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Julie Bass of Oak Park Michigan had her frontlawn destroyed as a result of a broken sewer line. Rather than replant her lawn with grass, she decided to put in raised bed gardens for growing vegetables instead. She checked first with city officials and the city ordinances did not clearly prohibit it. The code states that lawns shall be planted with grass or ground cover or shrubbery or other "suitable" live plant material. Julie decided that in our current age of economic and climate instability, one could make a good case for vegetables being suitable. It turns out that some of her neighbors and city officials don't agree. They have ticketed her and ordered her to remove the vegetables or face more serious penalties.

As a frontyard grower myself, this story doesn't have me seeing green as the reporter puts it but red. Oak Park is apparently cash-strapped at the moment and seeking to make savings in its budget wherever it can. Shouldn't Oak Park residents be able to take similar measures by growing their own food where the sun shines the strongest?

Please show your solidarity by [checking out Julie's blog](#) [1]. And if you want to take your activism one step beyond, you can write an email (a polite one!) to Oak Park's Technical & Planning Director, Kevin Rulkowski, at krulkowski@ci.oak-park.mi.us [2] to let him know that the dictionary definition of [suitable as meaning "common" is considered obsolete by Merriam-Webster](#) [3]. A more modern definition is "adapted to a use or purpose" which vegetables clearly are if the "purpose" is producing food. What we really need is to redefine the purpose of the American lawn in a more modern way which is precisely what Julie Bass is trying to do.

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Links:

- [1] <http://oakparkhatesveggies.wordpress.com/>
- [2] <mailto:krulkowski@ci.oak-park.mi.us>
- [3] <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/suitable>