

## **Nonprofit group pitches in to give Olympia woman edible yard**

**John Dodge**



West Olympia homeowner Suzanne Cravey plants a liberty apple tree in her frontyard with help from Michael Kelly, coordinator of Terra Commons, a nonprofit organization that promotes the use of edible landscaping. (Steve Bloom/The Olympian)

OLYMPIA — Homeowner Suzanne Cravey on Monday traded in the south-facing lawn at her westside Olympia property for an edible landscape filled with fruit and nut trees, berries and even mushrooms.

The miniature forest where green grass used to grow is designed to provide food while soaking up airborne carbon dioxide that would otherwise contribute to global warming.

"I could have planted ornamental trees and flowers but I want to have a yard that offers food to birds, people and other critters," Cravey said of the rental property she owns.

The edible forest garden at the corner of Cushing Street and Garfield Avenue is a demonstration project supported by Terra Commons, an Olympia-based, nonprofit network of citizens interested in sustainable agriculture, habitat restoration and natural building techniques.

"We're trying to show that individuals can make a difference through sustainable agriculture, sustainable building and buying local produce," Terra Commons member Pat Rasmussen said.

As the landscape matures, it will require little maintenance, including weeding, watering or fertilizing, Rasmussen said.

"She'll be sitting in the shade of her walnut tree, sipping lemonade, while her neighbors are mowing their lawns in the hot summer sun," Rasmussen said.

The lawn was covered with cardboard and straw this summer. On Monday, Terra Commons coordinator Michael Kelly dug holes in the former lawn to make room for a Liberty apple tree, and other garden additions, including hazel nuts, persimmons, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, bunchberries and three species of edible mushrooms.

Mushroom spores were introduced in 16-square-foot areas covered in straw, sawdust, coffee grounds or compost, depending on the variety.

Rarely used in landscaping, the mushrooms provide food and improve soil nutrition, Cravey said.

"They're delicious to eat, and they'll spread mycelium throughout the yard, helping fertilize the soil," Cravey said.

Mycelium are the threadlike network of fungal living matter in the soil from which the mushrooms spring forth. Paul Stamets, owner of Fungi Perfecti, a gourmet and medicinal mushroom company based at Kamilche Point, calls mycelium "the biological elders of the ecosystem."

---

#### **Comments on the web:**

I have mushrooms in my yard. Not edible ones, but if they indicate mycelium that will make my lawn happy, then that's a good thing. Carolyn

---

Sounds like a good thing...neighbors helping neighbors to make something nice. Scott

---

For more information please contact:

Michael Kelly, Coordinator

Terra Commons

(360) 866-1331

[terracommons@riseup.net](mailto:terracommons@riseup.net)

[www.oly-wa.us/terra](http://www.oly-wa.us/terra)