

Top 7 2018 Landscape Trends



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By 2030, the World Health Organization predicts anxiety will be the No. 1 health issue, outranking obesity, according to Garden Media Group's Katie Dubow. In fact, analysts report that the global wellness economy – wellness tourism and real estate, the spa industry and workplace wellness – reached \$3.7 trillion in 2016 and is expected to grow 17 percent over five years. Generation Y is suffering the most – 81 percent of 13- to 34-year-olds are making mental health a priority and want new ways to balance physical and mental wellness and clear their heads, according to research from Ypulse.

"Wellness is no longer just about being healthy," Dubow says. "It goes deeper, embracing positivity, relaxation and self-care. A happy mind leads to a happy body."

Being in and around nature and around water shifts our brain toward hope and compassion and away from stress and anger, says Wallace J. Nichols, an evolutionary ecologist and research associate at the California Academy of Sciences.

In revealing Garden Media Group's top seven trends for 2018, Dubow says, "Being surrounded by air purifying plants, finding a quiet place to meditate or eating a plant-based diet are all reflections of wellness trends that have become status symbols for people who make health a priority."



1. Make a splash.

"Water, it's not just a small 'sound' feature. Everyone seems to be going for big pools. There are a lot of reflective qualities, and that's what people are looking for," says award-winning garden designer Alan Rudden. Recent garden shows featured elements of water, from smooth-sided stepped plunge pools and spiral metal chutes to more subtle water features in black stone dishes.

Rainscapes were trending at the North Carolina Green Industry Water Symposium 2017. Capturing rainwater where it falls and soaking it in recharges local groundwater and saves water. The trend by some utilities to pay homeowners to save water is taking root. For instance, Montgomery County provides up to \$2,500 per garden to motivate homeowners to recycle rainwater.

“Wonders of the Water,” the theme of the 2018 Philadelphia Flower Show, reflects the same message of humans impact on water and waters impact on humans. From tree canopies to ground covers, slowing water down, filtering it with plants and creating areas to capture water before it hits the ground is essential to healthy water management, says Sam Lemheney, chief of shows and events at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.



2. Climate controlled.

Sixteen of the last 17 years have been the warmest on record, so it's no surprise that unpredictable climate conditions are challenging the way people landscape. And drought isn't the only concern. Intense rain storms, floods, hail, tornadoes, heat waves, mild winters and wildfires are stressing ecosystems.

“To reduce worry and work, gardeners are looking for resilient, weather-hardy plants that stand up to extreme weather conditions,” Dubow says, sharing four climate controlled landscape types.

1. Gone with the wind. High winds break and uproot plants, increase water loss and spread disease. Wind-resistant gardens include plants with flexible stems and small, narrow leaves such as native grasses, evergreen trees, lavender, yarrow and stonecrop. Plant trees and shrubs as wind blocks, add small retaining walls and an extra mulch layer.

2. Gardens that rock. Dry, arid conditions create hot and thirsty plants with wilted or scorched leaves. Desert gardens include drought and salt-tolerant plants, such as date palm, euphorbia, fennel, irises and poppies. Plant tall plants for shade, such as acacia, mesquite and desert willow. Cacti and succulents are slow growing and provide native focus in the landscape.

3. Don't get bogged down. Excessive rain saturates soil, suffocates roots, breaks plants and attracts pests. Rain gardens include water-resistant natives, such as black chokeberry, meadowsweet shrubs, Joe-Pye weed, Colorado blue spruce, bayberry, ferns and winterberry. Improve drainage by using absorbent soils and pervious surfaces, edging puddles and creating paths through low-lying areas with sand or stones.

4. Ice, ice baby. Freezing can cause branches to break and limit water to roots. Frost may cause leaves to appear water-soaked, shriveled, or brown or black, but plants may still be saved. Freeze-proof gardens include cold hardy trees, such as Douglas fir, spruce, birch and maples as well as hellebores, sedge and hostas. Add a blanket of mulch, compost and leaves to protect roots. Gently shake snow-laden plants and avoid using salt near garden beds.



3. Social network.

The big shift in horticulture will be from thinking about plants as individuals to communities of interrelated species, explains Thomas Rainer, landscape architect.

“Instead of seeing plants as objects in a sea of mulch, think of gardens as social networks,” Dubow says. “Walk through a forest and you’ll see that every square inch of soil is covered with a mosaic of interlocking plants.”

This changes how people manage gardens, focusing on management instead of maintenance. “When you plant in communities, you manage the entire planting, not each individual plant,” Dubow says.

Plants in combinations “solve challenges that many of us have: beds that aren’t quite working visually and garden areas that don’t function without lots of maintenance,” adds Margaret Roach in a recent New York Times article.



4. Imperfect gardening.

Wabi-Sabi is an ancient Japanese practice that appreciates imperfections in life and the ability to age gracefully. Wabi-sabi gardens imitate nature in a way that allows one to relax and appreciate their humble and imperfect forms.

People are creating imperfect gardens with natural, sustainable and locally sourced organic materials, according to designer Julie Blakeslee at Big Red Sun.

Homeowners are also turning to quality, natural materials, such as metal, stone or wood, over plastic, HGTV reports.

“Repurpose objects such as old iron gates or gardening tools that will change over time and weather with the seasons,” Dubow suggests.



5. Breathing room.

The stress of being connected 24/7 is resulting in a craving for quiet. Since plants naturally help clean the air and bring peace. As a result, people are creating breathing spaces, using plants that clean the air and clear the mind. These spaces enable people to connect with nature and create a small oasis in today’s fast-paced society.

6. Grow your own protein.

Livestock uses more environmental resources to feed, grow and harvest than non-animal based proteins. As a result, yearly consumption per person has fallen 15 percent since 2006.

Where isn't the beef? Plant-based foods. They require less land, water, fuel and other resources to grow, making them more eco-friendly than their animal-based counterparts.

Plant eaters are the new consumers. People are incorporating more high-protein foods into their landscaping, particularly edamame, peas, quinoa, broccoli, corn, asparagus, spinach, kale, millet and sunflower seeds.



7. Purple reign.

According to Whole Food's annual trend advisory, "richly colored purple foods are popping up everywhere: purple cauliflower, black rice, purple asparagus, elderberries, acai, purple sweet potatoes, purple corn and cereal will be favorites among customers."

In fact, the USDA calls purple the new color of health. Purple antioxidants, or anthocyanins, help fight cancer, have anti-aging benefits, reduce obesity and protect the heart. Many consumers are requesting pops of purple herbs and veggies in their landscape beds. Purple is showing up in borders and pots with lavender, catmint and rosemary. Ornamental shrubs are being replaced with thornless blueberry and blackberry plants. Eleven purple foods more consumers are incorporating into their landscapes include acai berries, beets, black raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, goji berries, eggplant, plums, purple cabbage, purple carrots and purple sweet potatoes.