

DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

Babble-jabber gardening

BY SIOUX ROGERS

I am so *not* a trendsetter or a trend follower. For me, “necessity is the mother of invention.” (I was sure it was my dear mum who first said those words of wisdom. Actually they are loosely translated from Plato’s *Republic*. Please don’t tell my mum.)

So la-di-da, what does this have to do with the latest in garden trends? Well, unless you were born before the invention of the wheel, nothing is really new in garden trends. But our attitudes, morals, diminishing resources, climate changes, and new knowledge all create new interpretations of land stewardship. And do we ever get it really right? Nah, but we do continue learning and observing.

Below is a slice of what is happening in the world of dirt and worms:

- Gardens that use fewer chemicals and less water.
- Gardens that are “regenerative.” These gardens use perennials and flowers that reseed without your help.
- Edible gardening has actually been around for years but is now being incorporated along walkways: dwarf fruit trees next to roses, for example, or a patch of ferny-top carrots growing merrily with zinnias.
- Small garden structures as a conscious integral feature of the garden landscape. Significantly, recycled and repurposed materials are no longer throwaways but a sought-after garden asset.



Put your veggies in the front yard (finegardening.com).



Front yard vegetable gardens are a growing trend (sustainableamerica.com).

- A “wilder” side of gardens, more like the casual version of an English garden—unorganized and inviting butterflies, dragonflies, honeybees, small birds, and, if you’re really paying attention, garden faeries.
 - Vegetable gardens outside the front door instead of great green front lawns.
- All the babble-jabber above describing new types of garden practice need not be confusing. For instance, who the heck needs, wants, or even thinks about regenerative gardening? (Actually, I personally could use some “regenerative”



An example of agricultural biodiversity (Wikipedia).



DIY vertical planter made from recycled pallets (onegreenplanet.org).

body parts after all these years of nonstop gardening.)

Regenerative gardening, edible gardening, biodiversity, resilient plants—they all have the same intention: to create a healthy, strong garden with enough good bugs to eat the bad bugs, enough vegetables to share with the chickens, and then enough chicken poop (after it has aged) to fertilize the chickens’ next growing garden meal.

All the new words for how to garden really make sense. Take the word “biodiversity,” for example. It is a simple

but vital concept. Biodiversity says, “down with monoculture.” Mum again: “Variety is the spice of life.” Focus on multiple varieties of plants, trees, shrubs, ground covers, etc. This is necessary for a few reasons. First and most importantly, if a monoculture gets the “flu,” the entire classroom goes down. If you grow a variety of stuff, not everyone gets sick!

What all the new trends have in common is conscious intention combined with foresight. In other words, when planting a summer garden, be consciously aware that, for example, a split tomato is not for throwing away; it is “dessert” for your chickens or any other animals craving a tomato snack. Seriously, instead of seeing a spoiled garden vegetable as waste, view it as fuel for the manure machine. You grow a tomato, it cracks, and you don’t want it in your kitchen. Instead of being grumpy you can throw it into the compost or you can feed it to your chickens. They eat it and then poop out the next (aged) fertilizer you use on, say, your lettuce crop. You have just come full ecological circle and at the very least, manifested regenerative gardening, edible gardening, and biodiversity.

The good news is that nature is a terrific teacher. The more you garden, the more you’ll learn about what works and what doesn’t. All you need to do is pay attention.

Dirty fingernails and all,
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Sioux Rogers

A photograph of a dog and a cat. The dog is on the left, looking up, and the cat is on the right, looking forward.

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A logo for Friends of the Animals, featuring a heart shape with a dog and a cat inside.

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