



Incorporating edibles into the landscape conveys a sense of caring about the food consumed by family, friends, and neighbors. It provides the home with satisfying end products. And it is much easier than you may think. One of my favorite things to do is to weave those edibles throughout the ornamentals. This can be as simple as arugula or parsley planted as borders. Or it can be as challenging as bananas. Have some fun, mix it up a bit. Some of the plants listed below are perennially hardy, outdoors, for the northern climes – others are not. Heed the warnings for those that need extra loving if you want to enjoy them for more than one season.

*Actinidia kolomikta* 'Ken's Red' (Kiwi) very ornamental, rapidly growing deciduous vine cold hardy from zones 4 - 9. Do check on zones as some are quite a bit less hardy than others. One male plant to every four females is required for adequate pollination and fruit production. The leaves are quite pretty on their own, and if fruit is not a priority buy male plants. These prefer partial shade (for best leaf color), and will grow in average soils, as long as adequate moisture is available. Don't expect large fruits with these – they only get to be about an inch long but are very edible.

*Asimina triloba* (Paw Paw) is a delightful tree. If growing for fruit, you will need at least two for pollination. The long, rather weepy leaves on this tree make it an interesting, yet unusual, choice for the landscape. On and off I hear of a quest for the remnants of a native stand purportedly somewhere in southeastern Wisconsin. To my knowledge, that has not yet turned up. Pawpaws prefer full sun in deep, rich, moist soils that run a bit more on the acidic side. The pretty, smallish, maroon flowers are followed by fruits (about 4" long) that are rather funny looking – kind of like a short, squat banana. Hardy in zones 4/5 – 8.

*Citrus reticulata* (satsuma mandarin) is a great citrus for everyone in the north to try. Although not perennially cold hardy in the north, it will survive temperatures of 26 degree F. This makes it an ideal container fruit for forgetful gardeners like myself that may not remember to bring it indoors before a cold snap. The Satsuma mandarin is relatively evergreen, losing only a few leaves over winter – generally in response to changing light situations too quickly. They can be long lived but don't grow much

taller than four or five feet in containers. Summer care is relatively easy. Water very infrequently, only when dry one inch or more deep, provide full sun – at least eight hours per day – and be sure to use a citrus fruit fertilizer as labeled and directed. These don't need to be brought in the house, although they make fantastic houseplants, but can be kept throughout winter in a sunny, cool, garage, or greenhouse location. The fragrant, white flowers pop in April or May, followed by the developing fruits that ripen around October. Expect to love the fruit from this one. It's very sweet, almost seedless, and one of the easiest to peel. Outdoor hardy in zones 8b-10.

*Coffea arabica* (coffee) is a small, shrubby, tropical bush that will produce coffee beans in about four years when happy. Although they can grow ten feet or more when unfettered in native tropical soils, coffee responds well to pruning and can be kept to a manageable four foot height, making it a lovely plant for larger containers. The pretty, white flowers are worth growing for the heady fragrance alone. But, just think of how much fun it will be to wait for the bright red berries to mature so that you can harvest, roast and use your own coffee beans. As a tropical plant (hardy in zones 9 - 10), these do require some attendance to temperature and water requirements. Coffee grows optimally at about 68 degrees F., with no tolerance for frost and a great need for moisture. These are lovely plants to grow, and even if you never reach the point of berry production, the leaves (which contain more caffeine than the beans) can be brewed as a tea.

*Ficus carica* (fig) can be grown in this area – to a certain degree. Most will only do well for one year (cold hardy from zones 5 and up), but are worth the effort if you like fresh figs. Doing a bit of homework will yield success in finding some that may overwinter. 'Brown Turkey' is one of those that with heavy mulching and some babying may provide years of fruit production. Figs require a full sun setting in soils that have decent moisture levels and are well-drained. These loosely structured shrubs can reach ten to fifteen feet in height with attractive large, fan-shaped leaves. Fruits will vary according to cultivar selected, but range in size from two to five inches in colors from black to red to brown. If grown from container or bare root, you should get fruit the first year.

*Mespilus germanica* (Medlar) is in the rose family but you'd never guess that by looking at it. Growing in well-drained soils in full sun, this small tree reaches about 20 feet tall developing a very nice rounded canopy. It is self-fertile, so try just one as it needs no other for pollination. The rounded fruit is rather unusual in that it remains very hard even after it matures late in the season. The fruits can either be left on the tree to soften with the frost or it can be picked hard and stored over winter to soften more slowly. Texture of the ripened fruit is similar to a grainy yet creamy pear/apple sauce. The flavor is often referred to as something that requires getting used to. I found the flavor to be different than what we are used to around here - but not unpleasant. Hardy in zones 4 – 8.

*Prunus tomentosa* 'White Nanking' (cherry) is a lovely shrub, cold hardy in zones 3 – 7, that will reach to about eight feet if happy. . Each branch is covered with a showy display of white (with a hint of pink) flowers very early in the spring. The 'White Nanking' has deliciously sweet, white cherries ready for picking in June. These shrubs love full sun, can be planted in containers, function beautifully as fruiting hedges, or just make a pretty addition to the landscape. Although relatively small, the fruit of Nanking cherries are known more for their sweetness rather than their size.

*Schisandra chinensis* (Magnolia vine) is a slow growing, cold hardy (zones 4 – 7) vine producing small, lightly scented white to pink flowers followed by small, delicious, late summer fruits. Well-drained, moist soils in sun to light shade have been noted as optimal for growth. Reaching about ten feet tall, this beautiful, deciduous vine is native to the forests of northern Asia and is highly valued for food as well as for medicinal purposes. The bright red berries, dried leaves, shoots, and roots are all usable.

As for that banana tree, why not give it a whirl. They can be found easily, just look for "Super Dwarf" for ease in indoor/outdoor movement as it remains smaller in height. Grow like any other tropical plant in the north – monitoring carefully when temperatures dip low. They will fruit when provided with natural sunlight. So be sure to move them outside for the summer months – after the night temperatures get above 50 degrees F. Anticipate providing additional potassium throughout the summer as they rarely get enough in the north for good fruit development.