



TRENDS in EDIBLES for 2019



The veggie market continues to grow at the consumer level. Can you keep up and capitalize on these opportunities?

BY DIANE BLAZEK

Trends. You might love them, you might hate them. But following trends is so important in the horticulture business. The public is fickle. Lifestyles change. Discoveries and innovations happen. So what is a good businessperson to do? Follow the trends in hopes that they bring new business opportunities!

As the executive director of All-America Selections and National

Garden Bureau, my office is the first to see new breeding trends, in the form of trial entries and new varieties, from breeders across the world. We also identify and promote horticulture-related trends on our social media streams. Today we'll focus on food and dining trends we're observing and how a grower or retailer might be able to take advantage of those trends.



- 1. Vegetables grown hydroponically.** While the technology for hydroponic growing has been around for decades, we've seen a recent surge in hydroponic trials and systems for the home gardener. Even Disney is doing some testing and sharing how-to's with their visitors, as seen in the photo on the left taken at the "Behind the Seeds" tour at the Epcot greenhouse in Florida. What are the easiest crops to grow hydroponically? Herbs, salad greens, tomatoes, peppers, beans and cucumbers are great crops to start with.
- 2. Smaller-sized fruits and vegetables.** Smaller family sizes and an increase in small plot and container gardening has led to many edibles being bred in smaller sizes. Supermarkets have certainly jumped on this trend and are now supplying smaller sized peppers, cucumbers and melons. We are seeing what the breeders are doing in this area with our AAS Winners like 'Mini Love' watermelon, 'Cutie Pie' peppers, 'Butterscotch' squash and 'Hijinks' pumpkins.
- 3. Tastes from around the globe.** Our nation is a melting pot, and food from other cultures has been a part of our way of life right from the beginning. As immigration patterns shift and we become more accustomed to a wider palate of tastes, we are seeing a surge in ingredients for dishes from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Israel, various parts of Africa and South America; even Hawaiian dishes are popular and trending (poke bowl anyone?). Ginger, avocado, red and green hot chilies, bitter melon, eggplant, onions, quinoa, and herbs along with more traditional items such as corn, potatoes, okra, tomatoes, peppers and cauliflower will support recipes from a variety of cultural backgrounds.
- 4. Plant proteins.** There has been a dramatic increase in people identifying as vegans in the U.S. in the last three years. According

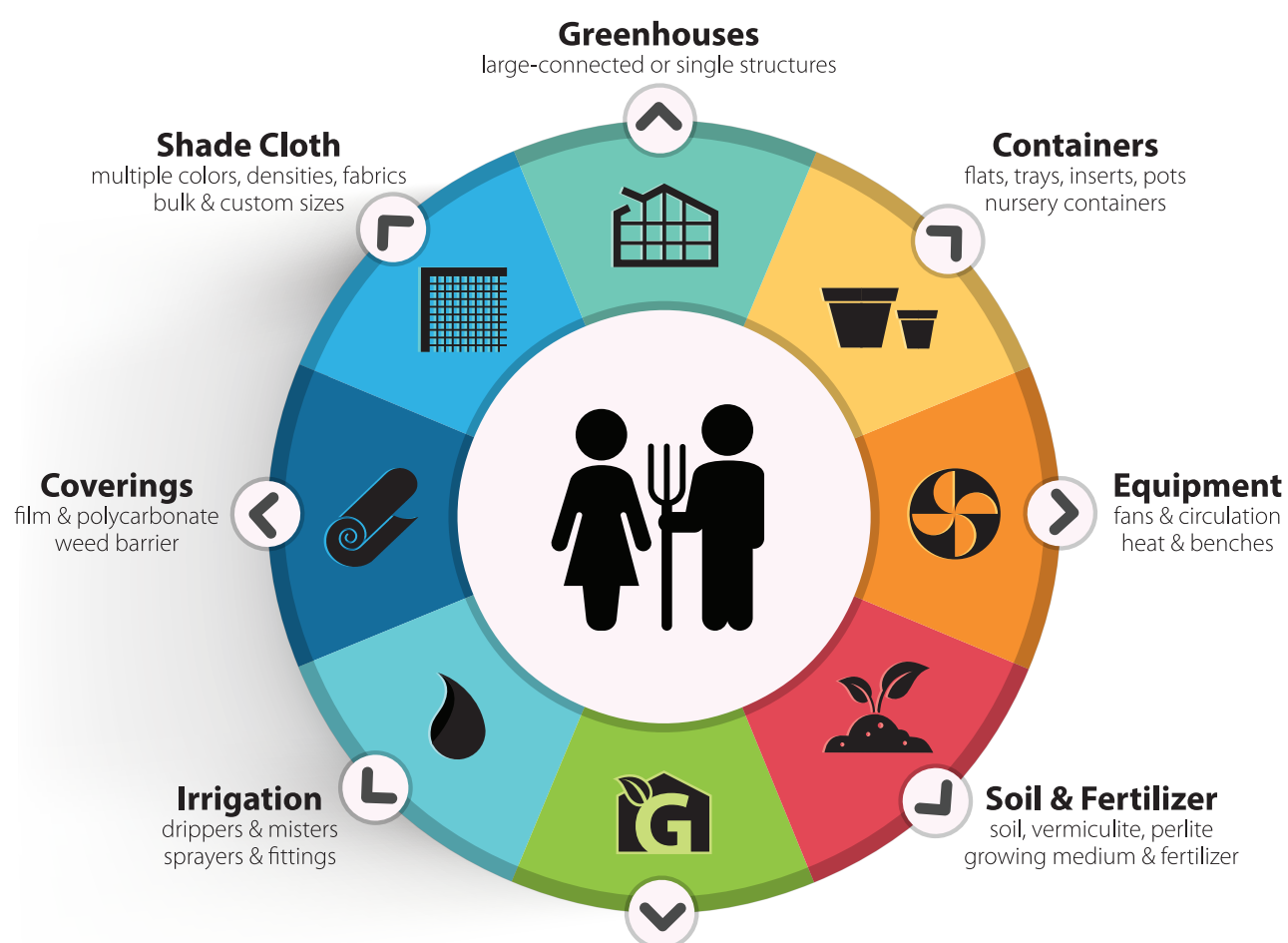
to a report by research firm GlobalData, only 1 percent of U.S. consumers claimed to be vegan in 2014; in 2017 that number rose to 6 percent. Key items to have on hand for this growing group, in addition to all vegetables,

