



Last November, Terracare Associates Vice President Bill Horn replaced “non-meaningful” turfgrass on his front yard with edible/ornamental plants.

# SUSTAINABILITY

## BEGINS AT HOME

Two PLANET members from opposite corners of the country have put a personal twist on sustainability. Jeff Bowen, Landscape Industry Certified Manager, owner of Images of Green in Stuart, Florida, recently started an orchard on his property. Last fall, Bill Horn, Landscape Industry Certified Manager & Technician, vice president of Terracare Associates in Martinez, California, turned his front yard into an edible landscape. Both landscape professionals are also promoting edible landscapes as part of sustainable solution for their customers.

### Sustainable market

Bowen’s one-acre orchard took root last summer when he came up with the idea of introducing a sustainable market for his employees. Located on the company’s five-acre parcel, the new orchard includes a variety of seven-gallon fruit trees. “We’ve added drip irrigation to the orchard and plan to actually harvest fruit within three to seven years,” Bowen relates. “Right now, our plan is to offer the fruit to our employees, but if the yield is adequate as the orchard matures, we may decide to actually

operate a small farmer’s market here.”

In some ways, the Images of Green experiment is a testing ground for customer properties. Already, Bowen maintains vegetable and herb garden for two residential customers. “The challenge we have in this part of Florida for growing edible gardens is the soil,” he relates. “For our two ‘edible garden’ customers, we’ve planted the vegetables in decorative pots, which helps the gardens to be aesthetically appealing as well as tasty and nutritious.” Tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, parsley, sage, thyme, and rosemary are just a few of the pots’ inhabitants.

**“I just want to make the planet a better place to live.”**  
— Bill Horn



### Lead by example

Horn uses the word “decorative” to describe his front yard, 90 percent of which now contains edible/ornamental plants. “I include the word ‘ornamental’ because the 50 or so varieties of vegetables, herbs, berries, and



## Images of Green owner Jeffery Bowen maintains a vegetable and herb garden for two clients and recently installed an orchard on his property.

other fruit-bearing plants are very colorful,” he explains. Even the four-foot strip of tomatoes that replaced turfgrass next to his sidewalk will add color and interest to his landscape.

“I want my neighbors to see what I’m doing and to even pick the tomatoes,” says Horn, who last November switched out what he calls ‘non-meaningful’ turfgrass for his new garden and the re-creation of one of his favorite walking trails. He brought in 40 yards of compost, moss rocks, and broken pieces of oak trees to fashion his natural setting and to set an example for neighbors and clients alike who would like a sustainable alternative.


Horn says he doesn’t dislike turfgrass, especially since his company does a lot of mowing and, as he points out, turfgrass in the right application offers many recreational and ecological benefits. It’s the large expanses of turfgrass that needlessly suck up huge amounts of

water, fertilizer, and fossil fuels for maintenance requirements that are his pet peeves.

“I just want to make the planet a better place to live,” Horn adds. “I’m doing my small part at home, and when I get the opportunity, I talk to clients about alternative landscapes, as well. One such client, a well-known national corporation, recently signed a contract with Terracare Associates to design, construct, and maintain a 10,000–15,000 square foot vegetable garden. When completed, the garden will not only be in full view of diners at the company cafeteria, but its harvest also will be on the menu.

Horn admits the company may not generate as much revenue maintaining a vegetable garden as it would mowing the same property 46 times a year. But, his company is saving the client money and giving it an opportunity to pay more than

lip service to sustainability. “This is very rich soil, well-suited to agriculture before it was caught up in the development of sprawling communities,” Horn relates. “We’re offering an opportunity to return some of that same soil to productivity, while reducing client reliance on water, chemicals, and fossil fuels, among other costs associated with maintaining turf.

“Every day, when I open my paper, I see references to sustainable practices. As a company, we want to be on the forefront of this movement, and as an individual, I want to do what’s right for the planet.” For both Horn and Bowen, there’s no better place to start than right at home. 



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