




# Consumers turn to what's green



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## SUSTAINABLE LIVING, STAYING AT HOME AND GROWING YOUR OWN FOOD ARE AMONG THE HOT TRENDS FOR 2009

*By Elizabeth Petersen*

Looking for a bright spot in the economic gloom? Horticulture professionals may be lucky in 2009.

According to Susan McCoy, president of Garden Media Group (GMG), "Gardening is popular again, particularly among younger homeowners, who want to simplify their lives while gardening for the greener good."

A marketing firm that tracks consumer gardening, GMG reported in 2008: "The urgent commitment to environmental sustainability and the basic desire to make our homes our havens is reflected in all gardening trends next year."

Gardeners want to grow food, create retreats at home, and nurture nature. GMG calls the trend "eco-boosting."

Consumers are cutting down on "conspicuous consumption," while boosting efforts to save the planet.

At West Coast spring shows, gardeners will find practical ideas for ways to stay home and invest in their own outdoor spaces. "Local is the new organic," said McCoy, who expects natives to be "hugely popular."

GMG predicts demand for plants that are easy to care for and build bio-diversity – eco-friendly plants that require minimal input. "Blended" gardens that combine vegetables and herbs in flowerbeds and organic methods will also draw attention.

### **Gearing up at consumer garden shows**

At the 2009 Yard, Garden & Patio Show, presented by Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping and Garden Centers, 10 display gardens will highlight practical ways to go sustainable. Ideas to be presented at the show Feb. 27-March 1 in Portland, Ore., include

Consumer trends this year point towards more people fixing up their yards and growing their own food.

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## ▲ CONSUMER TRENDS



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These signs at Portland Nursery on Division Street, Portland, Ore., illustrate two retail trends — the popularity of edibles, and signs that speak in common rather than scientific terms to reach the most customers.

managing stormwater on site, growing edibles and creating personal retreats in small spaces.

They focus on “realistic and rational possibilities for urban gardens,” said Corey Vetch, manager of residential design and sales for Dennis’ Seven Dees. “Sustainability is about changing the way we think and live,” so Vetch designed his garden as “concepts and visions” that gardeners can incorporate at home.

Natural alternatives include drought-tolerant options for dry sites, water-loving plants for rain gardens and homegrown edibles. To show that “sustainable” can be practical and attractive; the garden includes artistic uses for recycled and on-site materials, an eco-roof and a stormwater management system with residential applications.

Steve Varga, chief horticulturist for ProGrass, shares new trends in urban gardens in an educational seminar and a display garden at the show. In a patio garden, Varga offers “super-efficient” ideas that are applicable at a high-rise condo or a small urban or suburban yard.

“Sustainable goes beyond organic practices,” Varga said. “Plants need to be able to sustain themselves with very

little input or maintenance, build biodiversity and fill limited spaces in intimate settings.”

In the ProGrass garden, a green roof captures and cleans rainwater for use in the garden and a green wall makes an effective privacy screen. “One advantage of gardening in a small space is that you don’t need a lot of plants, so you can use high-end plants that feature fragrance, color and texture,” Varga said.

In the display garden by Matt Sanders Landscape, gardeners will see ways they can “use sustainable ideas in practical ways, and do it with style,” owner Matt Sanders said. The design includes ideas to “create warm, welcoming, peaceful places for the family in our own backyards.” Art and a pergola made from recycled steel and patio furniture produced using green techniques will add practical good looks. “We research sources to see how green their methods are, because people want to work with conscientious businesses.”

Permeable pavers and other stormwater runoff options redirect water from a roof into an overflow planter, where native sedges and rushes slow the runoff and filter out contaminants.

## West Coast Consumer Gardening Events

### 2009 Yard, Garden & Patio Show Presented by Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping and Garden Centers (www.ygppshow.com)

February 27-March 1, 2009  
10 a.m.-9 p.m. Fri. and Sat.  
10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday.

Oregon Convention Center  
777 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr.  
Blvd., Portland, Ore.

### 2009 Northwest Flower & Garden Show (www.gardenshow.com)

February 18-22, 2009  
9 a.m.-8 p.m.  
Wednesday-Saturday  
9 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday  
Washington State Convention  
and Trade Center  
Seventh and Pike,  
Seattle, Wash.

### 2009 San Francisco Flower & Garden Show (www.gardenshow.com)

March 18-22, 2009  
10 a.m.-8 p.m.

