

Extra!

An Express News Group Publication

May 5, 2022

# GARDEN

PLANTS AND LANDSCAPING



## ***SUSTAINABLE TRENDS***

Homeowners are looking at sustainable ways to build better gardens for generations to come.


## ***FOOD FORESTS***

Even a small garden plot can be transformed into a robust edible garden that supports a family's food budget and the ecosystem.









Frederico Azevedo of Unlimited Earth Care says he has been using bright color in his landscape designs for years.



## CREATING *Sustainable* SANCTUARIES

*As families continue to prioritize bettering their homes and gardens, sustainability is a top trend in 2022*

BY CAILIN RILEY

**S**ustainability, color, durability, privacy — those are some of the buzzwords that come up when local landscapers and landscape designers talk about trends and shifts they've seen in their industry in recent years.

The pandemic has changed people's lives profoundly in a seemingly endless variety of ways over the last two years, and nowhere is that more evident than in the approach people have taken to their homes. The idea of what home is, what it means for a family, and how it should be set up to optimize enjoyment and relaxation has shifted in recent years, with some changes a direct result of the pandemic, and others predating COVID-19.

Frederico Azevedo is the owner of Unlimited Earth Care, a full-service garden and landscape design firm based in Bridgehampton, with its Garden Concept Store and Garden Market at 2249 Scuttlehole Road. He founded the company in 1993, and describes its aesthetic as "a modern take on the classic Hamptons garden, with an awareness of the different environments and their sensitivities and an incorporation of native plants."

When designing gardens and landscapes for clients, Azevedo and his team adhere to certain guiding principles, such as using plants and flowers that are well-adapted to the area, and are "inviting" to butter-

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Incorporating bright colors and sustainable, native plants are big landscaping trends this season.

flies and birds.

"They're beautiful, and they work hard," he said of the latter.

As for what he's noticing from clients in 2022, Azevedo said a theme has emerged, although it's one that isn't necessarily new to him.

"This season, it's all about sustainability and color," he said.

"People want to be in spaces that make them happy; it was a long winter."

It's a trend that's right in Azevedo's lane.

"Color has always been my signature," he said. "Even when all-white gardens were trending I was planting in oranges and yellows. It's all about knowing exactly where to put each hue to make sure they complement one another and create an impression. The

same palette can be romantic or cheerful depending on the composition."

Of course, "sustainability" has been a buzzword for several years, across almost every industry, and it's a shift that seems like it's here to stay, particularly as the effects

ing these flowering meadows as an alternative to large grass lawns, which require a lot of maintenance. People like them because they bring all this painterly movement into their view and invite birds and butterflies."

Those views are best enjoyed

*'Put Verbena bonariensis by the pool and wait for butterflies to visit.'*

of climate change remain top of mind for most people paying attention.

"As for sustainability, I don't like to call it a trend," he continued. "I think people are going to be looking for more sustainable options from now on. I've been design-

ing outdoors, and Azevedo said he's also noticed another trend — certainly accelerated by the pandemic — that he is happy to endorse.

"Life outdoors has become more commonplace over the past few years, of course, although I've always lived this way," he said. "The

moment it's warm enough, my family is eating, cooking, reading, and exercising outdoors — it's the best way to be."

Customers are increasingly seeking to spend more time outside, and have invested in recent years more heavily in creating elaborate outdoor living spaces. Landscaping is what brings those elements together, whether it's a new swimming pool or hot tub, outdoor patio and kitchen area, seating area, or some combination of all those elements. Planting and tending to vegetable and flower gardens has also become an increasingly popular pursuit for families; a habit many may have picked up during the earlier months of the pandemic, when they were forced to spend more



time at home. The recently opened Garden Market at Unlimited Earth Care's headquarters carries a curated selection of native and well-adapted plants and flowers, including herbs and vegetable plants.

"I encourage people to try things out," Azevedo said. "Put Verbena bonariensis by the pool and wait for butterflies to visit, or choose some herbs to grow in the kitchen window and always cook with the brightest flavors. These are the kinds of atmospheres that I create for my clients, an integration of the outdoors into their daily experiences, and colorful, narrative gardens that bring on pleasant moods."

