

kitchen garden design

STREET SMART

Bank up on your edibles with a boulevard food garden

DESIGNS AND TEXT BY SENGA LINDSAY



In North America this idea is only recently capturing the public imagination and the number of these gardens is rapidly accelerating. As a result many cities are currently implementing guidelines that take into consideration the interface between the boulevard garden and automobile and pedestrian traffic. Here's what you need to know before putting your own boulevard garden into action:

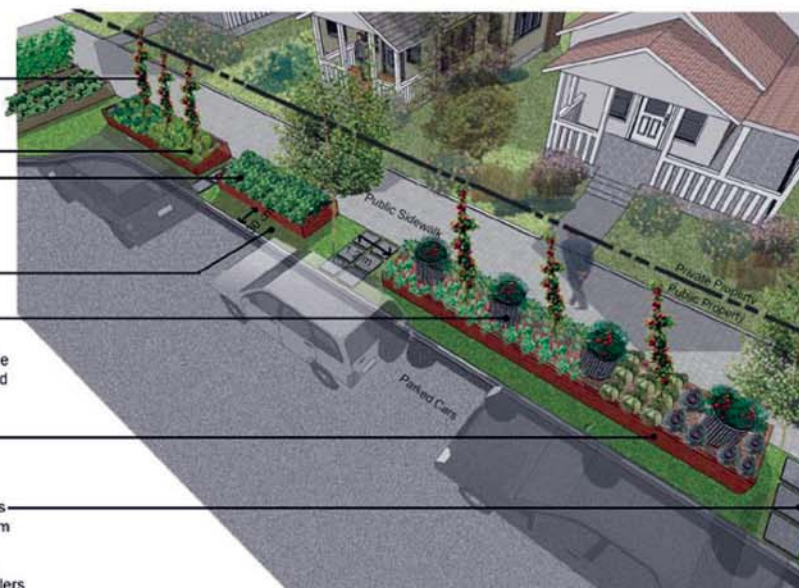
BEFORE YOU DIG

Realize that because these gardens are on public land you need to be prepared to part with some of your harvest to passersby unable to resist. Many people who garden on boulevards do it with a "sharing spirit."

Consult your municipality – often you will be required to follow a set of guidelines or seek permission for "Non-Standard Boulevard Treatments" and you may also need to register your edible garden. Additionally, you may be required to add a walkway through your garden if required for road access. Any construction of permanent landscape elements should be investigated with the municipality prior to installation. In addition, the city usually reserves the right to require the boulevard be returned to its original state at

The edible boulevard or street garden has been in existence since the 1950s in such countries as Australia where it is called "verge" or "kerbside gardening." Most commonly, boulevard gardens involve the strips of land between the public sidewalk and road. Planting this space up is a great way to use it while also beautifying your streetscape and inspiring your neighbours.

- Use dwarf or columnar fruit trees to save space and not encroach on parked cars or pedestrian traffic
- Plant low edibles at critical junctions and corners so not to impede vision
- Plant leaf lettuce away from road curbs and car influences
- 30-cm (1-ft.) setback from road curb
- Where allowable, use raised containers within planters to maximize space and accommodate trailing edibles – should not exceed 1 m (3 ft.) in height
- 45-cm (18-in.) raised wooden planters adjacent to curbs protect crops from contaminants
- Allow periodic hard-surface access for the passage of pedestrians from the sidewalk to parked cars – a minimum width of 1.2 m (4 ft.) will allow for wheelchairs and strollers



STEP BY STEP

LAY OUT THE BED. Set back beds from sidewalks, road curbs and adjacent parking spaces a minimum of 30 cm (1 ft.) to allow the doors of parked cars to open and people to manoeuvre in and out easily without potential tripping hazards. Lengthy planter beds should provide periodic openings 1.2 m (4 ft.) wide to allow strollers and wheelchairs access to the street and to and from parked cars.

PLANTER-BED CONSTRUCTION. Construction materials should be clean and simple, like wood or metal (without sharp edges), and keep an orderly design aesthetic that is fitting with the neighbourhood. Raised planter beds should be 45 cm (18 in.) high to allow good drainage, ample planting depth and optimum visibility to passersby. If you use shallower edging, ensure it is not a tripping hazard – aim for a minimum 18-cm (7-in.) rise as this is the average step height. Fresh soil is desirable in your new bed, as the existing soil may be compacted or nonviable.

PLANT CHOICES. In gardens

and tree setbacks. And avoid trees that have invasive roots that could lift up curbs and walkways. Also, do not plant trees that will drop nuts or slippery small fruits onto the sidewalk or parked cars. For those wishing for fruit in their gardens, columnar apple trees may be ideal.

Avoid leafy crops such as lettuce, which can be more sensitive to picking up contaminants that may wash into soil from streets. Or plant leafy greens in raised beds to mitigate this. Hardy plants for streetscapes are potatoes, beans, garlic, onions, kale, chard, tomatoes, cucumbers and zucchini.

Ideally your boulevard garden will look vibrant all year long. Edibles that hold up in the cold weather – blueberry bushes with their vibrant stem colour, beautiful kale, cabbage, cauliflower, Swiss chard, parsley, broad beans, corn salad and more – will give your garden four-season structure and make it appealing to walk by even in the dead of winter.

MAINTENANCE. Impeccable upkeep and healthy-looking plantings are key to winning over your neighbours and passersby with your new boulevard planting. Care for your garden beds should include regular watering, mulching, composting, disease and pest control and the pruning of trees and shrubs to avoid impeding pedestrians or cars.



located near intersections, tall plants may be a visual impediment to drivers. Check with your municipality for guidelines on planting heights

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