



From left: Heart to Heart® Midnight Oil Sun and Shade Caladium (*Caladium hortulanum* 'THAI STR OF17-1082' PP35509) and Vinho Verde® Weigela (*Weigela florida* 'SMNWFBGV' PP34297 CPBRA). PHOTOS COURTESY OF PROVEN WINNERS

Goth gardens

Plants with dark, rich tones are striking consumers' fancy

BY EMILY HOARD

Goth gardens celebrate deep purples, velvety blacks and smoky greens to create spaces that are both mysterious and elegant.

"It's about atmosphere — using rich tones, bold textures, and striking contrasts to tell a story through plants," said Madison House, consumer marketing manager for **Bloomin' Easy Plants**. "What makes it exciting is how expressive it is."

House said gardeners sometimes pair

the dark foliage with silver, chartreuse or pastel tones to make the dark foliage stand out even more.

"It's theatrical, emotional, and surprisingly versatile — perfect for anyone who wants their garden to reflect a bit of their personality," House said.

Natalie Carmolli, public relations specialist at **Spring Meadow Nursery**, first started hearing about the goth gardening trend a few years ago. She said it really seems to spike in interest every fall, to no surprise.

"It's a fun, moody way to play with color by grouping plants that have black or very dark purple flowers and foliage," Carmolli said, adding that she'd include

plants variegated with dark tones in the trend. "They still bring that dramatic, mysterious vibe people seem to love, but they can also break up the depth of color, adding a little more definition and style."

Katie Tamony, chief marketing officer and trend spotter at **Monrovia Nursery Company**, said goth gardens are inspired by Victorian-era old world estate landscapes that were dark and broody.

"These gardens were often created as places to reflect and remember, offering a haunting, romantic and reflective feeling," Tamony said. "The modern take on this design focuses on dark foliage plants with interesting textures offset by glowing accents." »

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From left: Pink Dynamo™ Mountain Hydrangea (*Hydrangea serrata* 'JPD01' PP33412) from Bloomin' Easy and Black Mondo Grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens') available from Monrovia and many other growers. PHOTOS COURTESY OF VAN BELLE NURSERY AND MONROVIA NURSERY CO.

The trend's development

Since the Victorian era, the goth garden trend has developed over time and has become especially popular during the fall season for Halloween, Tamony said. It has also become more common in container planting.

Carmolli said the goth garden trend has evolved and gardeners are embracing it year-round as an artistic expression instead of just for the fall and winter. She said social media channels have helped boost its popularity in recent years.

“People started sharing photos of deep purple dahlias, black petunias, and dark-foliaged shrubs and perennials, and over time it has developed a following,” Carmolli said. “I feel like lately it has become less about being ‘dark’ and more about being bold and personal.”

House added the social media aesthetic trends of “dark cottagecore” and “moody minimalism” for decorating homes and lifestyle spaces gained traction during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and 2021. People were spending more time at home, and House said more people were craving outdoor spaces that

felt personal and reflective.

“The garden became a creative outlet — somewhere to channel emotion, artistry and individuality,” House said.

Over the past few years, the goth garden has evolved from being a novelty trend into a design style that’s no longer about the color black but about creating mood and texture.

“We’re now seeing homeowners and even landscape designers use dark plants intentionally to create depth and contrast, or to anchor more colorful plantings,” House said.

House said she’s also noticed gardeners using dark toned plants as design accepts rather than the full theme, for example, pairing dark foliage shrubs with lighter ornamental grasses or white flowering perennials.

“It shows how the goth garden concept has matured — it’s not just for niche gardeners anymore, but a mainstream design element that adds sophistication to any space,” House said.

Who’s the audience?

According to House, the core audience for goth gardening is Millennials and

Generation Z. She said these younger generations approach gardening as an extension of personal style.

“Many of them are first-time gardeners who want to create something expressive and unique, but still manageable,” House said. She added that Bloomin’ Easy designs specifically for this group, helping the next generation of gardeners find success while having fun with design.

“They’re tech-savvy, design-conscious, and love plants that make an impact without demanding expert care,” House said. “The goth garden trend fits perfectly because it’s bold, emotional and easy to personalize whether that’s a full dark-themed bed or a moody container collection on a balcony.”

Carmolli added that this dramatic aesthetic is a style that photographs beautifully for online sharing via social media, so younger gardeners tend to be more drawn to it. However, gardening spans generations and lifestyles.

“But honestly, anyone who’s into bold, unconventional color with just a touch of mystery in their garden would probably enjoy it,” Carmolli said.



MoonShadow™ Rosita Hardy Hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos* 'Rosita' PPAF) from Bloomin' Easy.
PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE NURSERY

New developments

To feed this burgeoning trend, nurseries are introducing more plants with rich, dramatic foliage and blooms that are dependable for home gardeners.

“At Bloomin’ Easy, several of our newer introductions play beautifully into the goth garden palette,” House said. These include Spice Curls™ Coral Bells (*Heuchera* × ‘Holtspcur856’ PPAF), with its purple and silver ruffles that work well for borders or shaded corners that need dimension.

Others from Bloomin’ Easy are Pink Dynamo™ Mountain Hydrangea (*Hydrangea serrata* ‘JPD01’ PP33412) with pink blooms and dark leaves that House said gives it a romantic yet edgy look, MoonShadow™ Morello Hardy Hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos* ‘Morello’ PPAF) and MoonShadow™ Rosita Hardy Hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos* ‘Rosita’ PPAF), with their dark foliage and oversized blooms.

