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Top 2011 Garden Trends: Gardening with a Purpose

Philadelphia— Put your garden gloves on and join the fun because ‘*gardening with a purpose*’ is taking root.

The purpose may be to grow your own food or create urban ‘green’ sanctuaries, but planting for a greener good is changing neighborhoods and communities - one garden at a time.

Big city mayors like New York City’s Mayor Michael Bloomberg are promoting gardening programs in schools, connecting students with nature, growing food, and ‘greening’ their urban communities.

Garden and outdoor living expert Susan McCoy agrees. “We had trouble wrapping our heads around saving the rain forests,” she says, “but we clearly can wrap our arms around saving our own backyards. Digging and planting gardens brings awareness that we’re *all* earth’s caretakers.”

Since last year, according to the latest [GWA Garden Trends Research Report](#), half of those surveyed said they have gardens in their backyard, while more than one-quarter have gardens in their front yard.

With vegetable gardening up almost 20 percent and community gardens up 60 percent over last year, growing food for the table is certainly on the rise along with gardening with native plants, says McCoy, president of the [Garden Media Group](#).

As backyard conservationists, gardeners are transforming yards, gardens, rooftops and even urban alleys into green and productive spaces, knowing they are making a positive impact.

Here’s a look at top emerging garden trends that McCoy and her team are seeing for 2011:

1. **Gardening with a Purpose**
2. **Eco-scaping**
3. **Edible Ornaments**
4. **Sustainable Containers**

5. Succulents
6. Indoor Gardening
7. Growing Up
8. Urban Farming
9. New Urbanism

Gardening with a Purpose

In the wake of the shocking Gulf coast images of oil-sheen waves and coated wetlands and wildlife, we're taking measures to protect and conserve valuable natural resources.

This trend is echoed by Patricia St. John, president of the [Association of Professional Landscape Designers](#), that “gardens continue to reflect awareness of how our landscapes enhance and improve the environment around us.”

There's no disputing that we all need to work together to rejuvenate, regenerate and restore Mother Earth. Choosing eco-friendly products over toxic chemicals is a proactive step to making our world cleaner and greener.

Since healthy plants start with healthy soil, people are looking for sustainable and organic soils like OMRI-Listed compost-based premium blend potting soil from [Organic Mechanics® Soil Company](#). This all-purpose premier blend is good for all your plants and good for the earth!

According to the recent National Gardening Association's Lawn & Garden Survey, 9 out of 10 households want to manage their lawns and gardens in an environmentally-friendly way.

Consumers are turning to all-natural repellents to keep unwanted pests from mowing down lawns and valuable plants. Eco-friendly repellents keep garden foes away and are guaranteed effective and safe for people, plants and pets.



Eco-Scaping

Terms like “sustainable” and “biodiversity” were seldom heard a decade ago, but today are part of our lexicon. The move to de-lawn large tracks of turf and transform lawns into sustainable landscapes is achievable with the right plants for the right spot that use less water and pesticides.



Beautiful native plants from the [American Beauties Native Plants®](#) collection are low-maintenance and attract wildlife and beneficial pollinators like butterflies, bees and birds. Natives like Solidago ‘Solar Cascade,’ exclusively available from North Creek Nurseries, are

part of the American Beauties Native Plants Family. Proceeds from the collection benefit the [National Wildlife Federation's Certified Wildlife Habitat™](#) program.

Edible Ornamentals

Go ahead and mix it up! Berries next to tomatoes and azaleas under grapevines may sound odd but not to the professional landscape designers of APLD.

“We’re seeing rising consumer interest in edibles: small fruit bearing shrubs like berries and smaller trees,” says Doug Jimerson, executive director of the Better Homes & Gardens content core for Garden and Outdoor Living.

Fresh berries like raspberries and blueberries you can pick right from home are spiking in popularity. Blueberries offer four seasons of color and juicy berries rich in antioxidants.



According to a recent survey by the Garden Writers Association, about 16 percent more American households planned to add a veggie garden and an additional 12 percent planned on adding an herb garden. Why? More than three-fourths of respondents felt veggies are less expensive with better taste, quality and nutrition.

