

What Will Be the Hot Gardening Trends of 2019?

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1.) Good News 1: More people are gardening. According to Garden Research's 2018 survey, 77 percent of U.S. households are gardening. That's historically a high number.

2.) Good News 2: They're spending! Garden Research says the average U.S. household shelled out \$503 in 2018 on gardening. That's up nearly \$100 from 2017.

3.) Good News 3: The Under 35s are gardening. The 18-to-34 age group (the Millennial generation) reached an all-time gardening high in 2018. Young males in particular are taking up the hobby.

"From small beginnings with a succulent here and a houseplant there, the under-35s are now truly engaged in the full range of gardening activities," says Ian Baldwin, a gardening industry analyst who took part in the Garden Research study. "18- to 34-year-olds now occupy 29 percent of all gardening households. It's a strong sign that they are finally 'in.'"

4.) Edible Gardening. Millennials are especially into growing their own food. But the return of home vegetable-, fruit-, and herb-growing (now often called "permaculture" or "food forests") goes beyond just that group. Community gardens are springing up to serve urban dwellers, many more schools have school gardens to introduce elementary kids to gardening, and suburban gardeners are warming to the idea of "foodscaping..." tucking edibles into the landscape beds.

5.) "Saving the Earth" via Gardening. The be-kind-to-nature movement is showing no signs of slowing. Lots of offshoots of this, including native plants (although the "native-or-else" push is softening), planting naturalistically, accepting smaller "good-enough" lawns instead of demanding green carpets, pollinator gardens, less spraying, and embracing enviro-friendly gardening practices such as composting, recycling yard waste on site, and adding rain gardens and rain barrels.

6.) Low Maintenance. This one's never out of style. But the aging population is taking the low-care cry to a new level. Two practices in particular come out of this: scrapping mass planting of annuals in favor of spotting color in pots, baskets, and window boxes (container gardening is hotter than ever), and leaning toward the increasing number of dwarf, compact, and narrow plant varieties that breeders are churning out lately.

For the instant-gratification fans, the latest new idea is InstantHedge, a 20-variety offering of plants in trays of five young hedge plants each – already trained, trimmed, and ready to pop in the ground.

7.) Hot Plant of the Year: Succulents in general. They're easy to grow, low care, colorful, and come in lots of choices. Anything in the sedum family in particular is a winner these days.

8.) Hot Plant No. 2 of the Year: Sedges. This grassy family is the up-and-coming trendster because it's versatile, colorful, low-care, and an alternative to those trying to shrink lawns.

9.) “Solution Gardening.” Dr. Allan Armitage believes this is the next big trend in plant marketing. He says most people shop for solutions to their issues as opposed to looking for specific plants. Instead of displaying plants in alphabetical order, a more helpful approach is to group plants by their solutions, i.e. Plants that Deer Don’t Like, Plants for Dry Shade, Plants for Sunny Banks, Plants for Pollinators, Drought-Tolerant Plants, etc.

10.) Houseplant Comeback. This is a side effect of the Millennial generation’s interest in reconnecting with nature. In 2018, 30 percent of American households bought at least one houseplant, and Millennials accounted for about one-third of those purchases. Garden centers are reporting marked growth in houseplants.

11.) Technology in the Garden. Millennials are primarily fueling this one, too. We’re seeing more and more techie items like smartphone apps that give plant-care tips, apps that ID plants at the snap of a photo, automated lawn mowers, in-garden wireless monitors that beam soil-nutrition and watering information to the gardener’s gadgets, and even plant tags with bar codes that link to their own web pages.

New for 2019 is the Tertill Weeding Robot, a “Roomba for the garden” that’s solar powered and patrols the gardening, cutting off anything an inch or less tall (presumably small weeds).

Researchers are also developing robotic bees that pollinate flowers and plants that glow, with the aim that someday glowing trees could replace streetlights.

Landscapers and garden designers are increasingly employing drones to shoot overhead images of yards to aid in designs.

Me? I’m waiting for a robot that chases away the deer and groundhogs. Maybe next year...