

Potentiality of Ornamental Fruit Crops

*Abishek A, Akshaya P and Deepika V

SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Chengalpattu-603201, Tamil Nadu, India

*Corresponding Author's email: aa7866@srmist.edu.in

In the evolving landscape of modern horticulture, the boundary between aesthetic gardening and functional food production is increasingly blurring. This article explores the concept of "Edible Ornamentals," advocating for the integration of dual-purpose fruit crops that offer both visual splendour and nutritional bounty. We examine specific species such as the architecturally striking Dragon Fruit, the floral masterpiece of Passion Fruit, and the exotic vibrancy of Rambutan alongside versatile shrub options like Karonda and West Indian Cherry. By replacing purely decorative plants with these fruit-bearing alternatives, growers can maximize limited space to create a sustainable ecosystem that delights the eye while contributing to household food security. This article highlights the potential of these crops to transform conventional gardens into productive "ornamental orchards," offering a practical guide to selecting species that provide a feast for both the senses and the palate.

Keywords: Ornamentals, Urban, Aesthetic, Decoration, Fruit crops.

Introduction

For generations, gardening has been divided into two distinct worlds: the ornamental garden, designed to please the eye with vibrant blooms and structured foliage and the kitchen garden, purely functional and often relegated to the backyard. But as urban spaces shrink and the desire for sustainable living grows, the line between "beauty" and "bounty" is blurring. Enter the era of the Ornamental Orchard a landscaping philosophy that refuses to compromise aesthetics for yield.

The concept is simple yet transformative: why plant a non-fruiting vine when Passion Fruit (*Passiflora edulis*) offers equally intricate flowers alongside delicious produce? Why settle for a standard cactus when Dragon Fruit (*Selenicereus undatus*) provides structural drama and neon-coloured fruits? From the alien-like allure of Rambutan to the dense, hedge-worthy foliage of Karonda and West Indian Cherry, nature offers a wealth of fruit crops that possess high ornamental value.

This approach, often termed "Edible Landscaping," allows gardeners to maximize limited space by selecting species that work double duty. It turns a garden into a living ecosystem that provides a feast for the eyes and the palate simultaneously. In this article, we will explore different kinds of fruit crops that has dual-purpose, transforming the humble act of fruit growing into a visual masterpiece.

Dragon Fruit

Belonging to the family **Cactaceae**, the Dragon Fruit (*Selenicereus undatus*) is a climbing cactus that adds dramatic architectural structure to landscapes with its triangular, fleshy stems. It is prized for its massive, fragrant white blossoms often called "Moon Flowers" which bloom exclusively at night, creating a fleeting but spectacular visual display. The ornamental appeal culminates with the production of neon-pink, scaly fruits that hang like exotic lanterns, offering a refreshing, antioxidant-rich harvest.



Passion Fruit

A member of the **Passifloraceae** family, **Passion Fruit** (*Passiflora edulis*) is a vigorous, evergreen vine that rapidly covers pergolas and fences, offering both privacy and lush, glossy foliage. It is most famous for its intricate, otherworldly flowers often likened to a clock face which feature a stunning central corona of wavy, purple-and-white filaments. This ornamental display is followed by the production of aromatic, egg-shaped fruits filled with a tangy, tropical pulp that is a favourite for juices and desserts.



West Indian Cherry

The West Indian Cherry (*Malpighia emarginata*), a prominent member of the **Malpighiaceae** family, is a versatile evergreen shrub often utilized in landscapes to create dense, glossy-leaved hedges or vibrant container displays. Its ornamental value is highlighted by delicate clusters of pink to rose-colored flowers that bloom profusely against the dark green foliage. These blossoms rapidly develop into bright red, cherry-like fruits that act as jewel-toned accents in the garden and are celebrated globally as a powerhouse of Vitamin C.



Karonda

Belonging to the **Apocynaceae** family, Karonda (*Carissa carandas*) is a hardy, drought-tolerant shrub widely valued in landscaping for creating impenetrable, protective live hedges due to its dense branching and sharp thorns. Its aesthetic appeal lies in the striking contrast between its glossy, dark green foliage and the profusion of delicate, star-shaped white flowers that appear in fragrant clusters. The plant further beautifies the garden as its berry-like fruits transition through a vivid colour spectrum from pink and white to deep reddish-purple providing a tart harvest perfect for pickles and preserves.



Rambutan

A majestic member of the **Sapindaceae** family, Rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*) serves as an impressive specimen tree in tropical landscapes, boasting a dense canopy of lush, evergreen foliage. The tree transforms into a visual spectacle during the harvest season, as it becomes laden with clusters of exotic, hairy fruits that ripen into brilliant shades of fiery red and yellow. These distinctively textured fruits provide a stunning contrast against the green backdrop while offering a translucent, juicy flesh known for its sweet, sub-acid flavor.



Star Fruit

Belonging to the **Oxalidaceae** family, **Star Fruit** (*Averrhoa carambola*) is a graceful, slow-growing tree often planted in home gardens for its symmetrical canopy and soft, fern-like foliage. It adds delicate beauty to the landscape with clusters of tiny, bell-shaped flowers in shades of lilac and pink that bloom directly on the branches. The tree is most visually striking when laden with waxy, yellow-green fruits that hang like decorative lanterns, revealing a perfect five-pointed star shape when sliced for a crisp, refreshing treat.



Water Apple

A member of the Myrtaceae family, the Water Apple (*Syzygium samarangense*) is a fast-growing evergreen tree valued in landscaping for its sprawling canopy that provides deep, cooling shade. Its ornamental charm begins with an explosion of large, yellowish-white "powder puff" flowers that attract pollinators and contrast beautifully against the large, leathery leaves. The visual appeal peaks when the branches droop under heavy clusters of bell-shaped, waxy fruits in glossy shades of pink and red, offering a crisp, thirst-quenching treat.



Bilimbi

A close relative of the star fruit in the Oxalidaceae family, Bilimbi (*Averrhoa bilimbi*) is an upright, tropical tree favored in gardens for its feathery, fern-like foliage that casts a light, dappled shade. It is botanically distinct for its dramatic display of cauliflory, where clusters of tiny, dark red to purple flowers bloom directly on the woody trunk and older branches. This unique flowering habit leads to heavy bunches of bright green, cucumber-shaped fruits that cling tightly to the bark, creating a striking visual contrast while providing a sharply sour harvest perfect for pickles and curries.



Conclusion

Embracing the concept of the ornamental orchard allows gardeners to redefine the purpose of their green spaces, proving that utility need not come at the expense of beauty. By integrating dual-purpose crops like the sculptural Dragon Fruit or the vibrant West Indian Cherry, we can transform static landscapes into dynamic, living ecosystems that nourish both the body and the soul. This fusion of horticulture and landscape design not only maximizes limited space but also creates a sustainable environment where every branch and bloom provides a feast for the eyes and a harvest for the table. Ultimately, the choice to plant these crops is a step toward a greener, healthier, and more visually captivating future.

References

1. Thakur *et al.* "Exploring Edible Landscaping: Purpose, Plants, and Places – A Review." *Journal of Ornamental Horticulture*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2024, pp. 45-55.
2. Kumar *et al.* "Underutilized Fruit Crops of Indian Arid and Semi-Arid Regions: Importance, Conservation and Utilization Strategies." *Horticulturae*, vol. 8, no. 5, 2022.
3. Naiker *et al.* "Nutritional Value and Therapeutic Benefits of Dragon Fruit: A Comprehensive Review." *Molecules*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2024.
4. Singh *et al.* (2023) "Advances in Production Technology of Karonda (*Carissa carandas* L.)."