Sustainable containers

Annual flower sales were down almost 20 percent this year. It appears gardeners see them as “luxuries” they can replace with long-blooming perennials and every-blooming shrubs like Knock Out® Roses. They deliver all-season color without the high maintenance.

For small space gardens, growing food in containers makes sense. Containers brimming with fragrant herbs like basil, rosemary or thyme are attractive and aromatic additions for indoors and outdoors. Blended containers with herbs and veggies provide a one-two combo that can’t be beat for freshness and convenience.

Containers with abundant re-blooming daylilies, roses and ornamental grasses beautify spaces and benefit the environment.

Succulents

Dry gardening with less water is bubbling across the nation. From college dorm rooms to home gardens, succulents are a perfect choice! These easy sustainable plants produce showy flowers along with thick, fleshy foliage that stores water like a camel’s hump!



Drought-tolerant and able to thrive in a variety of conditions, succulents are perfect for small gardens and large landscapes. Get ideas from [Costa Farms](#) on varieties that you can mix with perennials, containers, or in roof gardens.

Indoor Gardening

Extend nature's influence by bringing the outdoors in with houseplants. From "steampunk" Victorian hipster décor rocking among young urbanites to upscale suburban homes, orchids, ferns and palms are now wildly popular.

Chic and easy to grow, orchids are graceful additions to any room. Plus these hard-working beauties clean indoor air from volatile organic compounds and provide oxygen.

Phalaenopsis (moth) orchids as well as other varieties from Costa Farms are perfect choices for easy growing, colorful and exotic plants that look as comfortable in 21st century homes as they did in Victorian days.

To learn more about the health benefits of indoor houseplants check out www.o2foryou.org.



Growing Up with Vertical Gardening

"Vertical gardens are becoming increasingly popular and will grow far beyond anything we can envision," says Joe Zazzera, with Plant Solutions, Inc. and Green Plants for Green Buildings (GPGB.org).



"Businesses are seeing the productivity, environmental quality and return on investment that indoor plantings and vertical living walls are bringing to their projects."

From vines and veggies growing up from containers to vertical walls blooming with edibles, plants are growing up.

"Climbing plants are a largely untapped resource for today's gardeners," says Dr. Allan Armitage, horticulturist. "They can be used to provide privacy, screen eye-sores, and draw the eye upward to create the illusion of space."

Urban Farming & CSA's

In step with the move to reinvigorate communities with gardens, urban farming and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms are springing up. Urban farming 'micro-farms' are converting small spaces in blighted areas into thriving farms that produce fresh produce for inner city communities.

CSA's provide fresh produce and companionship with full waiting lists. Even garden centers are getting into the act and offering community gardens to learn about varieties and "how-to" maintain plants and share experiences.

According to the Slow Food Movement, farmer's markets and CSA's are up a whopping 60 percent.

Like minded young gen Y's are joining together to plant specific herbs, exotic spices, small fruits and haute couture veggies that enhance cooking and sharing their edibles with the "tribe." It's a modern version of the "pot-luck" dinner that allows people to connect over the food they grow and eat, creating a unique bonding experience that in today's techno world feeds the soul- as well as the belly.

New Urbanism

Sustainable urban communities offering convenient and enjoyable places to enjoy an urban lifestyle are rising in popularity.

Rest-stop parklets replicating European traditions of outdoor plazas for sunning and socializing are popping up throughout cities and small towns where believe it or not- loitering is encouraged!

These new "parklets" convert concrete parking stalls along a block for relaxation, eating and enjoying green spaces with flowering shrubs, trees and paths.

Central to New Urbanism is commitment to the environment and connecting neighborhoods.

Planting water wise plants, collecting rainwater, walkable streets, diversity of shops, homes and apartments with less turf and more plants encourages better stewardship of our earth and reconnects us as fellow stewards of our resources and our communities.

For a complete look at the GMG 2011 Garden Trends visit:

www.gardenmediagroup.com

Resources:

American Beauties, LLC. www.abnativeplants.com

Association of Professional Landscape Designers www.apld.com

Costa Farms www.costafarms.com

Garden Media Group www.gardenmediagroup.com

Green Plants for Green Buildings www.greenplantsforgreenbuildings.org

O2 For You: Houseplants with a Purpose www.o2foryou.org

Organic Mechanics Soil Company www.organicmechanicsoil.com