



With its colorful spikes of flowers, *Hesperaloe* 'Coral Glow' from High Country Gardens easily steals the show in this waterwise garden filled with a wide variety of drought-tolerant plants, including cacti and other succulents.

COURTESY OF HIGH COUNTRY GARDENS

Emerging Gardening Trends

BY RITA PELCZAR

Here's a look at what is happening in today's gardening world—and the new plants for 2019 that are keeping pace.

LIKE FASHION, cuisine, and architecture, gardening styles evolve. Plant breeders strive to anticipate what gardeners will want, and to introduce new varieties each year that will complement current trends. Because it takes several years to develop and introduce a new variety, this requires a bit of crystal-ball gazing.

But trends are often years in the mak-

ing as well. For example, the importance of matching plants with local growing conditions has long been acknowledged but is increasingly vital as resources become more and more limited. Continued urbanization over the last decade has resulted in smaller gardens as well as a new focus on indoor gardens (for more on the resurgence of interest in houseplants, see the article on page 18). A new generation

of gardeners brings with it diverse interests—often shared, almost instantly, via social media. These are just a few of the many factors influencing today's gardening attitudes and directions.

In an effort to pinpoint emerging horticultural trends, I canvassed the editorial advisors of this publication—eminent gardeners all—for their thoughts about what excites today's gardeners and which new plant introductions are keeping pace with the trends.

SOARING SUCCULENTS

The boom in growing succulent plants—both indoors and out—may be the most frequently identified trend among those canvassed. “Succulents in general, especially small potted ones, seem to be on everyone's mind lately,” says Mary Irish, garden consultant and author who lives near San Antonio, Texas.

Panayoti Kelaidis, senior curator and director of outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens, agrees. “Our big cactus and succulent sale at the Botanic Gardens was off the charts—and largely crowded with millennials.” Kelaidis notes that succulents hardy to the region have gained huge followings. “*Hesperaloe parviflora* [Texas yucca] was unknown a few decades ago—now it is being used everywhere,” he says.

High Country Gardens recently introduced a new cultivar of Texas yucca that's a cross between a red and a yellow variety. ‘Coral Glow’ (USDA Hardiness Zones 5–9, AHS Heat Zones 12–5) is evergreen and grows five to six feet tall and three to four feet wide. Its spikes of coral-orange flowers attract hummingbirds while it blooms for more than four weeks in summer.

From Sunset's Western Garden Collection comes Skyscraper™ senecio (*Senecio ficoides* ‘Mount Everest’, Zones 10–11, 12–1). This upright evergreen with fleshy blue-green leaves grows two to three feet tall, providing a strong vertical accent in frost-free gardens.

Atlantis™ stonecrop (*Sedum takesimense* ‘Nonsitnal’, Zones 4–9, 12–4) from Hortech, Inc., has showy dark green leaves with creamy yellow margins. In fall, as cooler weather arrives, the margins take on a pink blush. Growing only four to six inches tall, this sun-loving plant is a good choice for rock gardens or mixed succulent container plantings.



Sedum takesimense 'Nonsitnal'



Gaillardia xgrandiflora 'Celebration'

WATERWISE PLANTS

Attention to the water needs of plants sounds obvious, but increased restrictions on water use in many areas and flooding in others have moved this concept to the forefront of garden planning. “This awareness has truly taken off here in Texas in the last few years, owing to the efforts of many, and the increasing availability of both native and well adapted plants,” says Irish.

Many waterwise plants are selections of native species. For example, Flower Kisses™ is a new Texas bush sage hybrid (*Salvia* ‘Dark Shadows’, Zones 5–9, 9–5) from High Country Gardens. This woody-stemmed sage grows about three feet tall and wide, producing plentiful dark purple blooms that provide nectar for hummingbirds and bees from late summer until frost. And it thrives in regions where annual rainfall is just 10 to 30 inches.

“Unless you live in a region that gets a lot of rainfall, growing drought-tolerant plants is always a smart choice, especially in many of the Western states that regularly experience drought,” says garden editor and test garden manager for *Sunset* magazine, Julie Chai, who lives in Los Altos, California. “And there are so many low-water plants that look just as lush and colorful as their thirstier counterparts,” she adds.

