



2019 Landscaping Trends: Horticulture Gets Hip (And Greener)

A blending of the indoors and outdoors, more sustainable practices and smaller-scale planting dominate the list.

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02/25/2019

During the depths of winter, it's natural for our minds to turn to dreams of lush landscapes and sprawling greenery. Maybe you've decided that 2019 will be the year you finally plant those shade-promoting trees at the edge of your yard, or the year you finally spring for that outdoor fire pit (hello, s'mores.) ESTATENVY spoke with Thomas Soulsby, Senior Horticulturist at the [Chicago Botanic Garden](#), along with Rachael Williams, an account manager and horticulturist at Chicagoland landscape company [James Martin Associates](#). Here's what you can expect to see in the world of landscaping in 2019. A focus on good management practices "Some of the trends that we had in 2018 included heightened awareness of pollinators, bees and butterflies," said Williams. "That means more rain gardens and rainwater management, permeable pavers, and so on. There was more interest in managing our resources and insect population in 2018. I hope that those continue, because I

think that they're good management practices.” Along Chicago’s North Shore neighborhoods, Williams noted, water management has become exceedingly important as urban and residential development replaces topsoil. In reference to both one’s own home and that of one’s neighbors, “runoff can overwhelm sewer systems and cause flooding,” Williams explained. Flooding can cause costly repairs and hurts property value, but owners can stay on top of this by investing in water management. Tech comes to the outdoors In the age of streaming services and take-anywhere devices, it’s no wonder that wifi has migrated to the Great Outdoors. “We’re starting to see it in irrigation systems, which we’d encourage,” Williams said. “[With a wifi system] you can monitor your irrigation system anywhere, and pay attention to the weather so you know what should and shouldn’t be watered, how much, and so on. So being able to monitor [your yard] remotely is a great opportunity that’s available now.” Williams also noted an increase in “televisions and radio” coming into the backyard. “I think a lot of young people are driving that shift. Many may have started out in the city, then wanted to move outside once they started a family. Wifi has always been such a part of their life that they bring it into residential areas, so that’s been a trend we’ve seen,” Williams explained.

Blurring the divide between indoors and outdoors Both Williams and Soulsby spoke to the trend of bringing the outdoors inside, and vice versa. “I’m seeing more outdoor kitchens, outdoor privacy spots,” Williams said. “If you’re in an urban area and trying to turn it more into a private oasis, adding plants-based screening or evergreen shrubbery is something that’s been trending and still going.” Williams also spoke to the growing prevalence of outdoor entertainment, including mounted TVs, fire pits and so on. “People are putting in bigger hardscapes like patio spaces and less lawn,” said Williams. Soulsby noted the statement-making appeal to plants and said that “tropicals and large foliage plants” seem to be taking center stage indoors, “much like a living piece of art.” He echoed Williams’ point on outdoor privacy spaces, saying: “Homeowners are increasingly re-creating comfortable ‘rooms’ as a component of their outdoor landscape. Quiet, relaxing outdoor spaces that feel like your living room are an example.” The outdoors has also commingled with the typically “domestic” or indoors in another way: plants have become lifestyle emblems. “I also see plants becoming the nexus of people’s social and entertainment world,” Soulsby said. “Plants as personal party gifts, plants as a component of a commercial social gathering, plants as a gateway to volunteerism and community engagement, you name it—plants may not be the primary reason for an event to happen, but plants are certainly a dominant underlying connection with all of those events.” Eye-catching plants with low-maintenance care Both indoors and out, Soulsby noted, younger gardeners tend to flock toward “all forms of succulent plants” such as aloe, sedum, cacti and the like. “Homeowners, and plant growers in general, have great interest in plants that are smaller, more compact, and easy to grow,” Soulsby said. “The need for instant gratification; the desire for a beautiful landscape with limited time and smaller budgets; and smaller overall growing space (think balconies and small yards) really drive that trend.” Within the context of seasonal planting design, Soulsby said he sees bold foliage and tropical plants trending, as well as the continued popularity of edible and vegetable gardening, albeit increasingly in “new, more compact, and more small-garden-appropriate” varieties: “Things like balcony-sized tomato plants, single-serving-sized sweet peppers, and indoor-appropriate sunflowers and herbs,” for example, to fill the demand for smaller, more efficient flora. And if you’re thinking of bringing some living splashes of color to your balcony or yard: “Living Coral, the Pantone color of the year, will certainly influence interest in vibrant plant/flower colors throughout the year. A more neutral color, mint, seems to be trending going into 2020,”

Soulsby said. Greater interest in more natural, sustainable growing and living Williams pointed out a trend toward the use of fewer chemicals for landscaping and maintenance purposes as we move into 2019. “There’s less of an interest in having a perfect-looking lawn or landscape and more tolerance about pest control,” Williams said. “Children and pets are the biggest concern, and there’s more awareness about chemical use today.” As more of the millennial generation transition into buying homes and taking up lawn care, Williams said she has seen an embracing of alternatives to chemicals that kill fewer insects and promote a healthier, more sustainable way of living. “It’s exciting to see how we can help consumers with their desire to reconnect with nature,” Soulsby said. “Gardening can be intimidating to many. I can't tell you how many times I have heard someone say ‘I don't have a green thumb!’ My goal is to help them be successful with plants. With the wide variety of plants and plant solutions available on the market today, I think there is truly something for everybody. All we need to do is to get them to be successful with just one easy plant—and once we do that, most people are hooked for life!”