

Desert Appropriate Edibles

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The trend toward planting fruits and veggies in home landscapes has swept the nation and shows no sign of abating. So how do we approach edibles in desert gardens where soils have low organic matter and water is scarce?

It is widely acknowledged that food production gardens are among the most demanding in terms of maintenance. This is especially true in desert climates where one missed watering can spell crop failure.

The plants below are a few I've found most durable and useful. Some of them are unexpected in that they have not formerly been considered "food" plants.

Plants for Beds: Traditional Edibles

To grow the sort of plants stocked in Bashas' produce department, you really need garden beds that have been heavily amended with organic matter. As the rubric goes, "there is nothing you can do after a garden is planted that will effect it's success as much as what do to the soil before it is planted."

In addition to rich well-drained soil, traditional veggies need regular watering. These sort of beds may not be suited to everyone, but below is a short list of winners:

- Punta Banda Cherry Tomatoes
- Tohono O'odham Onions
- Wild Arugula
- Freckles Lettuce
- Red Sails Lettuce
- Bright Lights Swiss Chard
- All manner of melons and squash
- Artichokes
- 'Rodger's Red' Grape

Hardcore Edibles

If the work required for traditional veggie garden doesn't agree with your lifestyle, hardcore edibles can provide treats without fuss. As a bonus, you may already have some of these in your garden. They are uniquely suited to harsh situations:

- Pincushion cactus (*Mammillaria* sp.)