This is true of ‘Celebration’ and ‘Sunset Flash’, two new selections of blanket flower (*Gaillardia xgrandiflora*, Zones 5–9, 8–1) from Sunset’s Western Garden Collection,

both of which bloom almost year-round in warm western gardens. In areas with cool winters, these perennials flower from late spring to summer. ‘Celebration’ bears rich red flowers, while those of ‘Sunset Flash’ are bright orange with yellow tips.

Kelly Norris, director of horticulture and education at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden in Iowa, is a fan of the perennial *Zinnia grandiflora* Native Roots™ (Zones 4–9, 9–4). “This wonderful native zinnia is already more broadly

adapted than people might judge, but this form has bigger flowers and offers months of them during the growing season,” says Norris. It grows in mounds five to 10 inches tall with fine gray-green foliage and bears yellow blooms from spring to frost.

On the opposite end of the water-needs spectrum are plants that thrive in wet, sometimes flooded soils. Norris suggests the perennial sedge, *Carex grayi* ‘New Moon Mighty’ (Zones 5–9, 8–1), a new introduction from New Moon Nursery that he says is a “great plant for rain gardens, bioswales, and the like.” It forms slowly-spreading clumps of 14-inch-long, glossy, arching, evergreen leaves that have a lime-green hue. In early summer, it produces eye-catching spikes of starburst-shaped seedpods.

NATIVE PLANTS, NATIVARS, AND POLLINATOR ATTRACTORS

“At long last, native plants are gathering steam and becoming a passion for many gardeners,” says garden journalist Linda Askey, of Birmingham, Alabama. In answer to this, new selections and hybrids of familiar natives—or “nativars”—appear each year. While purists may shun nativars because of their differences from the parent species, others embrace them for their enhanced qualities.

Another trend that was noted by several of our editorial advisors is an interest



This colorful frontyard pollinator garden in Toronto includes many North American natives.



Penstemon 'Midnight Masquerade'



Physocarpus opulifolius 'UMNHarpell'

in plants that attract butterflies and other pollinators; many of the natives cited below qualify.

Denny Schrock, Master Gardener coordinator and lecturer at Iowa State University in Ames, recommends *Penstemon* 'Midnight Masquerade' (Zones 3–8, 8–3), a hybrid between two eastern North American natives, *Penstemon digitalis* and *P. calycosus*. This easy-to-grow perennial boasts purple-black foliage and stems that serve as a dramatic foil to the lavender flowers that appear in early to midsummer, attracting bees and hummingbirds. It grows best in full sun, reaching about three feet tall and wide.

From PlantHaven International, *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Silver Fountain' (Zones 5–9, 9–6) is a selection of a North American prairie plant. From early summer to fall, this perennial produces sterile white flowers set off by variegated foliage. It grows two feet tall and wide with a neat mounding habit.

Another recommendation from Norris is the ironweed hybrid *Vernonia* 'Summer Swan Song' (Zones 4–9, 9–1), which, he says "comes with flower power



Gaura lindheimeri 'Silver Fountain'

and sturdy architecture." It grows only three feet tall—quite short for an ironweed—and produces deep purple flowers on long branches in fall that draw a host of pollinators.

Fireside ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius* 'UMNHarpell', Zones 3–7, 7–2) is a new native shrub selection from Bailey Nurseries that Schrock says is worth getting to know. The foliage of this sun-loving, deciduous shrub emerges red, morphing to red-purple in summer before turning deep

purple in fall. Its mature height is five to seven feet. Spring flowers are pinkish white.

Low Scape Mound™ chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa* 'UCONNAM165', Zones 3–8, 8–1) from Proven Winners is a very adaptable deciduous shrub, tolerating wet or dry soils, sun or part shade. Its small, white spring flowers attract a variety of pollinators. Growing one to two feet tall and wide, it is a good choice for edgings or massing as a groundcover; it also does well in containers. Its glossy green leaves turn bright red in fall, providing dramatic contrast to the purple-black fruit, which birds relish.

