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Trends for the Back Half of 2021

Amanda Thomsen



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For the second half of 2021 (and beyond), here's what I see being hot:

- Although my first love will always be perennials, I believe shrubs are having a moment. Pushing shrubs as the skeleton of the garden offers new homeowners the foundation of shrubs that have interest in all-seasons and, of course, they're so economical (while delivering a punch!). Explain to a customer that it would take five perennials to fill this space OR one expertly chosen shrub.
- While I'm at it, these four words get me hilariously excited: shrubs in pretty containers.

If you're marketing your perennials in one department and your trees and shrubs in another, why not get together for displays? Layer in trees, shrubs, perennials, and let's get crazy and even layer in some annuals to present a

whole ecosystem rather than stay in our lanes (erm, departments?). This makes it so much easier for that customer, rare as they are, that wants to "buy the whole outfit" from the mannequin.

- PRIVACY is going to continue to be hot, as the housing market is spicy and lots of people are moving. Young homeowners want to put their mark on their landscaping and privacy plantings is where they will (or at least should) start. Our industry has so much more to offer for privacy than arborvitae, but we have to show them how it's done.

"The interest in outdoor living is strong, as a new generation of gardeners rediscovered their back- and front-yard spaces through the 2020 Experience. It's no longer about just 'bringing the inside/outside,' but about employing practical use of our back- or front-yard environments to meet our needs for food, entertaining, work, socializing and family life. With this is a strong interest in creating outdoor rooms within the yard environment to meet that variety of needs," said Lyndsi Oestmann, VP of sales at Loma Vista Nursery. "Along with traditional trees and shrubs like arborvitae, juniper and boxwood for privacy, the new demographic of gardeners is looking for out-of-the-box trees, shrubs and perennials that provide creative boundaries or borders while also offering that 'something more.' They're selecting grasses like feather reed grass, big bluestem and maiden grass, along with quince, small specimen trees like smoke tree, Korean lilac and crepe myrtle, and hydrangea to provide privacy and structure with color, minimal-to-no care and vibrancy." I agree.

- Native plantings are also hot with new homeowners and should be sold as a whole lifestyle. This means having native perennials in large sizes and plugs, shrubs, trees, insect hotels, seeds and anything else you can think of to

support this, including cute signs that say, “Honk if you love pollinators” or “Certified Wildlife Disco” or “MYOB I’m No -Mow!”

- Stock clover seed for lawns and other lawn alternatives; every year lawns lose more of their appeal as an “ideal” and their grip on our wallets.
- Will houseplants continue to be hot this winter? In short, yes. Houseplants will be hot as well as increased interest in indoor blooms, such as orchids and amaryllis bulbs.
- Floor baskets are hotter than big heavy pots right now; make sure you’re stocking plastic liners for inside those baskets, as well as sheet moss for top dressing.
- I hate to tell you this but the garden centers on TikTok are killing it. Fantastic, fun content that, even if you aren’t going to (understandably) take on another social media platform at least go watch a few. It’s eye opening to see what others are doing (and doing so well!).
- It’s time to push autumn plantings of vegetables, complete with row covers. These new vegetable gardeners that came to us in the last year-plus are ready to take it to the next level, but they need us to tell them that. So stock up on garlic, spinach seeds and 6-packs of kale.
- It’s time for ferns to have a moment and we should be selling them to people who come in for houseplants. Ferns are so very tricky indoors so they seem an unlikely fit outdoors, where they’re happy participants in humidity. It’s time to re-educate and shine a spotlight on ferns! **GP**

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