



IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

MY GARDENING MANIFESTO

By Jason Minshev

Photography by [Jody Horton](#)

My goal is to persuade Austinites to reinterpret the relationship between a landscape and a garden. By applying the principles of landscape design to include plants that produce fruits and veggies, I create thoughtfully designed, productive urban landscapes that are as beautiful as traditional landscapes conceived and installed purely for ornamental purposes.



For the last three years I've had the pleasure and pride of promoting this reinterpretation at Austin's

Habitat Suites Hotel. When I began my work there, the hotel's landscape was over 20 years old and planted with the usual suspects from that period. Red-tip Photinias and (non-fruiting) Bradford pear trees were reaching the end of life and needed to be replaced. I chose olive and satsuma trees, which have similar beneficial qualities and functions as their predecessors, but with the bonus of providing bounty. I swapped the Chinese holly and Indian hawthorn for blackberries, guava and dwarf pomegranate shrubs. Soon the ground was covered with areas of native grasses, strawberries and beets, and guests began complimenting the management on the inspiring changes taking place in the landscape.



Through my work at Habitat Suites, I hope to help people past the paradigm that food only grows in straight rows, that good neighbors don't plant vegetable gardens in their front yards and that landscape is synonymous with ornamental. Heck, we might just start a revolution.

I have my eye on those soccer fields at Zilker Park.