Fire King™ musclewood (*Carpinus caroliniana* 'J.N. Select A', Zones 3–9, 9–1) is “a great native tree, underappreciated and a durable performer in urban circumstances,” says Norris. This Johnson’s Nursery introduction has a tidy habit and stunning yellow-red-orange fall color. Growing 20 feet tall and wide, Norris calls it “a Goldilocks tree for smaller yards—just the right size.” This tree serves as a larval host to several butterfly species.

COMPACT PLANTS

Jessica Walliser, a Pittsburgh-based garden writer and radio host, has noticed a surge in interest in compact plants and has been researching them for her newest book, *Gardener’s Guide to Compact Plants: Edibles and Ornamentals for Small-Space Gardening* (Cool Springs Press, 2019), coming out this summer. “Compact growth habits are becoming increasingly important to homeowners,” she says, especially those looking to downsize and minimize maintenance.

Garden writer and radio and television commentator Charlie Nardozzi from Burlington, Vermont, adds that compact



With the help of container-grown plants, this former driveway on a property in Buffalo, New York, becomes a cozy outdoor living space, complete with an outdoor rug, lamp, and garden art.

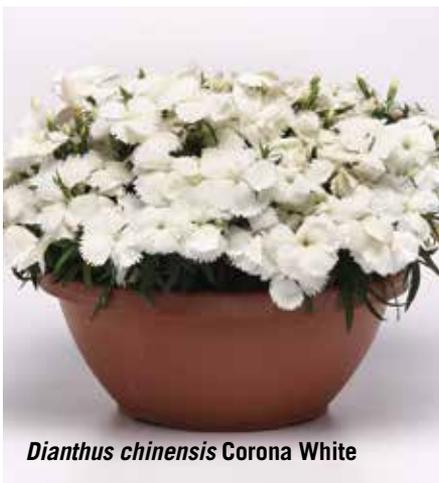
plants are also popular with non-homeowners, especially millennials, many of whom have tiny or non-existent yards. “Containers are the solution,” says Nardozzi. In addition to more compact varieties of native plants like those I’ve already mentioned, breeders continue to develop dwarf shrubs, trees, and edible plants like berries for container culture.

A new Proven Winners annual, Angelface® Cascade White angelonia (*Angelonia* 'ANCASWHI'), is a gem for containers because it serves as both a filler between other plants and a spiller over the container’s edge. This heat-lover grows eight

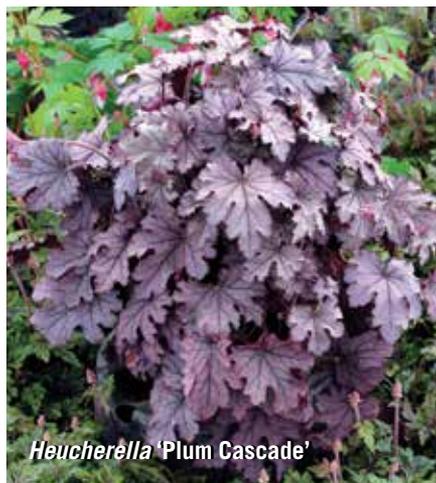
to 14 inches tall and produces clear white blooms throughout summer.

The Corona Series of *Dianthus chinensis* from PanAmerican Seed is typically grown as annuals, though it is rated as hardy to Zone 5. The series, which includes Cherry Red, Salmon Red Eye, and White, boasts large blooms on compact, mounded plants reaching about 10 inches tall that make good additions to cool season container gardens.

