

# Back Yard Makeovers: Edible and Drinkable

... continued from page OH4



Rows of organic heirloom tomatoes in Beth Ferree and John Eaton's backyard.

Photos Doug Kohen

## The Edible

Beth Ferree and husband John Eaton have a flat and sunny one-third acre lot near the heart of Lafayette.

Although they loved the expansive back lawn that their children – twins, now in their late 20's – spent endless hours enjoying when they were younger, these empty

nesters were interested in something more productive that would use significantly less water.

"It was exhausting, a huge job," explains Ferree, recalling when she and her husband ripped out the original front yard and replaced it with natives and drought tolerant plants. All along the couple considered taking the back lawn out, but after surviving the front yard transformation, the task seemed daunting.

Hello Urban Farmers, goodbye lawn. The couple applied and was selected to participate in the Urban Farmers (UF) program – where the homeowner supplies the land and water and UF provides the labor and know-how to design, cultivate and harvest an organic garden – sharing the bounty with the collective. They tilled the lawn under and installed a multitude of three foot by fifteen foot beds with drip irrigation.

A cover crops of fava beans were planted to help break up the clay soil and add nutrients; their first season forty heirloom tomato plants were planted along with fruit trees, an herb garden, and a bee hive that the family pooch, Aslan, keeps an eye on. Although they are still working to naturally enrich the soil there is already a bountiful crop from the beds.

"We just love it. I feel like we are in Italy – it's beautiful, fun and the water bill is down substantially," says Ferree. "My kids think we've turned into hippies." She explains it really isn't that hard, Urban Farmers made it easy – but you can do it yourself.



Nearly ripe tomatoes



Buzzing bee hive



Beth Ferree with Aslan.