

# WHAT CONSUMERS SEE

## in their Gardens of the Future



*As the National Garden Bureau celebrates its 100th anniversary, the organization surveyed consumers to gain insight into current gardening trends. Here is what they had to say.*

**BY DIANE BLAZEK**

Just like fashion, trends in gardening come and go — and sometimes come back again. Some shifts in gardening were inspired by necessity, like the Victory Gardens when consumers grew their own food during the rationing that the war years brought. Others reflected societal changes, like the green lawns of the 1950s and 1960s, when families spent more time playing and entertaining in their yards.

Today's interest in sustainable gardens offering a home for pollinators is not too different from the desire for birdwatching and natural gardens of 100 years ago.

So what will the gardens of the future look like?

A survey done by the National Garden Bureau (NGB) — which is celebrating its 100th anniversary — found fascinating trends among today's gardeners and what their visions are for future gardens, which may provide some interesting insights for your businesses.

### **GROW TO EAT**

In the survey, more than half (57%) of those aged 35 and under said they're using their green space to grow their own food. That interest was echoed by respondents over 35, with 65% of them saying they planned to turn their future gardens into more of a food source. (Note: this survey was done in fall 2019, before any of us had even heard of the coronavirus or COVID-19.)

Many expressed interest in growing their own herbs in their home kitchens, with over 65% of those 35 and under sharing a desire to grow herbs indoors in the future.

**Take home:** No matter which demographic you serve, be on the forefront by offering herbs, fruits, vegetables and other edible plants. As consumers' tastes and experiences change, they might be interested in the more unique items they can't get in their local supermarket. Staying in tune with cooking shows, YouTube trends and celebrity chefs will help you stay up on trends that are happening now or coming down the pike.

### **MIXED-USE GARDENS**

Gardens past and present have served multiple purposes, and gardening with a variety of plants allows you to enjoy your space and take in the outdoors to your liking. Over 67% of respondents 35 and under shared that, while they want some green lawn, they also want the rest of their yard to be planted with a wide variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, fruits, herbs and vegetables.

What does that mean for gardens of the future? They'll likely offer more variety, from the ornamental to the edible. And over 60% of gardeners of all ages want to grow pollinator-friendly plants and flowers.

**Take home:** National Garden Bureau continues to preach about the importance of pollinators and providing plants for them so they pollinate

the vegetables for you! So, it's a combination sale: vegetables and the pollinator plants to go with them. This means the need for on-staff or on-site garden coaches will continue to "grow" as we attract more and more new gardeners to our beloved hobby. We do want them to be successful so they come back for more!

**BEAUTY FOR DWELLINGS**

We in the industry know what a nice landscape can bring to a home's value. It seems like, as the population ages, they too place more importance on adding beauty to their homes.

When asked about the top reasons why they buy plants, those under the age of 35 buy them for their food value, with beauty being the second reason. Those over 35 said they buy them for the beauty they bring, with food value being the second reason.

**Take home:** There is certainly an opportunity for providing more plants that offer both beauty and food. There is a term being used called "Ornamedibles" and that might be a fun promotional and/or educational opportunity. Show how something like oak leaf lettuce or Swiss Chard can be used mixed in with annual or perennial ornamentals. Or offer elegant containers for a front yard that mix annuals and herbs.

**VICTORY GARDEN 2.0**

When the "Victory Garden Manual" was written in 1943 (by NGB founder James H. Burdett), reasons to grow your own vegetables were obvious — it was wartime and food was scarce. Statistics show that in 1943, nearly 40% of all fruits and vegetables grown in the U.S. were grown in home and community Victory Gardens.

As NGB celebrates its 100th anniversary, part of the celebration includes the reintroduction of victory gardening with quick and easy steps to plan and grow your own vegetable garden. Dubbed "Victory Garden 2.0" this blog and social media series interprets key gardening tips from the 1940s for today's new and amateur gardeners.

**Take home:** Look to Instagram hashtags to stay on top of trends and look to programs like those that National Garden Bureau and other non-profit organizations offer to let us do the work for you! No need to reinvent the wheel.

**GARDENERS OF THE FUTURE**

It may seem like younger people are somewhat less active gardeners currently, as 11% of the survey respondents under 35 said they've never gotten their hands dirty — as compared with only 4% of those over the age of 35. Commonly it was lack of time and space as their two biggest hurdles to gardening.

But many younger gardener wannabes hope to graduate from growing just houseplants and succulents indoors to becoming gardeners in the future: 58% said they plan to graduate to growing flowers and

Maybe so, but it can also be a great source of inspiration for future gardeners. While gardeners over 35 look to magazines, books and garden retailers for ideas, those under 35 largely browse Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube for information and tips about developing their green thumbs. However, both groups talk to friends and family for ideas and inspiration about what — and how — to grow.

**Take home:** Why not provide a way for the two groups to meet up and learn? Pair up newbie gardeners with your best customers who have experience to share so the newbies have their own local mentor. After all this social separation, we're willing to bet that people will crave community and human interaction.

What do you think the garden of the future will look like? Stay tuned as NGB presents more results from this survey as we cross-reference consumer results with those from industry participants.

For more information, tips, blogs and lots of inspiring gardening ideas, visit [ngb.org](http://ngb.org). [gpn](#)

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over 65% said they plan to grow fruits and vegetables in the future.

**Take home:** Offering new gardeners a series of classes or products that easily take them from "indoor succulent" to "outdoor osteopermum" (sounds impressive, right?!) might take the fear out of making that leap.

**WHERE THEY GO FOR INSPIRATION**

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