

# Top gardening trends for 2020: Blooms and beyond: The top gardening trends for 2020

(BPT) - Whether you have an outdoor oasis or are a nurturing indoor plant parent, gardening offers a multitude of benefits and has the power to brighten up any space or mood. Spring is the time to plan what plants to grow, and with some expert insight on top trends, you'll be gardening with success and enjoying the results.

The team at Ball Horticultural Company shares the top trends for 2020, guiding plant lovers at all levels to confidently grow a garden, big or small.

### Indoor Garden Rooms

Mother Nature has made her way indoors with more people planting inside their homes in a variety of ways. Whether it's creating a soothing space by a windowsill filled with houseplants or growing your own edible herbs and microgreens in your kitchen, planting indoors is on the rise. Serious plant-lovers are even dedicating entire interior spaces to gardening, creating "garden rooms" or "indoor jungles."

Indoor gardening lets homeowners experience the benefits of plants wherever they live, regardless of the

weather outdoors. Easy-to-care-for houseplants, such as Dieffenbachia, a strong and sturdy plant that has stunning and unique tropical leaves, makes people feel like they are on vacation in their own homes. Studies show that foliage plants also clean indoor air and lift overall spirits. Finally, don't be afraid of indoor flowering plants like Gerbera or Cyclamen. Their flowers last 3-4 weeks and are available in many colors to fit your mood or match your seasonal dV@cor.

PanAmerican Seed offers the Kitchen Minis™ collection as an option for gardeners who want to grow and harvest their own vegetables year-round. These potted vegetable plants can thrive on a sunny windowsill or counter. With Kitchen Minis, such as the Siam Edible Potted Tomato, people can pluck ingredients right from the container in their kitchen to use in a recipe. The collection also includes sweet and hot peppers with more options to come.

### Gardening for Health and Wellness

It's no secret that consuming fresh vegetables



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and herbs is beneficial to one's physical health, and gardening at home puts a variety of flavorful produce within arm's reach. The benefits of gardening also extend to mental health, as tending a garden and being close to nature helps reduce stress, calm anxiety and acts as a mood-booster.

Herbs are a simple place to start when growing your own food. You can't go wrong with Everleaf Emerald Towers Basil, which adds flavor to many dishes like fresh Caprese salad.

This beautiful, column-like plant not only gives a bountiful harvest, it is also late to flower and can be paired with colorful flowers in a mixed container for month after month of hand-plucked flavor and garden enjoyment.

Mardi Gras Fun Snack Peppers from Burpee Plants are the perfect healthy miniature peppers that add a conversation piece to any garden. They're available in four eye-catching color options that can be grown together in one container for a fun patio display, and kids adore helping to grow, pick and eat these crunchy snacks.

Aromatherapy is also a

popular wellness practice, with lavender plants topping the list of must-haves because of its reputation for inspiring relaxation. SuperBlue English Lavender grows rich blue blooms on short flower spikes, providing a calming scent and great garden texture. Alternatively, Primavera Spanish Lavender flowers throughout the summer, displaying great heat tolerance with bushy, scented florets that attract bees and other pollinators.

### Bold Colors

Bold colors are planted in gardens across the country and different hues blanket landscapes large and small. Additionally, people

with container gardens are planting flowers known for their vivid color for instant impact, making this trend accessible to all, including those who live in a condo or apartment with limited outdoor garden space.

Some standout plants that feature the best bold hues include Galaxy Geranium, a brand-new series that is vigorous enough to keep its large, semi-double blooms in-color all season. Look for stunning dark red, pink, purple, salmon, violet, watermelon and white, giving gardeners the option to choose their favorite shade or create a rainbow of flowers.

Another bold option that is wonderful for sunny borders or bright corners is Rose Marvel Salvia. Its mega-large bloom stems result in spectacular displays in spring and summer so you'll enjoy color throughout the warm months. The rose-pink flowers are deer and rabbit resistant, plus they rebloom without being cut back, saving time and minimizing maintenance.

Ask for these plants at your favorite garden retailer, and you're on your way to experiencing all that flowers have to offer. To learn more about these plants and the top gardening trends of the year, visit the plant experts at [www.ballhort.com](http://www.ballhort.com).