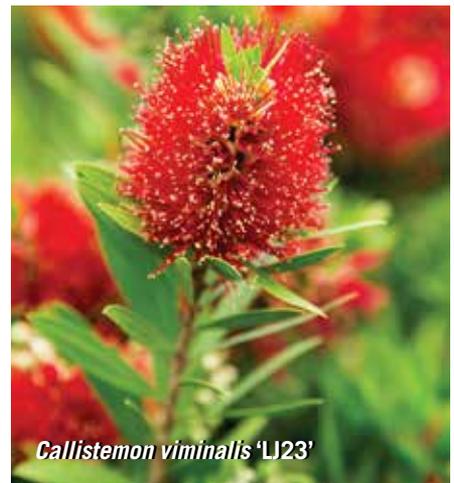
Heucherella 'Plum Cascade' (Zones 4–9, 9–4) from Terra Nova Nurseries is a compact, trailing perennial with lobed, silvery-purple leaves that add season-long color to shady container gardens or bor-



Dianthus chinensis Corona White



Heucherella 'Plum Cascade'



Callistemon viminalis 'LJ23'

ders. It grows nine to 12 inches tall with a 32-inch spread. Delicate pink flowers appear on short stalks throughout summer.

Also from Terra Nova comes *Echinacea* Kismet® Intense Orange (Zones 4–9, 9–1). This coneflower hybrid has a dense habit reaching 16 inches tall and 24 inches wide. It’s a heavy producer of very deep orange blooms in summer that are both large and long-lasting.

‘Everlite’ carex (*Carex oshimensis*, Zones 5–10, 11–5) is the most compact variety in the EverColor® series from the Sunset Western Garden Collection. Topping out at 10 inches tall, its arching, grasslike, evergreen leaves are cream with dark green margins. It adapts to part shade or sun, and works well as a groundcover, the foreground of a border, or mixed container plantings.

A 10- to 15-inch-tall evergreen shrub, Anna’s Magic Ball® arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* ‘Anna Van Vloten’, Zones 3–7, 7–1) from Bailey Nurseries requires no pruning to maintain its rounded shape and diminutive size. The bright yellow foliage holds its color year-round so it is well suited for a prominent spot in the rock garden or mixed border; it also makes a fine container specimen.

Light Show® red bottlebrush (*Callistemon viminalis* ‘LJ23’, Zones 8–10, 11–8) from the Sunset Western Garden Col-

lection is a dense, two- to three-foot-tall shrub that produces red bottlebrush flowers from early summer through fall. Its evergreen foliage is emerald green.

ENHANCED EDIBLES

“Vegetables, fruits, and herbs are more popular than ever,” says Panayoti Kelaidis. And the more colorful, prolific, and flavorful, the better, as evidenced by some of this year’s new varieties.

‘Candy Red’ is a bright red cabbage from Johnny’s Selected Seeds that produces dense, pointed to heart-shaped heads. Also from Johnny’s comes ‘Beas’ kohlrabi with skin that is pure white, as is the interior flesh, which boasts a sweet, mild flavor.

From Renee’s Garden comes ‘Festival’ acorn squash. Outside, the squash is striped bright green and orange, while the



‘Festival’ acorn squash

interior flesh is creamy orange. Each fruit weighs one to two pounds. Fedco Seeds offers ‘Dazzling Blue’ dinosaur kale, a vigorous variety with blue-green leaves that sport a bright pink mid-rib. The color is more pronounced as weather cools.

“Fruit gardening seems more popular as veggie gardeners expand their horizons beyond tomatoes and lettuce,” says Nardozi. Berried Treasure™, an ever-bearing strawberry (*Fragaria ananassa*,



Berried Treasure strawberry

Zones 4–9, 9–1) from Proven Winners, is both ornamental and tasty. While it can be planted in the ground as an edging or groundcover, it shows off best when grown in a container. Semi-double, red flowers are followed by flavorful fruit over several weeks.

‘Hannah’s Choice’ is a new melon bred at Cornell University that is offered by Johnny’s Selected Seeds. The ribbed fruit is flavorful, sweet, and aromatic, each weighing three to five pounds. The productive vines are resistant to several diseases that can plague melons.

A TREND TOWARD HARMONY

“There’s a beautiful tension in the market right now between the style of gardening and the sustainability of it,” says Kelly Norris. This tension may be giving rise to some new perspectives about how and why we garden. Those garden trends that contribute to a healthy environment without creating a strain on limited resources and that suit our spaces and lifestyles are likely to persist. And new varieties that support the evolving nature of gardening are worth seeking. 🌿

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Growing fruits, vegetables, and other edibles remains popular with gardeners everywhere.