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Outdoor Living Takes a New Twist in 2007

Philadelphia – August 25, 2006 – From dinner on city rooftop gardens to watching football in suburban outdoor living rooms, Americans have once again fallen in love with the great outdoors.

“The outdoor living boom has clearly moved from being ‘just a trend’ to a lifestyle,” says Susan McCoy, outdoor living trendspotter and president of the Garden Media Group.

According to McCoy, consumers have discovered that outdoor living is more than dressing up patios with a few containers. Instead, people are transforming their ordinary backyards into ‘specialty rooms’ complete with kitchens, bars, TVs and even heaters for cool nights. Flowers, shrubs and trees are being used as accents, room dividers, carpets and curtains.

McCoy believes outdoor living has been fueled by three things: our obsession with living a healthier lifestyle, easier-to-grow plants for instant success and a vast array of stylish and affordable all-weather furnishings, fabrics and appliances.

“Today the average homeowner can walk into the home and garden department at any major store and find outdoor end tables, all-weather floor lamps, waterproof art and even affordable entertainment sets along with big and bold flowers and plants,” says McCoy.

And as we go outdoors more often with our family, friends and pets, it is only natural that we begin to think more consciously about how safe our own backyards are, giving way to the biggest new twist in outdoor living: the “eco chic” movement.

According to a recent *Newsweek* article entitled “Going Green,” “environmentalism appears to be on the upswing” and is changing everything from the type of cars we drive to the food we eat and even the way we garden.

Bruce Butterfield, Research Director at the National Gardening Association, agrees, predicting that the demand for earth-friendly products could “quadruple in the next few years.”

To transform your backyard into an outdoor living area with eco-chic style, here are GMG’s 2007 outdoor living trends, presented to garden editors and writers at the 58th Annual GWA Symposium in Philadelphia.

For a complete list of what’s shaping gardening, visit www.gardenmediagroup.com.

GMG 2007 Trends Report What's In What's Out

What's In

Outdoor Living is In.
Escape Gardens Are In.
Streamlined Gardens Are In.
Eco-Chic Gardens Are In.
Small Space Gardens Are In.
Larger than Life Accents Are In.
Foliage in Focus Is In.
Multi-tasking Gardens Are In.
Fancy Plants Are In.
Masses of Any Color Are In.
24-Hour Gardens Are In.

What's Out

Indoor Living is Out.
Everyday Gardens Are Out.
Shabby Chic Gardens Are Out.
Chemical Needy Gardens Are Out.
Colossal Gardens Are Out.
Peak-a-Boo Accessories Are Out.
Flowers Only Are Out.
Time Consuming Gardens Are Out.
Basic Plants Are Out.
Colorless Masses Are Out.
Daytime Only Gardens Are Out.

Outdoor Living is In. Indoor Living is Out. “Outdoor living is no longer a noun. It’s a verb,” says Susan McCoy, president of the Garden Media Group. “We are entertaining in our outdoor living rooms, cooking in our outdoor kitchens, conducting business in our outdoor offices and even grooming in outdoor showers.” Thanks to new product offerings like weather-resistant appliances, furniture and electronics, there’s virtually nothing we aren’t doing outside we haven’t spent years doing inside the home, including watching TV. A recently released survey from *Better Homes and Gardens* confirms this trend. The survey states that building a major garden or landscaping project is the second most popular home improvement choice. “Today’s consumers in all tax brackets are creating their own outdoor living style, whether it’s adorning their patio with floor lamps from a discount retailer or installing full-blown entertainment areas complete with fireplaces, plush seating and sound systems,” says McCoy. “Living large outdoors is a luxury everyone is embracing.”

Escape Gardens Are In. Everyday Gardens Are Out. Time-starved consumers balancing work, family and leisure time are hungry to feed their need for escapism. Homeowners want creative ways to make their backyards personalized sanctuaries so it’s no surprise people are borrowing ideas from their favorite vacation destinations. Thanks to advances in plant breeding, flowers and shrubs not typically inclined to do well in certain hardiness zones are being successfully grown around the country. Look for breakthroughs like the Bahama Bay™ Hibiscus collection (www.bahamabay-hibiscus.com) with 12 different colors that bloom from spring through fall. New plant collections like these are revolutionizing the way homeowners defy garden reality in their own backyards.

Streamlined Gardens Are In. Shabby Chic Gardens Are Out. As we continue to simplify our lives, consumers are opting for sleek but approachable contemporary designs. Savvy homeowners are turning in their former shabby-chic styles for more sophisticated, structured looks. Eric Liskey of *Better Homes & Garden* magazine, says the desire for well-defined design is extending outdoors and changing garden design. “Gardens with strong architecture are in,” says Liskey. “Bold lines, well-defined angles and colorful foliage are becoming very stylish,” adds Liskey. “You’ll see mass planting of Phormium in borders and hanging baskets filled with brightly-hued coleus.” Peter Cilio, Director of Design and Production at Campania International, says its Pacifica collection of sleek, glazed containers brings the sophisticated, modern look full circle.

