



THE 2017 GROWING FORECAST



Woburn Rocking Chair, \$149, available from Wyevale Garden Centres

The 2017 growing forecast

Wyevale Garden Centres, the UK's biggest garden centre retailer, is unveiling its gardening and outdoor living trend predictions for 2017 as it launches new and exclusive products. The insights contained in this report are based on the behaviours and preferences demonstrated by their extensive customer base over the last 12 months.

Among the most influential trends the garden centre group expect to see this year are; the development of the link between gardening, wellbeing and mindfulness, a surge in demand for 'hardy plants' in response to changes in global weather patterns and seasonal changes, and a move towards 'convenience gardening', a response to the decline of basic horticultural knowledge in Britain's younger gardeners as well as the rising need for products that suit an urban and rental lifestyle.

Health and wellbeing

Gardening continues to be one of Britain's favourite hobbies, extending its diverse, and increasingly younger audience all the time. It's no surprise that this is the case, particularly given the proven benefits of gardening upon our mental and physical health, as well as its centrality to our understanding of and connection to, the natural world. Over the last few years, a number of leading mental health charities including Mind and Thrive have launched their own gardening schemes as a form of therapy for their clients. Additionally, The King's Fund produced a report in 2016 on the 'impact of gardens and gardening on health across our lives', the report was commissioned to provide, based on its findings, recommendations to the government on how to tangibly exploit the benefits of the garden and gardening into policy and practice.

These benefits combined with the 'mindfulness' movement in this country and around the world, mean that more and more consumers are looking to their gardens to stimulate their sense of wellbeing. One of the many ways to access these benefits at home is to begin growing your own produce. Wyevale Garden Centres expect the grow your own trend, an existing growth sector, to be buoyed by this movement in 2017. The group already sell a vast range of grow your own product, both the plants themselves and the growing media to support them, but this year are introducing products that offer 'something a little different', as a direct response to consumer demand. Alongside the more traditional fruit and vegetables, the centres will be introducing their purple hued counterparts. These unique varieties will include purple kale, carrots, onions, tomatoes and sweet potatoes. They are also introducing some interesting heritage products such as the 'Heinz 1370', the strain of tomato originally used to make ketchup.



Moreton Casual Dining Set, £1799, available from Wyevale Garden Centres

Eco-conscious gardening

Over the last few years awareness has risen amongst British gardeners about the toxicity and environmental impacts of using certain products in the garden. Wyevale Garden Centres expect to see sales of organic and natural growing media rise across the business, in particular the '6X Natural Organic Fertiliser'. This 100% natural organic fertiliser has a balanced pH of 6.8 and is environmentally friendly as it contains no peat or chemicals and is oven heated at over 250°C to provide a sterilised, weed and pathogen free organic fertiliser.

Running alongside this is the desire for consumers to increase the biodiversity in their gardens. Wyevale Garden Centres stock, sell and advise their customers on the plants that can be used to attract wildlife into the garden such as the Delphinium, Calendula and Alyssum. Accessories such as hedgehog houses and bee or bug hotels also help to transform gardens into wildlife havens.

The rise of small space gardening

Ever more people are renting their homes and living in smaller spaces. As a result many urban and city-dwellers who are interested in harnessing the benefits of cultivating their outdoor spaces require small-space solutions. In response to this Wyevale Garden Centres are launching a range of products that will make gardening easier for people with small or alternative outdoor spaces, as well as for consumers who rent their homes and are less likely to make substantial investments in laying down roots.

Having identified this need to provide space-saving solutions for small space gardens, Wyevale Garden Centres are launching a range of products from new supplier Keter, including storage solutions for the garden, meaning space-wasting sheds to store tools and outdoor living accessories can be a thing of the past. The range will also include more lightweight and ergonomic tools that are easier to use and transport.

There are also many other simple products that make life easier for beginners as well as people with small outdoor spaces, for example the Feather range of ultra-lightweight pots, windowsill propagators, grow-houses and small vegetable trugs - all of which make getting growing more accessible



Convenience gardening

Today's generation of younger gardening enthusiasts lack the basic horticultural knowledge of older generations and this paired with a demand for instant gratification products for the garden has resulted in the rise of convenience gardening. This year Wyevale Garden Centres are launching a range of pre-planted pots. These pots come in multiple varieties and provide instant colour and brightness to the garden all year round. They also work well for consumers who want to create an impactful outdoor space but perhaps have little room or a paved space as they don't require any soil to grow and need very little space. The pots come in a range of sizes and shapes, meaning they can also be used in a space as small as a balcony. They also provide a great alternative gift to cut-flowers, as they are more sustainable and much longer lasting.

Houseplants

Whether you think houseplants are a throwback that should remain firmly in the seventies, or a green home trend that you can't wait to get involved with, foliage in our front rooms is here to stay; and with Pantone choosing 'Greenery' as their colour of the year, it's no surprise that people are bringing the outdoors in. Across their centres, Wyevale Garden Centres have seen an increase in sales of more traditional houseplants with larger leaves, and early season sales have shown that well-loved varieties like the Calatheas and Monstera are still popular. Beyond being a style trend, houseplants are also a cheap and easy air purification solution.