are: beans, peas, shoots, grains and vegetables that can be served as "steaks" like cabbage, eggplant, cauliflower, etc.

- 5. Gut-friendly eating.** Gut health is a growing trend bringing an increased

demand for gut-friendly, fermentable foods like cabbage, cucumbers, onions and garlic, as well as fruits that are used in kombucha such as berries, melons, peaches and citrus. Speaking of kombucha, another

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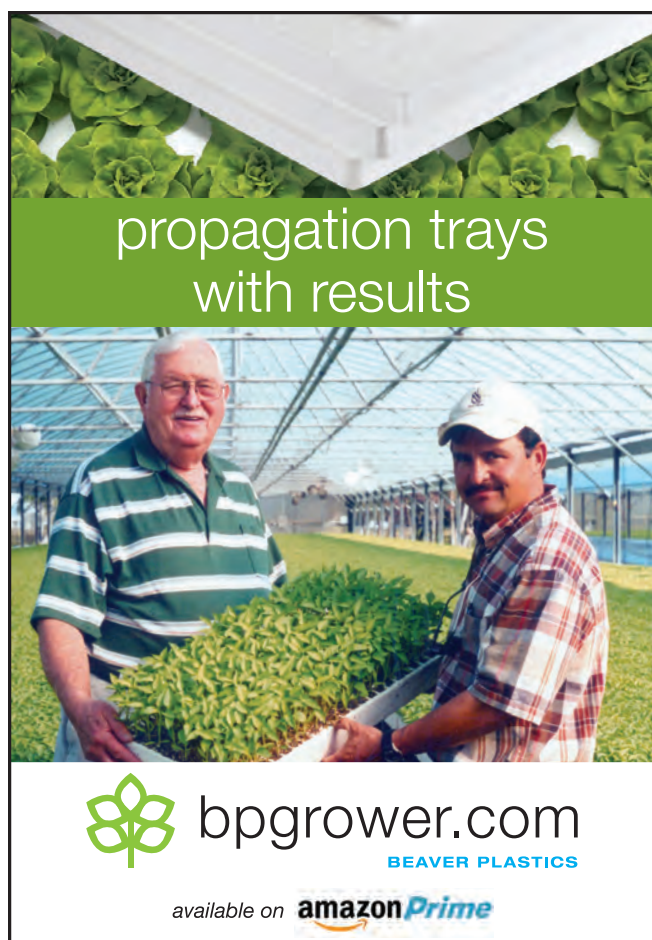
popular trend is non-alcoholic specialty drinks, especially ones with a health claim. A nice cold, fizzy glass of ginger kombucha is a great substitute when alcohol is not desired.

6. **Instagram-worthy foods.** Colorful foods may or may not include PPG Paints' Color of the Year for 2019, which is "Night Watch," a deep teal green. According to the brand, the luxe shade, selected by its board of global color experts, "allows homeowners to emulate the feeling of lush greenery and the healing power of nature in their spaces." That's great that we again have a green color of the year but also consider how the food photographs for Instagram. Yes, believe it or not, how well a food photographs for Instagram can cause a food to trend on social media. We are seeing it with multi-hued tomatoes like the Chef's Choice series, the unique lavender radish 'Sweet Baby', indigo tomato 'Midnight Snack' and the aptly named 'Bright Lights' Swiss chard.
7. **Transparency and a story.** Today's consumer wants suppliers to show and talk about their production or growing process. Explain the origins of what you are growing and how you are respecting the earth. Locally grown and sustainable still has value. Use tag and label space to share the unique stories behind products, especially if they include examples of social responsibility. Use your social media presence to share the growing experience. We recently shared a video showing the automation process of herb growing in the Netherlands. We were pleasantly surprised to see the extraordinary interest in that one short video. Explain how and where it was grown to make your products stand out from the rest.
8. **Flaws are beautiful.** Have you heard about Imperfect Produce, the produce delivery company taking advantage of produce that isn't "perfect?" Don't underestimate how you can market some of your less than perfect items.
9. **Tea.** This trend may also link back to some of the above mentioned trends, but tea is here to stay. It's the types of teas and where they're served that are multiplying now. Herbal teas are growing, so

having a good stock of herbs and information on how to prepare them for tea is key.

10. **Unicorns ...** well, no trend article can be complete without a mention of unicorns! We're not sure how unicorns relate to vegetables but we know Amazon has catered to this rainbow-color demand by selling "multi-colored" tomatoes and other so-called PhotoShop-colored vegetables. This is not good for our industry, so let's just not go there ... sometimes it's good to not follow a trend. [gpn](#)

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