Trading Grass for Gooseberries: Edible Landscaping as a Solution to the Lawn

Nicole Mokrzycki
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Faculty Adviser: Anne Rademacher
Faculty Sponsor: Jennifer Jacquet

Abstract

Over the past century, turf grass lawns have become the prevailing residential landscape style of the suburban United States. Social norms regulate the shape and form of the suburban landscape, encouraging homeowners to employ a slew of ecologically harmful practices to maintain the perfect lawn. Concern for the environment, coupled with a faltering stability in the food system and the recognition that thirty million acres of the United States is planted with turf grass lawns has led to the burgeoning popularity of edible landscaping as an alternative to the conventional lawn. This study traces how social norms and economic factors work to regulate homeowners’ attitudes and actions with regards to their yard. I interview four edible landscape design company owners from across the United States to assess how their businesses operate and whom they operate for, and couple this information with conclusions from previous studies on neighborhood landscape norms to answer the question: Is residential suburban America poised for a transition to edible landscapes?