



**A trellised raised bed** constructed out of rough-cut Cedar at Mount Hood Gardens in early July.

such as gophers or moles. Weeding is also easier. You will experience significantly fewer weeds, especially when applying a layer of heavy-duty ground cloth over the hardware cloth before filling in soil mix. This will prevent perennial weeds from pushing through. Elevated soil warms up earlier in the spring, enabling you to plant and harvest earlier. Yield per square foot is higher, as the looser and richer soil promotes deep and rapid root growth.



**The raised beds at Mount Hood Gardens** are conveniently located on the way to the office and decoratively border the company's stock beds. The squash plant with its huge leaves forms a focal point.

**Raised beds** are also visually appealing, if constructed soundly, and can be arranged in a decorative pattern to add structure and year-round interest to the landscape.

Various herbs and aromatic perennials and shrubs, such as Lavender, can be included in raised beds. You may also wish to plant annuals and perennial cut flowers.

**Cultural requirements:** Most vegetables prefer full sun. Therefore, you want to consider this when placing the raised beds. However, a few

crops, such as lettuce, peas, and parsley, bolt or perish less readily in a partial shade location and may be just right for that shadier spot. Regarding the soil mix, you want to add at least one third organic matter, e.g. a mix of mushroom compost and aged (dark) fine bark, to your soil. High quality, well-drained topsoil, such as a sandy loam, is best. If your soil is high in clay content, raise the percentage of organic matter. You may also want to include a porous material such as coarse pumice to improve drainage. If you prepare your soil carefully, you will only have to incorporate aged chicken manure or other compost and organic vegetable fertilizer each following season, loosen your soil a bit, and you are ready to plant again.

**Materials and Construction:** Raised beds can be constructed out of lumber, dry-stacked rocks or flagstones, bricks, block, COR-TEN steel, or a wood-plastic composite such as Trex or TimberTech. Personally, I prefer rough-cut Cedar as a building material. Juniper wood is now also available, usually as 5 x 5



**A standard-size backyard** in a residential development in Hood River was transformed by a decorative and functional privacy fence and three small raised vegetable beds surrounded by lush, bermed screen plantings. Here they are shown shortly after planting in June. By August the vegetables and herbs completely fill the beds.

# EDIBLE BEDS

Marion McNew, Mount Hood Gardens, Inc.

dimension lumber. It has excellent durability and can last 30 years. Treated lumber is no longer the material of choice due to leaching concerns. Railroad ties should be avoided by all means for growing edible crops, as they exude creosote.

**Dimensions:** Raised beds usually are no more than 4 ft. wide, so you can reach the center easily. The length will depend on your plot size, layout, and preferences. Regarding the height, I favor a comfortable 16 to 18 inches final height, with a 2 x 10 clear fir or cedar board firmly attached horizontally to function as a sitting ledge. Beds can be square or rectangular. Hexagonal, octagonal, or circular shapes are also possible, especially if they form the central focal point of a kitchen garden.

**Ornamental elements:** Your edible garden can contain decorative and supporting vertical elements such as trellises and obelisks. In a potager, sculpture, birdbaths, and containers form focal points and add interest. You may even wish to build a small greenhouse or cold frame, extending the growing season and raising your own vegetable starts.

**Design components and considerations:** Edible gardens can consist of much more than a humble vegetable plot or a few rows of berries. They can be an outstanding, decorative asset to your landscape, as well as produce delicious, organic vegetables and fruits. Every landscape can include edible plants, with many heirloom and new varieties readily available. They are best combined with texture interest and contrasting color in mind, in addition to their culinary properties. Vegetables come in ranges of blue-green, red, and bright green leaf colors. Berry plants such as Blueberries, Red Currants, or trellised Raspberries can be used as background or enclosure shrubs, being ornamental as well as edible. Blueberry leaves display vibrant red fall color in addition to delicious, healthy summer fruit. With the selection of several different cultivars, harvest can last over two months. Edible gardens perform well in the Mid-Columbia, with our abundant sunshine during the summer months. Sheltering the garden from strong winds and choosing the correct varieties according to the site's elevation and exposure will contribute to your success.

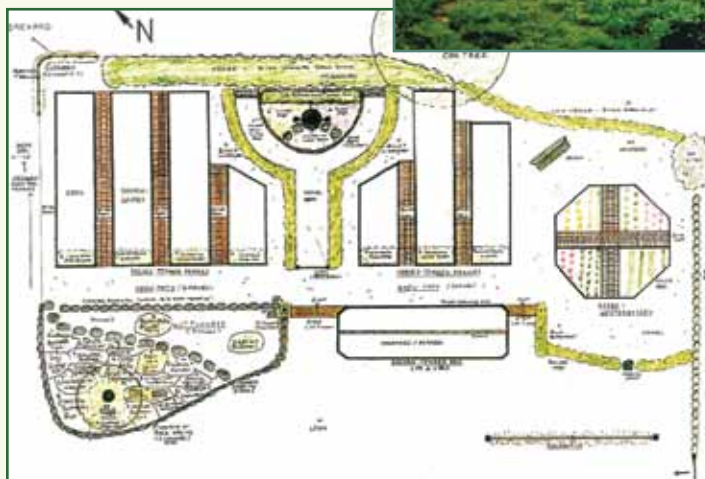
Happy gardening!



**The raised beds in the kitchen garden at Sakura Ridge Farm and Lodge** in the foothills of Mt. Hood double as comfortable seating to enjoy the fabulous views. The sitting ledges also facilitate easy plant tending and harvesting. The organically-grown vegetables and herbs provide culinary delight for guests and owners. The generous raised beds are constructed out of rough-cut cedar and surrounded by cut bluestone squares to create a clean, easy mowing edge.



**A beautiful example** of an ornamental vegetable garden, this Potager is part of a residential garden in The Dalles, Oregon.



**The colored design concept** for the Potager