

Home & Garden

Gardening's benefits jibe with today's emphasis on wellness

By Dean Fossdick | AP April 3 at 10:30 AM

Modern gardening isn't just about growing plants — it's part of a movement toward personal and family wellness that includes everything from diet and exercise to a clean and livable environment.

"A lot of things are going on with wellness as it applies to our food culture," said Helen Lundell, a senior consultant with The Hartman Group Inc., a company in Bellevue, Washington, that studies consumer, food and beverage trends. "The essential theme is that consumers are moving toward natural foods. First and foremost is the absence of pesticides and chemicals used in production."

But gardening fits the moment in ways beyond healthier food, she said.

"People want to exercise," she said. "They want to connect with nature. They want to socialize. They want to have some private time and disconnect from social media. They want long-term weight management rather than crash diets." All of those can be benefits from gardening.

A trend toward outdoor living has blossomed in landscape design, and is also health-related, said Missy Henriksen, a spokeswoman for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

"People are recognizing that being outdoors benefits wellness," Henriksen said. "They feel better when they interact with nature, even if it's simply looking through a window."

If you're remodeling a deck or patio, Henriksen said, consider adding creative lighting, wifi, TV connections, and shelter from harsh sun and wet weather. "Not only for nighttime use, but more people are working remotely from home and they're doing it outdoors," Henriksen said.

When planning the garden, she recommended nature-scaping with pollinator-friendly plants ("Attracting wildlife is a great educational tool for kids") and including edibles.

"People look at their landscapes and think they're attractive, but they may be missing some personal benefits," Henriksen said. "Herbs, fruits and vegetables add texture, color and variety to residential landscapes."

You also can hardscape to fit family lifestyles as they evolve. Include badminton or bocce ball courts, chessboards, pools and spas, fire pits and yoga spaces. Aside from their immediate satisfaction, these also may pay off when selling the property.

Try your local university Extension office if you need help. “Family health and wellness has been the mission of Oregon (State University) Extension for over 100 years,” said Stephanie Polizzi, a registered dietitian-nutritionist with the university.

“Our field faculty and campus specialists have expertise in nutrition, community food systems, physical activity and community engagement,” she said.

Online:

For more about healthy lifestyles, see this reading list from the Wellness Proposals resource library:
<http://wellnessproposals.com/wellness-library/nutrition/handouts/nutrition-and-healthy-eating-fact-sheets/>

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