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# 3 value-boosting improvements new homeowners make to enhance spaces

(BPT) - Buying a home is an exciting time. Once you purchase a property, you want to make it your own. Whether it's a 100-year-old beauty or a fresh new build, there are improvements you can make that not only personalize the space, but add instant value to your real estate investment.

## Project 1: Update the garage door

Garage doors take up a lot of visual real estate on the exterior of a home, meaning they dramatically impact curb appeal. Because you never get a second chance to make a first impression, bland designs, old styles and damaged doors detract from a home's appearance and overall value.

Updating a garage door has a midrange cost but an impressive ROI. According to Remodeling Magazine's 2020 Cost vs. Value report, the average national job cost of a garage door replacement is \$3,695, with an impressive 94.5% cost recouped at resale.

When choosing a garage door, select one you like that matches the home's design. For example, carriage-house garage doors have a rustic look that work well with American Craftsman style homes. Contemporary garage doors with clean lines work well with mid-century modern homes. Raised panel garage doors are popular and work with many types of homes.

## Project 2: Add a



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**Basements, attics, garages and unfinished spaces are tricky, but there is one way to add a bathroom without busting through concrete or sacrificing the structural integrity of a home.**

## bathroom

Wish there was a bathroom where no conventional plumbing exists in your home? Basements, attics, garages and unfinished spaces are tricky, but there is one way to add a bathroom without busting through concrete or sacrificing the structural integrity of a home: above-floor plumbing such as macerating toilets and drain pumps from Saniflo.

This was the case for David Pirain of NextHome PPM Realty, who wanted to add a half bath to a home he was flipping in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The primary challenge: Sewage access was above grade and 40 feet away from the basement, which is situated about six feet below the sewer line. Installing conventional plumbing was impossible without installing a large sewage ejector

system that would require breaking concrete to dig a pit to hold the system, which he estimated would cost \$9,000. He decided above-floor plumbing options would be an effective alternative at a much lower cost. He spent \$1,100 for the Sanibest Pro grinder system, whose one-horsepower pump can discharge up to 25 vertical feet and up to 150 horizontal feet to a soil stack or septic tank. Pirain now estimates that adding a basement bathroom increased the value of the home by \$20,000. Learn more about adding a bathroom anywhere you want without the traditional cost at [go.saniflo.com](http://go.saniflo.com).

## Project 3: Revitalize ceilings

Dingy, cracked ceilings are eyesores that date a property and can make it look older than it is. By up-

dating your ceiling, you not only improve the appearance, but you also increase the home's overall value. If there are chips and cracks, it's important to repair these issues before applying any paint. Once repaired, vacuum cobwebs and remove dust to ensure that fresh coat of ceiling paint adheres properly.

Don't like the style of ceiling you have? Many homeowners are opting to replace popcorn texture ceilings with flat or knock-down styles. While a ceiling is a personal preference, updating it to a more modern option may command a higher price at resale. If the ceiling has never been painted, you may be able to remove the popcorn texture yourself; otherwise, hiring a professional should get the job done quickly. Keep in mind, popcorn textures and other ceilings applied before 1979 may have asbestos, so you'll want to get it tested before removal.

## Enhance the value and enjoy the results

As you look at different properties, you imagine yourself in each house, enjoying the space and making memories. Even when you find "the one," there are things you want to update. By making these improvements, you will personalize the space, instantly enhance the value and have a property you enjoy.

# Keeping personal information safe during a pandemic



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**The FBI warns that cybercriminals are taking advantage of the current environment to steal personal information and money.**

STATEPOINT - Americans are spending more time at home, which means they're likely spending more time online. While their attention is focused on staying healthy, they shouldn't forget to stay vigilant about cybersecurity either.

The FBI recently warned that cybercriminals are taking advantage of the current environment to steal personal information and money. The scams come in various forms, including fake emails from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization claiming to offer new information on the virus; emails asking users to verify personal information for an economic stimulus check from the government; and emails selling counterfeit COVID-19 related products or treatments.

## Personal health information can be a target for hackers too.

According to the Office of the Inspector General, personal health information (name, social security number, Medicare number, Medicaid number) can be stolen and used to file false Medicare or other health insurance claims. If this occurs, individuals might experience a disruption in medical care should they need it.

