

TOP PLANT TRENDS FOR 2011

Focus on smaller spaces and bigger value to create opportunities.

WHILE RETAILERS experienced better-than-expected sales over the important 2010 holiday shopping season, economists are predicting a mixed bag for 2011 with some sectors recovering sooner than others. But the economic turmoil over the past three years has already taken its toll on homeowners, many of whom have downsized to smaller homes and apartments. Consumers, still unsure of their economic futures, are also likely to be even more focused on getting the most bang for their landscaping buck.

That's not all bad news for landscapers who install high-value livescapes and are prepared to offer solutions for smaller spaces. Bright colors in containers and growing vertically make the most of small landscapes, while edibles and water-saving cultivars can save consumers' money.

But how do you explain that to consumers?

"The question on many marketers' minds is, how do we as an industry market horticulture products in this unique economic climate?" says Anthony Tesselaar, co-founder and president of the Australia-based Tesselaar Plants. "So, how



Contrasting colors provide high impact, allowing homeowners to do more with less.

do we make sure we stay in their cross-hairs? We've learned it's not necessarily about price. These days, it's all about value — and values — to me, the purchaser."

Promoting value

Tesselaar suggests taking a page out of retailers' sales strategies.

"Of course retailers know they need to focus on sales and promotions to bring in shoppers. And of course price is a factor for just about everyone," says National Retail Federation vice president Ellen Davis in the group's recent 2010 holiday shopping survey report. "But unlike 2009 — and most definitely 2008 — price is not the only factor shoppers will consider when making buying decisions."

Instead, the report suggests a need to demonstrate how a product or service offers long-term benefits, prevents problems or hits on something so emotionally important to the consumer that the extra cost is "worth it."

For instance, is the drought-tolerant

plant that costs 20% more than its similar counterpart worth the purchase because the consumer can go on vacation and not have to find a plant-sitter? Can the price for a season-long-blooming shrub be amortized over several years because it boosts the resale value of the home? Does the more expensive hanging basket also work in the shade or save space in a downsized or urban dwelling?

Even though the economy is improving slightly, the recession has changed the mainstream mindset, moving shoppers toward a "save-save-save" mentality.

Maximize multiple uses

Can a garden perennial be overwintered as a houseplant, helping to beautify the in-

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POPULAR COLOR PREDICTIONS

Pantone LLC, a provider of professional color standards for the design industries, has announced PANTONE 18-2120 Honeysuckle, a vibrant, energetic hue, as its color of the year for 2011.

While the 2010 color of the year, PANTONE 15-5519 Turquoise, served as an escape for many, Honeysuckle emboldens us to face everyday troubles with verve and vigor, according to the company. A dynamic reddish pink, Honeysuckle is encouraging and uplifting.

"In times of stress, we need something to lift our spirits. Honeysuckle is a captivating, stimulating color that gets the adrenaline going — perfect to ward off the blues," says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. "Honeysuckle derives its positive qualities from a powerful bond to its mother color red, the most physical, viscerally alive hue in the spectrum."

For over a decade, Pantone's Color of the Year declarations have influenced product development and purchasing decisions in multiple industries including fashion, home and industrial design. For more information, visit pantone.com.

AkzoNobel, the world's largest paint-ings and coatings company and manufacturer of Dulux paints, has announced light, airy, citrus yellow as its Color of the Year for 2011 along with next year's top five color trends at its annual ColourFutures showcase.

ColourFutures is the result of international color trend research, developed by AkzoNobel's Aesthetic Center with an international group of creative experts from the fields of color, design, architecture, and fashion. For more information, visit: icidulux.com.my/EN/colour/.



Spreading flowers that fill large areas will continue to be popular as homeowner budgets are expected to stay tight in 2011.

Container plants offer high value because they can be moved where needed. Some can be also be moved indoors and enjoyed during the winter.

doors, boost moods and improve indoor air quality? Can it provide healthy food for the family and save on the grocery bills? Can it become a gift for someone else?

Container plants that can easily be carried in from the patio to serve as winter-time houseplants are big sells, especially in colder climates, Tesselaar says.

And why can't quick-growing edibles like swiss chard, ornamental kale and lettuces be packaged up as ornamental containers?

Save with green

Drought-tolerant, pest- and disease-resistant plants can cut spending on inputs, plus they require less time to maintain. Such plants can also be promoted as socially and/or environmentally responsible products — something 67% of respondents said they'd buy, even in a difficult economy, in a 2009 survey by brand-marketing firm BBMG.

Tesselaar says he has noticed landscapers are moving toward buying smaller containers of such plants at a lower price, because they know these plants will soon fill out and reach the mature size of the more expensive ones. They're also buying

less of a variety of plants, but more of what they choose (i.e. only the tested, top performers they can count on and that won't need replacement anytime soon), he says.

Smartphones prompt thinking locally

"With smartphones becoming the dominant mobile force, Quick Response (QR) codes and application technology will pique interest, provide portals into unique experiences and improve our quality of life," says James Limbach, author of "Economic Hard Times Bring Lasting Changes to Consumer Behavior." He notes that sales of smartphones grew 82% from 2008 to 2010.

This ability to filter information by geography has inspired a "local-local" mentality. "Empowered like never before," says Limbach, "consumers are showing a deeper interest in where they are: from the city to a specific store."

Ride the wave of this trend by offering location-based services, promotions and solutions. Perhaps you can highlight native plants that work well in your area, trumpet your experience with your area's specific landscapes and architecture, and promote your company's involvement in the local community. **LMI**



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