Creating a certain kind of mood, or just being generally more mindful about landscape design and how it harmonizes with the overall elements of the home is another trend some designers have noticed in recent years.

Charlie Marder owns and operates Bridgehampton-based Marders, a full service landscape design and installation company with an ex-



Boldy colorful plants are in high demand, according to Frederico Azevedo of Unlimited Earth Care.

tensive headquarters and popular gift shop on Snake Hollow Road. He has noticed homeowners investing more time, thought and energy into the design of their homes in recent years.

"Since the shift from pre-COVID to post-COVID, there is a trend, especially among the younger clients, to engage and involve in the

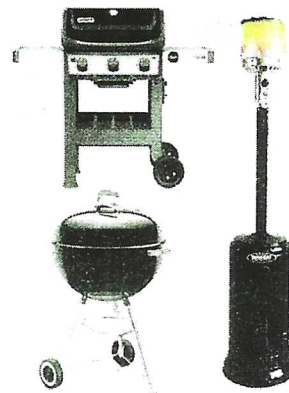
overall property development," he said. "They're taking great interest in re-editing and restructuring their properties and gardens to be a lot more acutely focused on taking advantage of the opportunities and options available, such as, not just walling in themselves, but rath-

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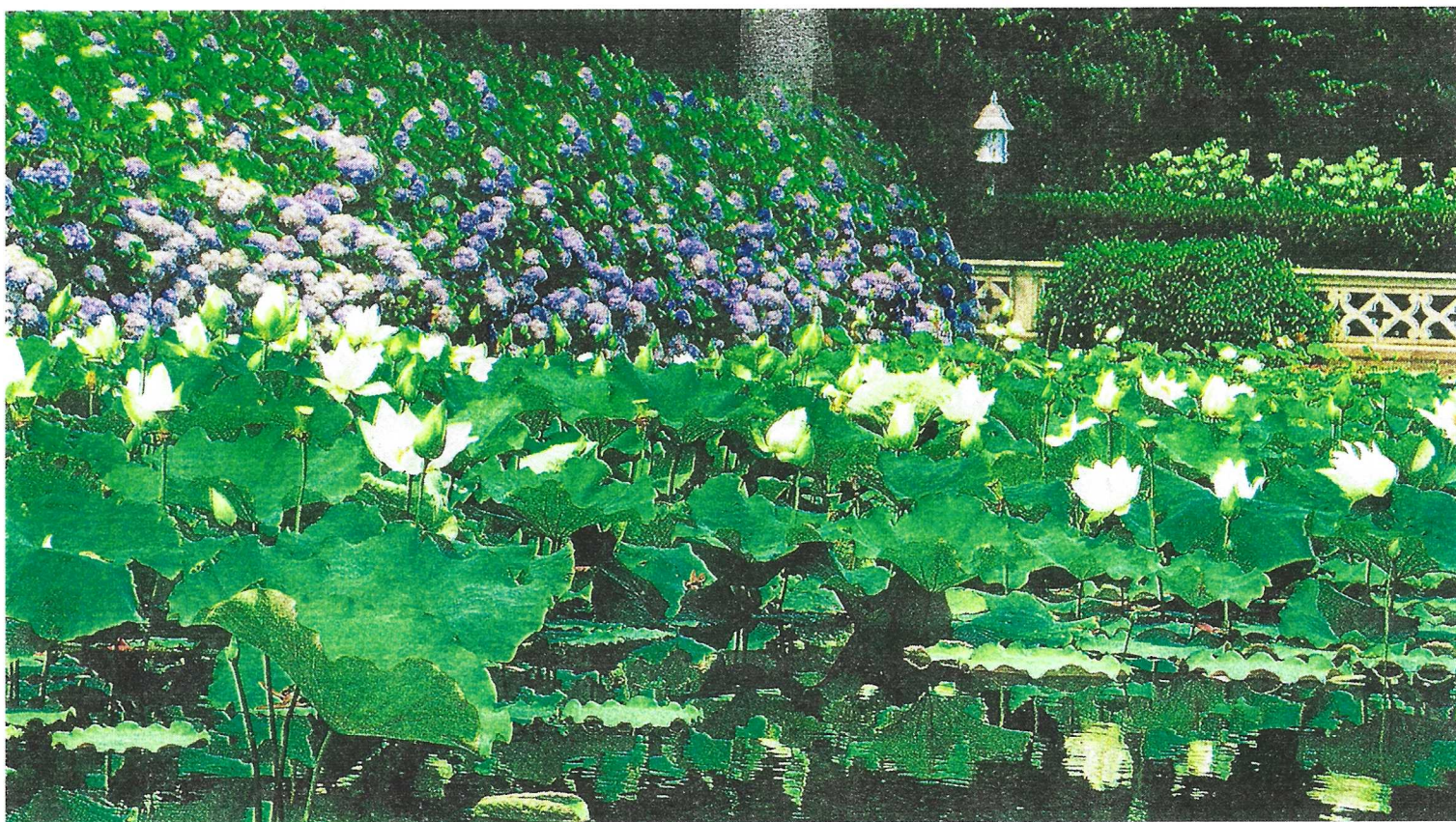
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*As they spent more time at home because of the pandemic, homeowners began thinking more critically about how they wanted to design their landscapes.*