Bob Davis, deputy chief information security officer, Cigna, has a few simple steps to protect individuals and families from threats.

- Never open email or attachments from unknown senders.

Many scams occur when clicking on fraudulent links or attachments in emails. Sometimes these emails can look similar to those received from legitimate sources, such as a health insurer, making it difficult to notice the difference. Pay attention to details: does it look like other valid communications you've received? Is the sender email address correct? To check a link's legitimacy, hover over the text to see where

it will redirect.

Also note, when communicating with health insurers online, it will likely be done through a secure email portal, which automatically encrypts (secures) emails and can only be accessed by signing in using a pre-determined password.

- Guard personal information. As a general rule, health insurers will never ask for credit card information or account passwords in an email. Report emails asking for this information to your health insurance company immediately.

- Hang up and call back. Not all threats occur online. Be wary of phone calls from someone claiming to be your health insurance company asking for personal information. To confirm legitimacy, simply hang up and call the customer service phone number listed on the back of the insurance card. In most cases, if information or payment is needed, individuals will receive a letter in the mail, not a phone call.

- Monitor texts and social media. Many use cell phones as a primary way to communicate, so it should be no surprise that cybercriminals are turning to text messages as a way to steal information. Text messages should be approached the same way as emails. Don't click on links or share information with unfamiliar numbers. Same goes for social media. Don't click on suspicious advertisements or links.

- Remind friends and family. Just like friends and family are reminded to stay healthy, the same should be done with cybersecurity threats. Remind loved ones, especially the elderly, to pay close attention to unsolicited emails and calls, and to limit the information they share over the internet. If seniors think that they may have been victim of a scam, they should contact Medicare as soon as possible at 1-800-MEDICARE.

# 3 ways a deck can make staying home more enjoyable

(BPT) - With so many people across the country staying put in their homes right now, a fun and functional outdoor space is more important than ever. Amusement parks and concerts are closed or canceled and spring is around the corner, beckoning families outdoors. Millions of people are working remotely and looking for a more natural option for their home offices. A well-thought-out deck could be the answer to making a staycation, whether forced or planned, more enjoyable.

Here are three ways a deck can improve the at-home experience.

## 1. Fewer screens, more fun

When kids are out of school, screen time usually goes up. Whether it's TV, computers, video games, phones or tablets, screen time is usually a sedentary activity.

A deck can provide an alternative outdoor play



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**With the right patio furniture, a deck can make a great option for an outdoor workspace to soak up the benefits of the sun's rays.**

space where kids can be active and stretch their imaginations, enjoy the outdoors and do things like bring their favorite toys like building blocks, action figures or doll houses outdoors.

Worried about splinters hurting those little toes and fingers? Composite decking is a beautiful option that makes sanding, stain-

ing, sealing and splinters a thing of the past. While composite decking has historically had a higher price tag than traditional wood, boards like Envision Ridge Premium deliver the exotic hardwood beauty and low maintenance of composites at a budget-friendly price.

## 2. Home office with a side of vitamin D

Millions of Americans have moved to work-from-home situations recently and are looking for a way to get out of their stuffy home offices in favor of a workspace with natural lighting and a great breeze. Soaking up a safe amount of sun every day can reap big benefits for your health, according to physicians and the World Health Organization (WHO), including elevating mood, improving sleep, promoting bone

growth and strengthening the immune system.

With the right patio furniture, a deck can make a great option for an outdoor workspace to soak up the benefits of the sun's rays. Choose a table of the appropriate height and a comfortable chair for extended work sessions, or a cushioned chaise lounge for shorter periods. Adding a screen or pergola to a deck can provide some protection from the wind (fewer important work papers blowing around).

## 3. Family time all year long

If there's an upside to the increase in people staying home, it's the ability to connect with the other people living in your home. Life can get so busy with work, friends and other commitments that it's difficult to find time to connect or have a family game night. A deck is a great place to gather the members of your household for a laid-back evening of stargazing or a rowdy game night.

And those family connections don't have to end due to summer's heat or fall's chill. By adding an outdoor heater, firepit or fans, you can extend your deck's use as a family space to the majority of the year.

As you can see, a deck is a great way to expand the living space of your home and to provide an alternative space for all members of the family to enjoy.

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