



Awash in green

Plants of a single hue lend a sense of peace and serenity to garden spaces

Green drenching creates a cozy oasis to connect with nature. Gardeners create the spaces to take their minds off of worldwide events and get away from stress and noise of everyday life. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONROVIA

BY EMILY HOARD

Surrounded by lush green foliage of different textures and varieties, a home gardener can feel a sense of peace and serenity in their living spaces, both indoors and out. This is the idea behind green drenching, and nurseries are providing a plethora of plants to support the trend.

What's green drenching?

Katrina Sanford, senior account manager at **Van Belle Finished Plants** in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, said green drenching is using different layers and textures of plants to maintain a blanket of green for a calming space.

"It's about designing a space that doesn't have the full rainbow of colors that engages the senses; it's a place to relax," Sanford said. "If you think of spas, they use the green color palette as a restorative color."

Katie Tamony, chief marketing officer at **Monrovia**, a California-based grower with its largest nursery in Dayton, Oregon, described green drenching as a trend where homeowners are creating lush, living "walls" around their garden spaces.

"This could mean planting evergreen hedges to hide fences, or choosing vines to trellis or cover fences," Tamony said.

Jimmy Wallich, sales representative for wholesale grower **Youngblood Nursery Inc.** in Salem, Oregon, said his definition of green drenching is doing what we can to bring the aura and feeling of the outdoors indoors in a modern life where there's less



Ferns such as *Matteucia struthiopteris* add texture to the garden as well as movement with a breeze. PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE FINISHED PLANTS



Dicentra 'Amore Titanium' (top left) showcases silvery blue-green foliage. During the spring and summer, beautiful white, heart shaped flowers dangle over the foliage on slender stems. *Heuchera 'Green Spice'* evokes the feeling of being in a forest, with its combination of pine green, greyed silver and burgundy. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TERRA NOVA NURSERIES INC.



and less green we can tangibly touch.

“It’s really trying to bring us back a step closer to being with plants,” Wallich said.

Natalie Carmolli, media and public relations representative at Proven Winners and **Spring Meadow Nursery**, based in Grand Haven, Michigan, said green drenching goes beyond the concept of color drenching, a design aesthetic that focuses on one dominant hue.

“Green drenching, on the other hand, isn’t just about surrounding oneself with greenery, or plants,” Carmolli said. “Yes, it’s about using gardens to create an immersive, lush atmosphere but it also emphasizes eco-conscious design with a focus on sustainability and restoration.”

Gardeners implementing green drenching create an impressive visual impact but also take into account ways to limit water use or grow plants known to clean the air where they live.

Chuck Pavlich, director of new product development at breeder-wholesaler **Terra Nova Nurseries Inc.** in Canby, Oregon, said in addition to rich green foliage, vibrant, showy flowers can be incorporated to add to the overall visual impact.

“Green drenching can evoke a sense of calm, offering a soothing and natural atmosphere through the presence of plants in a room or garden,” Pavlich said.

While the name might sound trendy, green drenching has been around for a very long time.

“People have been living side by side with plants since the beginning of time,” Wallich said, noting historical art depicting people surrounded by greenery. He said it has developed over the years into careers and lifestyles. He said this applies to his own life of living sustainably and his career of helping gardeners create sustainable gardens.

Sustainability

Carmolli said the environmental consciousness aspect of green drenching has been developing too. It includes using native plants, using less water, not using chemicals, and building green walls to clean air in urban environments.

Beyond the home garden, many public gardens use the green drenching concept.

The High Line in New York City is an urban park built on top of an unused elevated railway, Lurie Garden in Chicago is a naturalistic garden that includes native plants, and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas promotes the conservation of native plants.

“These are just a few examples of public spaces that immerse people in nature, with sustainability at their heart,” Carmolli said. “Now people want to take the concept of these iconic gardens into their own backyard, patio or rooftop garden and create their own lush spaces using plants that serve the dual purpose of being beautiful but also sustainable.”

Other sustainable features include pollinator friendly, wildlife supporting, drought tolerant, non-invasive, and low levels of flammability.

Pavlich associates green drenching with the beginning of hippies. “Getting back to nature, eating more organically, growing »

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your own food. For many, green drenching became an integral part of their daily life, a way to immerse themselves in nature,” Pavlich said. “It’s distinct from the recent houseplant craze, where indoor plants are sometimes sold for the price of a new car.”

Calming effect

The current societal focus on mental health has also helped evolve this concept.

“It’s creating that space where you can unwind and relax your senses,” Sanford said. “Green helps reset the mind and body.”

Tamony said green drenching creates a cozy oasis to connect with nature.

“Fifty-three percent of gardeners reported last year that they strongly agree that ‘gardening is good for my mental health and well-being’ and 38% report that ‘they garden to take their minds off of worldwide events and get away



Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*) adds texture to the garden. PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE FINISHED PLANTS

from stress and noise of everyday life,” Tamony said.

Suggested plants

Nurseries are offering many options to

match the concept’s themes of lush green color, privacy screens and native cultivars.

Sanford said ostrich ferns and hostas work well in shadier spaces.

“Evergreens add color in there as well as provide a nice structure to a shade garden,” Sanford said.

