

# Sustainable solutions

BY EMILY GURNON

**D**iana Grundeen's clients had a problem. Several, actually. Their front yard was overgrown, their back yard was too shady for much of a garden, their Minneapolis street was noisy, the driveway jutted into the yard, and the husband suffered from allergies.

As a landscape designer, Grundeen and her team from Trio Landscaping had answers to all of the issues.

We talked with Grundeen recently about the project, which featured edible plants and put a premium on sustainability.

**Spaces:** You decided to plant vegetables, blueberry shrubs and other edibles in the front yard, where we usually don't see them. What was the thinking behind that?

**Grundeen:** I had recently come back from a design conference where I talked with other designers and hung out with people like Rosalind Creasy (a pioneer in edible landscaping). I got to walk through her front yard. It has chickens. It has vegetables. And she lives in a residential neighborhood like everyone else. And I thought, 'That's really cool, but nobody's going to want chickens, nobody's going to want to grow vegetables in their front yard,' but her neighbors really love and appreciate her landscape.

This little nugget I take home, and this particular client lets me know they don't have a whole lot of yard space but they really like to be outside and they'd like to do something else with it. They have a little garden out back but it doesn't get much sun, so if they could grow some things out front, that would be kind of cool.

So we started something that could be worked into an edible garden – something that's more sustainable but doesn't look like you're farming in your front yard. Because nobody really likes to look at farms unless we're driving out in western Minnesota, southern Minnesota, right?



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRIO LANDSCAPING

**Above:** A small water feature helps mask street noise. **Below:** Edibles such as squash and runner beans mingle with ornamentals near the driveway.

**Q.** Are there other edibles in the yard?

**A.** Yes. This particular yard is really small. The only driveway space kind of looks like it's in the front yard.

So we have this awesome trellis that is just about the height of her car, and on that, she is growing nasturtiums; we also have kiwi vine planted. So we have both annual and perennial vines of edible plant material, which also screens her car.

**Q.** How can landscaping help with street noise?

**A.** We combatted that by giving the homeowners some other white noise that's more pleasant and also can help drown out the road noise: a water feature. And, bonus: It's relaxing to look at. This one's very low-maintenance. It doesn't have a pond with it; it goes into a reservoir underneath the patio and the water just recycles.

**Q.** How did you deal with the allergy



problem?

**A.** Grass is a huge allergen, so there is very little lawn in this project. We replaced a good portion of that with creeping thyme. That way, when they sit outside on their patio or hang out in their garden, he doesn't have to be sneezing. Creeping thyme is not going to take a ton of water, it can take some minimal foot traffic, and as far as having a green space that's going to be a respite on the eyes, it works really well.

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