er understanding their privacy in a more dynamic way.”

Marder said clients seem to have a “more civilized and sophisticated” understanding of the outside spaces of their homes and properties, much of it gained by “their experience of redoing and renovating or even building their house and interiors.”

“Their comfort level in the garden is representative and connected to the electric cars that they drive, their health and fitness and their long term vision of the landscape and gardens,” he added.

One trend that is a bit of a mixed bag is that a nearly unprecedented surge in demand for all kinds of plant varieties and both landscape design and installation services is happening at the same time that supply chain issues are compounding, and shipping charges are through the roof.

“Our biggest challenge, by far, is getting stuff once it’s ordered,” said Midge Fowler, who owns and operates Fowler’s Garden Center

on North Sea Road in Southampton Village. “Freight charges have tripled, and materials have gone up.”

She said that most customers understand the price increases, because they are seeing it everywhere, from the grocery store to the gas pump. She said that since the pandemic started, her business has had “more requests than ever” to do plant and garden installations.

“We simply don’t have the staff to do that,” she said. “But we are happy to offer business cards.”

A sharp spike in demand has been a trend for all local landscape businesses in recent years, as people sought to invest in their homes during the pandemic, using money that perhaps would’ve been spent on a vacation or other leisure activities, and realizing the value of their home as a safe, cherished place. Lou Caracciolo Jr. is the owner and operator of Shade Trees Nursery, a 130-acre wholesale nursery in Matti-

tuck and Jamesport that supplies garden centers, landscapers, and re-wholesalers from eastern Pennsylvania up to southern Maine. Shade Trees also operates a retail garden center in Jamesport.

“Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic and forward, and as the public became more focused on their home environment, we have seen a huge uptick in almost all plant varieties,” Caracciolo said. “Certainly screening materials for privacy are very much in demand and in short supply. Fruiting plants and herbs are extremely popular as people have gotten back into their gardens and want to go from ‘backyard to table’ as much as they can.”

In keeping with the sustainability trend, Caracciolo said that native species continue to be very popular, and he added that there will always be a demand for low maintenance, disease and pest resistant plants.

While native plants that invite

desired bees and native birds to gardens have increased in popularity, there is one member of the natural environment that homeowners are increasingly interested in keeping out of their gardens and landscapes: deer.

Both Fowler and Caracciolo pointed out that deer-resistant plants have increased greatly in popularity in recent years.

“Everyone has busy lives and wants a landscape that has four-season interest but isn’t all consuming,” Caracciolo said. “Also, the least amount of pest control materials needed is always important, both from an economical standpoint but more importantly, an environmental standpoint.”

“Depending upon location, deer are an issue,” he added. “On the North Fork, it is a real issue so we focus on providing as many deer resistant plants as we can. It’s a limited palette of plants but there is enough to create an attractive landscape with low risk of ‘Bambi’ dissemination.”