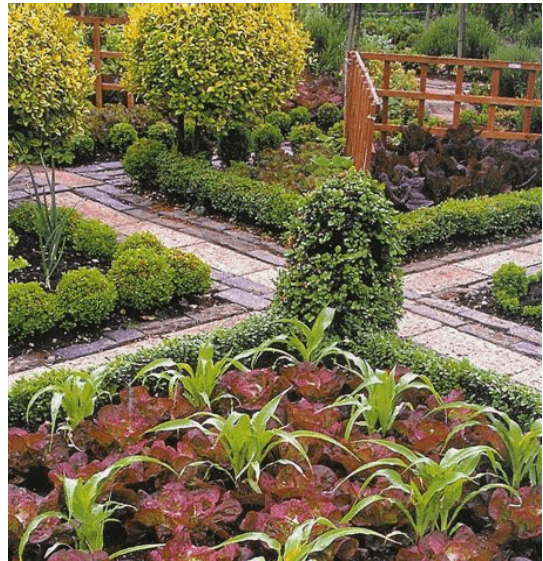


## Norm's Notes "Beautiful and Useful"

What could be better than to have a garden that is both beautiful and useful?

The gardeners of England have spent a fair amount of energy in creating that garden marriage between esthetics and utility. Their solution is the potager, a vegetable and fruit garden planted ornamentally. It was the recently deceased Rosemary Verey who planted what is probably the most archetypal potager at her Barnsley House garden in Gloucestershire. Though lettuce, cabbages, leeks, corn and onions grow among arches of gourds, there are also salmon-orange sweet peas and clipped golden privet along the symmetrical paths. Rosemary's potager is an intersection of the informal cottage garden, the formal garden and the practical kitchen garden.



Lettuce and corn in Rosemary Verey's potager.

But alas, Rosemary's potager is in temperate England. What about us Montanans who have to endure wind and 40-below temperatures? What I have found is that we in Montana can use different plants to achieve the same effects as the English who many feel are the finest gardeners in the Western world.

Beyond edible nasturtiums and violets, there are numerous vegetables and fruits available today to the Montana gardener that have outstanding ornamental value. For example, in warmer Montana climates colorful millet and corn varieties are available. But for everyone in Montana there are beautiful lettuces and beets.

Rather than planting a flowering border along a sidewalk that may bloom for only six weeks, one could with so little effort and cost really jazz up a sidewalk border with a patterned knot garden in yellow and purple lettuce accented with maroon-leaved beets. Actually, you could even spell out your family name or a welcome in letters of lettuce. The design would look great from late spring through autumn and you could eat a fresh, tasty and healthy salad nearly every day by thinning out or harvesting plants from your ornamental border.

An actual example of using vegetables in an ornamental design can be seen in Butte at the Old Lexington Gardens (Granite and Arizona Streets) in a 40 foot butterfly planted this year (left). It only took five weeks to look good from a May seeding. Three varieties of loose leaf red lettuce, one yellow lettuce and maroon-leaved beets were used. If you could choose only two lettuces for a design, recommended would be "Red Velvet" and "Australian Yellow". The beets used were "McGregor's Favorite" which is a maroon-leaved beet that can have a silver sheen in sunshine.



See the pictures below as examples of the use of vegetable “gardens” and of Verey’s potager. Close up pictures of the vegetables used in the Butte butterfly garden are included in another article on this site entitled “Columbia Garden Receives Grant from Principal Financial Group”.



(Above) An overview of Verey’s potager



Leeks and onions against a simple lumber fence

All pictures on this page are of Rosemary Verey’s potager photos from *The English Garden*, Feb/Mar, 2000; Andrew Larson, photographer



Gourds growing in a tunnel pathway.



Narrow paths maximize the growing space.