For sunnier spots, she recommended Bloomin’ Easy Private Jet® arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* ‘King of Brabant’ PP29678), Karl Foerster feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora*), Moonrock® Hardy Hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata* ‘Kolmakilima’ PP29853) and Dragon Baby™ Hardy Hydrangea (*H.p.* ‘HYLV17522’).

Spring Meadow Nursery and Proven Winners offers a drought-tolerant, pollinator friendly native shrub called Kodiak® Orange Diervilla (*Diervilla* × ‘G2X88544’ PP27548, CPBR5596), and another native shrub with round flowers called Sugar Shack® Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis* ‘SMCOSS’ PP26543, CPBR 5124).

Carmolli also recommended chokeberry (*Aronia*), a native plant with glossy leaves that turn red in the fall.

“It has purple berries in the summertime so wildlife can enjoy them and it’s great for pollinators in the spring,” Carmolli said.

Screens

Tamony said evergreen shrubs work well

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Beyond the home garden, many public gardens use the green drenching concept. The High Line in New York City is an urban park built on top of an unused elevated railway. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

to cover fencing and act as privacy screening.

There are several great choices, including Tight Squeeze™ Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata* ‘Green Sport’) which grows 12 feet tall, five feet wide, and has a lovely uniform habit that’s easy to care for, Tamony said. Bright N’ Tight® Carolina Laurel (*Prunus caroliniana* ‘Monus’) also provides privacy, reaching eight to 10 feet tall.

“We also have incredible upright junipers, and they tend to be the unsung heroes of this landscape look, providing a durable and versatile screening option,” Tamony said. “Skyrocket (*Juniperus scopulorum* ‘Skyrocket’) and Blue Arrow (*J.s.* ‘Blue Arrow’) junipers have lovely blue green foliage and grow fast to 15 feet.”

For natural screens, Wallich suggested beech trees or birch trees, or for indoor plants *Pothos* and spider plants (*Chlorophytum comosum*).

Scents

Plants that provide aroma can also lend another dimension to green spaces. Tamony suggested jasmine for abundant fragrant blooms and *Bougainvillea*, such as Monrovia’s Burgundy Queen® (*Bougainvillea* ‘Monharr’ PP34247) with stunning burgundy flowers.

Wallich recommended incorporating scents into green drenching with fragrant flowers. “*Daphne* has an extremely fragrant and beautiful bloom that hits you out of nowhere,” Wallich said.

Pavlich’s green drenching picks from Terra Nova include *Thalictrums* NIMBUS™ ‘Pink’ and NIMBUS™ ‘White.’

“Their early spring foliage is a fresh green, fluffy and ruffled, much like a maidenhair fern,” Pavlich said. “*Dicentra* ‘Amore Titanium’ showcases silvery blue-green foliage. During the spring and summer, beautiful white, heart shaped flowers dangle over the foliage on slender stems.”

He said *Heuchera* ‘Green Spice’ evokes the feeling of being in a forest, with its combination of pine green, greyed silver and burgundy. An indoor choice is *Monstera* ‘Thai Constellation’, which Pavlich called one of the must-have, holy grail plants of the houseplant craze.

“‘Thai Constellation’s bold, dramatic foliage is randomly striped with cream and white, giving this plant an extra flair,” Pavlich said. “This easy-to-grow monstera is tough, durable and always attracts attention.”

Advice for retailers

Carmolli’s advice to garden retailers is to tell their customers about native species they can use in their green drenched spaces.

“Also think about seasonality — buy with the whole growing season in mind, so people who want to garden with the green drenching aesthetic have the benefits these different plants offer always available to them, and to the wildlife who also enjoy these outdoor spaces,” Carmolli said.

Wallich said he thinks growers and »

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retailers should start to think on a smaller scale to match the needs of younger generations who don't necessarily have as much space as older ones.

He said retailers should cater to the shift he sees in why people choose to live with plants, as more of an internal and holistic choice rather than a symbol of status and wealth. Customers are seeking out smaller specialty plants that are affordable and that they can take care of and bond with.

He said tropical plants like *Sansevieria* are very accessible and affordable.

"Having exotic *Philodendron* and *Monstera* gives people a sense of inclusion and commitment," Wallich said.

Sample displays can be a great way to give customers ideas.

"We have a lot of new gardeners who can be overwhelmed, so a display provides a starting point and inspiration," Sanford said. "They can see combinations that will work to make that look and feel."

Philodendron verrucosum has a unique appearance that can be a great addition to indoor spaces, with foliage that has wavy edges, white veins and flushes of reddish hues. PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUNGBLOOD NURSERY INC.

Tamony's main advice is for retailers to translate to their customers the value of evergreens and conifers that need less maintenance to stay trim and lovely.

"Just consider the savings in time and energy once planted," Tamony said.

Green drenching is not a passing fad, as it has been part of multiple generations' lifestyles.

"To keep the interest of the buying public, always look for new and novelty items, find new applications for the more common products and stress quality," Pavlich said.

Green drenching draws from concepts like biophilic design, environmental awareness and since the pandemic, the desire for restorative personal spaces, according to Carmolli.

"Growers can capitalize on this by staying attuned to their customers' behaviors, priorities, and tastes," Carmolli said. "By aligning your assortment with this awareness, you position your business



not merely as trend followers but as contributors to a shared experience that feels authentic to your customers." ©

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