

2000

# Fashionable Vegetables

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## Recommended Citation

Hinkamp, Dennis, "Fashionable Vegetables" (2000). *All Archived Publications*. Paper 942.  
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## GARDEN NOTES

# FASHIONABLE VEGETABLES

*By Dennis Hinkamp*

September 2000

Fall-29

It's a fashion show out there in the garden. Some vegetables are not only delicious but attractive. Then there are those that are downright ugly. Celeriac looks like a potato that fell off a truck at high speed. Parsnips, turnips and rutabagas also fall into the category of homely vegetables.

"Vegetables that are unfortunate enough to be both bland and ugly should be called weeds," says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist.

"A few lucky vegetables, however, are not only edible but could even be classified as pretty," he adds. "They look so good in the garden that they may be confused with an ornamental and should be showcased in the front yard rather than relegated to the back lot garden."

One of these is Swiss chard, Goodspeed says. It can be found in red, orange, yellow and green. The most popular variety is called Bright Lights. The name is accurate because its coloring is indeed bright and striking. A nice, red variety is called Ruby.

Another attractive plant occasionally seen in gardens is the sweet potato, he says. A member of the morning glory family, it has the ability to vine and crawl along the ground. It makes a wonderful groundcover.

Plant sweet potatoes in mounds or raised beds of well drained, loose soil, Goodspeed explains. During warm summers the plants can cover a four or five square foot area with a thick mat of leaves and vines. It really doesn't flower, but the foliage is attractive. Colors range from a deep green to purple or bronze.

Since sweet potatoes are a warm season crop, start them as early as possible, he says. Some nurseries in Utah sell sweet potato slips, or they can be purchased from mail order catalogs. Harvest sweet potatoes right before the first killing frost in the fall.

Peppers are another great addition to any flowering or ornamental bed, Goodspeed says. Of course ornamental peppers are well known for their small purple, red, yellow and white fruits. What many people don't realize is that all ornamental peppers are also edible. In fact, many of the more colorful peppers are quite spicy and have unique flavors.

There are also many sweet, belltype peppers that are showy, he says. These large, edible

and colorful fruits are available in purple, brown, red, orange and white.

“One small flower bed I saw was planted entirely in a variety of colored bell peppers,” Goodspeed says. “Its great mixture of colors was eye appealing, and it had the added benefit of making great salsa later in the year.”

Many vegetable gardeners plant pole beans because they can quickly grow and cover a fence, trellis or wall, he says. However, they also add to the landscape with their colorful blooms and fruit. The flowers can be white, purple or even red. The pods come in an array of colors similar to the peppers, but purple and red are the most spectacular. Some that are a bit unusual are two-toned pods. And those that grow to be about a foot long can be both entertaining and useful.

So, as you plant a garden or flowerbeds in the future, don't be afraid to mix plants that are ornamental and edible, Goodspeed says. Grow vegetables that are both attractive and useful, and see how many you can hide in flower beds.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 9 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert L. Gilliland, Vice-President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. (EP/09/2000/DF)