Wednesday-Saturday,  
10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday

San Mateo Event Center  
(new location)  
2495 S. Delaware St.,  
San Mateo, Calif.

Other shows to the north and south present "Sustainable Spaces. Beautiful Places." Both the Northwest Flower & Garden Show in Seattle and the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show will include display gardens, educational seminars and the marketplace to demonstrate green living.

Creating a sustainable sanctuary is expected to appeal to a new generation of gardeners committed to improving the environment, according to Northwest Flower & Garden Show Manager Cyle Eldred.

Full-scale display gardens and seminars will feature sustainable lifestyles, green walls and roofs, rooftop and small-space gardens, organic vegetable gardens, native and water-wise plants, as well as creative recycling, all of which contribute to the "all-encompassing, outdoor living experience."

Until now, vendors at these shows could offer only garden-related products, but this year, the criteria include products that are "good for the environment," including eco-friendly tools and organic lawn care products.

#### Economy affects research findings

In 2008, the National Gardening Association (NGA) conducted the first-ever nationwide survey about organic gardening. The *Environmental Lawn and Garden Survey* found that nine out of 10 households believe it is important to maintain their landscapes in a way that benefits the environment.

Despite the interest, only half (53 percent) of all households say they are knowledgeable about ways to maintain lawns and gardens in an environmentally

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friendly way, NGA Research Director Bruce Butterfield said. These figures suggest that the number of organic gardeners in the U.S. will increase two-fold or more, and a new survey that was set for release early this year may show even higher numbers.

Butterfield qualified his predictions by saying, "I don't think anyone really knows what to expect in 2009 with the economy because there's no light at the end of the tunnel right now."

His "best guess" is that, as in previous recessions, "People will do more for them-

selves instead of hiring lawn care and landscape services. I also think most consumers are becoming more price sensitive than they have been in years and that using environmentally friendly lawn and landscape practices doesn't necessarily mean you have to spend more money."

"This year's research reinforces an increased need for homeowner education about simple, actionable ways they can be good environmental stewards at home while cultivating healthy lawns or gardens," he said.

### Grow it – eat it

GMG research shows an increase in demand for fruit-bearing shrubs such as blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and elderberries being used as ornamentals. This trend is confirmed at Portland Nursery, where demand for edible plants, both seeds and starts, and everything to develop self-sustaining practices, including composters and rain barrels, is up strongly.

"We have seen insane increases," said William McClenathan, manager of the Division Street location.

According to McClenathan, "Portland has always had a market for organic," but it has now gone from a trend to a requirement of "social consciousness." Some people are trying to be more sustainable, more for economic reasons than environmental, but they are "green" just the same.

It may continue for a while, he predicted. Garden centers can teach customers the value of growing edibles and companion plants. With a \$100 investment in plant starts and another \$100 for mulch and other needs, McClenathan harvested enough food in June, July, August and September, 2008, to feed a family. The harvest represented "huge savings," he said. "It's a real bargain to grow your own."

Speaking for the \$23.6 billion organic industry, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) announced in November 2008, that it is launching a campaign that will reach more than 25 million consumers in 2009.

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“This unparalleled effort to educate consumers about the benefits of organic comes at an historic point of change for America,” OTA Executive Director Christine Bushway said. “Never has there been as much evidence backing the benefits of organic to public and environmental health, as many organic farmers on the land, and as many educational programs preparing a new generation of organic farmers. But never in recent years has there been as high a level of consumer spending, confusion and concern. The role of this campaign is to set the record straight and help consumers make the educated choice.” ©

*Elizabeth Petersen writes for gardeners and garden businesses, coaches students and writers, and tends a one-acre garden in West Linn, Ore. She can be reached at gardenwrite@comcast.net.*

## Garden Media Group 2009 Garden Trends

### What's In

1. Eco-boosting
2. Grow It Yourself (GIY)
3. Blended gardens
4. Locavore
5. Water (features)
6. Info lust
7. Quick & simple
8. Global colors
9. Worldly

### What's Out

- Conspicuous consumption
- Doing it ALL for me
- Segregated gardens
- Big carbon footprints
- Water (thirsty plants)
- Lack of Knowledge
- Over-the-top gardens
- Safe colors
- Cookie-cutter

Source: [www.gardenmediagroup.com](http://www.gardenmediagroup.com)

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