Another big trend set to continue for 2017 is the popularity of succulents, these easy to maintain plants look great and are an easy way for beginners to hop on the houseplant trend. However, if succulents, low maintenance as they are, still seem like too much hard work then Air Plants are a great alternative. These ingenious plants need nothing more than air to grow, expect to see these hanging in beautiful glass 'pots' and featuring all over your Instagram feed.



Hardy plants

As the weather in Britain, and around the world, continues to become more extreme, gardeners are changing the way they buy and grow plants in their gardens. Wyevale Garden Centres have noted a rise in the sale of 'hardy plants', these are plants that are capable of standing up to extreme weather, as well as making their spot in our (ever shrinking) outdoor spaces count, as they continue to flower until well into Autumn. These environmental changes have directly affected the buying patterns at Wyevale Garden Centres, having actively increased the share of plants they sell that are long-lasting and capable of surviving harsher environments.

The rise of hardy plants is not only due to their ability to withstand extreme weather and provide long-lasting colour to the garden, their 'hardiness' means they are also more likely to survive at the hands of inexperienced gardeners.

Wyevale Garden Centres see many shoppers who want to begin growing and maintaining their outdoor spaces; however many of these people lack basic growing knowledge, therefore Hardy plants provide the perfect solution as they last well throughout the year but are also a low-maintenance option, requiring little knowledge on how to cultivate them.

The UK vegetable shortage

As a result of adverse weather in Europe during the 2016 growing season, a number of popular green vegetables are currently either in very short supply, or unavailable in the UK. Courgettes are one of the main victims of this shortage, however due to their increased popularity in 2016 and the shortages reported so far this year Wyevale Garden Centres reactively increased their buy of both courgette plants and seeds. The group predicts that if these shortages continue, there is the potential to see real growth in the grow your own sector.



Cambridge Bistro Set, £199, available from Wyevale Garden Centres

Plants to experiment with in 2017

The big planting trend for 2017 is predicted to be around Shrubs. Though for many years Perennials have been at the forefront, garden designers are now turning towards using a good mix of Shrubs alongside the traditionally popular Perennials.

Despite this, Wyevale Garden Centres still expect to see Perennials as a growth area and as such the company will be introducing new varieties of the Erysimum (wallflower) and Salvia Blue Marvel. They will also be extending their offering of the Hellebore as this popular plant flowers in autumn and spring, a time when many other plants in the garden may not be in flower. The group will also be exclusively stocking the 'Fox series' of Heucheras.

The predicted surge in popularity of shrubs amongst consumers predicted for 2017 is also linked to their 'multi-purpose' character; as outdoor space is increasingly limited plants need to work for their spot in the garden. The Virbunum Kilimanjaro Sunrise, celebrated at Chelsea in 2016 is a great example of this, this plant has blossom, autumn colour and berries. Hebe also perform in the garden all year round, with Wyevale Garden Centres predicting that the midnight sky and heartbreaker varieties will be the most popular as they look great and are particularly easy to grow.

This year centres up and down the country will be introducing a new range of quirky plants for gardeners looking for something different to experiment with. Grow your own examples include the Sweet Colossus strawberry plant that bears huge fruit the size of your palm, the Lemon Cucumber that produces wonderfully sweet and unusual lemon-shaped cucumbers - perfect for a gin and tonic and the Cucamelon that grows tiny fruits that look like melons but have the taste of cucumber. For those who prefer savoury to sweet, the Tomato Heartbreaker is a tomato plant

that produces small heart-shaped tomatoes, or alternatively the Vampire Chilli Pepper produces gothic-looking black fruits that eventually mature into a blood red colour when ready to harvest.

About Wyevale Garden Centres

Wyevale Garden Centres, formerly The Garden Centre Group, is the nation's largest group of garden centres, with over 148 centres across the country. Please refer to us as "Wyevale Garden Centres" or "WGC" rather than "Wyevale" to avoid confusion with our friends at Wyevale Nurseries.

Ninety per cent of Wyevale Garden Centres' plant stock is British-grown, and much of this stock is grown in its own nurseries. Wyevale Garden Centres employs over 5,000 staff and runs its own gardening membership club, The Gardening Club, which has over 2.5 million members.

For more information visit

www.wyevalegardencentres.co.uk

The history of Wyevale Garden Centres

- Wyevale Garden Centres roots date back to Wyevale Nursery, which was founded in 1932 and eventually became one of the earliest garden centres.
- The company has grown organically and through acquisitions of well-known brands such as Blooms and Country Gardens, and in 2009 was renamed The Garden Centre Group.
- The Garden Centre Group was acquired by Terra Firma Capital Partners in 2012.
- Since then the company has continued to grow, acquiring ten centres in 2013, including the Garden & Leisure Group.
- In July 2014, The Garden Centre Group announced it would rebrand as Wyevale Garden Centres.



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