Carmolli said Spring Meadow Nursery’s Proven Winners® is always looking for niches in the market that are underserved.

“Often that means creating plants with unique, eye-catching foliage; especially those deep, dark tones that stay consistent through the season, like Kodiak Black® Diervilla (*Diervilla rivularis*

‘SMNDRSF’ PP27550 CPBR5938),” Carmolli said. “By always focusing on developing interesting, distinctive plants that perform better, we end up with varieties that naturally fit into almost any gardening trend and capture any market, when it comes along.”

Some of the Proven Winners® plants that fit into the goth garden trend include Superbells® Blackcurrant Punch™ (*Calibrachoa* hybrid ‘BBCAL81801’ PP30839 CPBR6288), Sweet Caroline Raven™ Ornamental Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomoea batatas* ‘NCORNSP-024SCRI’ PP31837 CPBR6286), Rock ‘N Grow® ‘Back in Black’ Stonecrop (*Sedum* ‘Back in Black’ PP33632 CPBRAFF), and Primo® ‘Black Pearl’ Coral Bells (*Heuchera* hybrid PP29395 CPBR5724).

Some of the many shrubs with black foliage include Winecraft Black® Smokebush (*Cotinus coggygria* ‘NCCO1’ PP30216 CPBR6513), The Center Stage® Series Crapeyrtle available in coral, pink and red (*Lagerstroemia indica*), Summer Wine Black® Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius* ‘SMNPMS’ PP30232 CPBR6775), Black Lace® Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ‘Eva’) and Very Fine Wine® (*Weigela florida* ‘SMNWDFPD’ PP32223 CPBR7155).

One of Tamony’s favorites is Centennial Ruby™ Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macro-* ➤

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phylla ‘Hokocentennial’ PPAF), a special release for Monrovia’s 100th anniversary.

“The flowers of this new variety are simply stunning, unlike anything seen before, with rich ruby-red mophead blooms that deepen in color as the long-lasting flowers age,” Tamony said.

Other dramatic plants from Monrovia include Ice N’ Roses® Merlot Hellebore (*Helleborus* × *glandorfensis* ‘COSEH 4700’ PP31181), Lilla Smoke Bush (*Cotinus coggygria* ‘Lilla’), Black Mondo Grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* ‘Nigrescens’), Velvet Viking™ Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum* ‘Monfrick’ PP31864) and Black Forest Cake Heuchera (*Heuchera* ‘Black Forest Cake’ PPAF).

Tamony said Dark Fire Montbretia (*Crocsmia* ‘Dark Fire’ PP35303) also fits the description with its smokey purple-green foliage and bright red and yellow flowers that hummingbirds love.

Gaining notice

Goth-style plants have also been gaining notice from retailers, garnering awards in 2026 at the Farwest Show and Cultivate. Retailers nominate plants and decide which ones should be recognized with awards. “There’s a lot of interest and development of it from the standpoint of breeders, and the retailers are seeing opportunity in that,” said Danny Summers, managing director of the Garden Center Group. Summers coordinates the Retailer’s Choice Awards at Farwest and Cultivate. He said the goth garden is “unique and provides another way of having interesting, different plants for a new season.”

Summers said the trend provides an opportunity for nurseries to offer unique plants to drive customer interest, especially during the fall and winter seasons. He said some of the judges have been impressed with the plants that include a

contrasting flower color that pops against the dark background of the leaves.

One example that stood out to Summers is Bailey Nurseries’ *Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Eclipse,’ which won the People’s Choice award in the New Varieties Showcase at the 2023 Farwest Show. This variety has dark purple foliage and red blooms. It keeps its dark color all season instead of turning green like other hydrangeas.

Other dark foliage plants that have won at the Retailers’ Choice Awards in recent years include:

- Syngenta Flowers’ Petunia Fun House ‘Black Widow’ (*Petunia hybrida*) and Tomato ‘Akoya’
- Star Roses & Plants’ Ruby Ruffle® Patio Peach (*Prunus persica* ‘Ruby Ruffle’)
- Monrovia’s Pink Spike Snakeroot (*Actaea simplex* ‘Pink Spike’)
- Proven Winners’ Kodiak Jet Black® Diervilla (*Diervilla* × ‘SMNDSN’ PPAF), Midnight Express® Redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis* ‘RNI-RCC3’ PP34213), Vinho Verde® Weigela (*Weigela florida* ‘SMNWFBGV’ PP34297 PBRAF) and Heart to Heart® Midnight Oil Sun and Shade Caladium (*Caladium hortulanum* ‘THAI STR OF17-1082’ PP35509).
- Bloomin’ Easy’s MoonShadow™ Morello Hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos* ‘Morello’) and Cherry-Go-Round Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Hokomaburlac’ PP34379, CPBRAAF).

The goth garden trend helps empower gardeners to create spaces that feel like them, House said. “I think the goth garden trend really proves how creative and emotionally driven gardening has become,” House said. “People are using plants to express identity, mood and even storytelling — and that’s exciting to see.” ☺

Emily Hoard is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master’s degree in multimedia journalism. You can reach her at HoardE123@Gmail.com.

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