

Edible landscapes: Growing a yard you can eat  
written by Newspark Team | September 28, 2014



Local green thumbs and budding gardeners gathered recently to hear author Michael Judd discuss best practices for landscapes that are pleasing to the eye, as well as the taste buds.

Judd, who discussed his book, “Edible Landscaping with a Permaculture Twist,” came to Charlottesville for a program sponsored by the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground.

“It’s human design ecology,” Judd said of edible landscapes. “We want to create something that, when we design it and create it, will continue to thrive on its own.”

Judd’s presentation to a small audience at CitySpace covered the design process, material identification and costs for simple self-build projects. Representatives from C’ville Foodscapes, the Urban Agriculture Collective of Charlottesville and Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards also shared exhibits with the audience.

Judd has lived and worked in a variety of landscapes all over the world, including England, Latin America, Spain and Mexico. He said he took what he learned about growing patterns in the tropics and translated it for suburban living.

☒ “My passion for edible landscapes was put on a fast track from living in the tropics, because ... in the tropics, everything grows really fast,” Judd said during his talk.

Judd's book provides information and how-to's for "food forests," raised-bed gardens, earthen ovens, uncommon fruits, outdoor mushroom cultivation and more. With several years of experience and business knowledge, he said his goal is to share his techniques with gardeners at all stages.

"Remember, all things that can be shared can be expanded or retracted," Judd said. "We can design to the smallest space, whether it's a patio apartment or a homestead, huge farm or a whole watershed. These things can be amplified."

Speaking on uncommon and low-maintenance fruits, he emphasized some that grow in the area, such as the pawpaw. Judd said the pawpaw is an untapped resource, but the fruit has to be used soon after picking. He urged the group to consider making pawpaw ice cream out of the fruit as it approaches the end of its shelf life.

Judd also shared his recipe for a food forest.

"A food forest is not growing food in the forest, it's growing food like the forest," he said.

Judd said a healthy forest has many species working together to create a healthy ecology. He said gardeners need to figure out how to create a forest feel on local landscapes with a mix that serves human needs, including nuts, fruits and medicines. A food forest patch can be used for almost anything, Judd said.

"This is often opposite of what we do in gardening when we focus on aspects such as patterns," he said.

As a food forest is created, Judd said, patience is the key to get the foundation ready. It can take a year or more to get the ground fertilized and ready to plant.

"Sometimes you have to fight for a couple years to get what you want established, but once it's established, you won't have to worry about it anymore," he said.