Eco-Chic Gardens are In. Chemical Needy Gardens Are Out. Eco-Chic gardens top the charts as one of the hottest trends for 2007. Gardeners looking for products with environmentally sustainable ingredients can find an array of new garden goods that are great for their plants, but still good for the planet. From certified-organic deer repellent called Deer Stopper (www.messinawildlife.com) to LazyMan, a liquid soil amendment (www.lazymangardener.com) which naturally improves the health of soil to promote happier plants and greener lawns to Zeba (www.zeba.com), a biodegradable cornstarch based product that absorbs and stores 300-400 times its weight in water releasing 95% back to the plants when they need it the most, the possibilities are endless.

Small Space Gardens Are In. Colossal Landscapes Are Out. As lot sizes shrink and people downsize their homes, consumers are gardening more in less space. According to Raymond Evison, (www.evisoncllematis.com) the leading breeder of clematis in the world, dwarf-sized annuals, perennials and shrubs are now specifically bred for small spaces. 'Baby Wing' begonias, Sunblaze roses and Patio Clematis are all proportionate to the size of small gardens. Container gardeners on the east coast can expect to find a brand new organic potting soil turning up on their garden center shelves this spring. Organic Mechanics, (www.organicmechanicsoil.com) is an all-purpose, peat-free, organic potting soil promises to improve plant performance.

Larger than Life Accents Are In. Peek-a-Boo Accessories Are Out. Garden trendsetters agree the larger-than-life look will dominate the garden this season. Because of the movement towards simplification, designers are creating the same amount of impact with larger plants and garden accessories rather than integrating several smaller-scaled elements into the design. "Gardeners are thinking big this season, growing super-sized plants like agaves, conifers and cannas," says Doug Jimerson of *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine. "From extra-large perennials to gigantic-sized pots, this season, bigger is better."

Foliage in Focus Is In. Flowers Only Are Out. For that boom without bloom look, chic gardeners are using colorful foliage plants to add wow-color in their landscapes and spice up containers. A wide range of new color options and sizes make gardening with foliage more versatile than ever before. This season look for lots of elephant ears, ornamental grasses and iresine. Simply Beautiful™ (www.simplybeautifulgardens.com) will introduce 'Live Wire' Isolepis cernua, with funky exploding leaf blades and 'Rose' Iresine, with its iridescent ruby pink leaves and stems that seem to glow in the sunlight. Perfect for sun or shade.

Multi-tasking Gardens Are In. Time Consuming Gardens Are Out. "The need to multi-task is so great homeowners now want to multi-task in the garden," says Ethne Clarke, garden editor at Traditional Home magazine. Great new plants and products, like Dynamite (www.dynamiteplantfood.com), a slow release plant food that feeds plants macro and micro nutrients for up to a whole 9 months, makes gardening easier for those short on time. Plants that work inside and out will also be hot this season. New from Simply Beautiful™ is Maracas 'Brazilian Fireworks,' a heat loving tropical shade plant with funky purple and red flowers. It works great in the garden or as a houseplant.

Fancy Plants Are In. Basic Plants Are Out. Joe Gray, plant expert with Hines Horticulture (www.hineshort.com), says that the new trend towards luxury plants is on the rise. "This trend seems to be following in the vein of collecting top-tier wine or luxury cars," says Gray. Gardeners are using luxury plants like the 'Summer Chocolate' Mimosa to create their own paradise unlike the garden next door.

Masses of Any Color Are In. Colorless Masses Are Out. Mass plantings of evergreen shrubs are being replaced with hydrangeas, landscape roses and other flowering shrubs offering loads of color and interest every season. Knock Out® shrub roses, for example, have become a landscape work horse, showing nonstop color from spring through fall with no maintenance. “But we are going way beyond the obvious,” says Steve Hutton, president of The Conard-Pyle Co. “We are seeing plants, such as the new Drift® series of shrub roses, planted in containers and then placed in a sea of Drift in the landscape. A mass of vertical and horizontal color is created, which is very interesting.” The new Easy Wave Beachcomber creates a stunning display of blue, coral and shell pink masses. Plant in baskets and borders, or use for a full carpet of color, like an Oriental rug.

24-Hour Gardens Are In. Day Only Gardens Are Out. With outdoor living booming, we are spending more time than ever before in our backyards. Even when the sun goes down, the party stays put -- outside. “Outdoor spaces are now aesthetically pleasing and comfortable for both day and night,” says Joseph Cilio, president of Alfresco Home. Distinctive All-Weather Wicker and Deep Seating furnishings, like those from AlfrescoHome.com, can transform your backyard into a stylish outdoor space perfect for entertaining friends or just relaxing with a good book. From outdoor floor lamps to plants that glow in the moonlight, outdoor rooms provide 24 hours of comfort and enjoyment.

Resources

Alfresco Home www.alfrescohome.com

Ball Horticultural Company www.ballhort.com

Campania International www.campaniainternational.com

Conard-Pyle Co. www.starroses.com or www.starplants.com

Deer Stopper www.messinawildlife.com

Dynamite www.dynamiteplantfood.com

Garden Media Group www.gardenmediagroup.com

Hines Horticulture www.hineshort.com

LazyMan www.lazymangardener.com

Organic Mechanics www.organicmechanicsoil.com

Raymond Evison Clematis Collection www.evisonclematis.com

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