

GARDENING IDEAS FOR *spring*

FOR MANY YEARS, SHERIDAN Nurseries (sheridannurseries.com) has been Geranium Homes' supplier of choice for beautiful outdoor planters as well as seasonal decor for our model homes and sales centres. As we approach the season for warm weather, I spoke with Brenda Luckhardt, business-to-business marketing and development manager for Sheridan about making plans for spring.

To get you in the mood for gardening season, bring some of the outdoors inside. Luckhardt says that outdoor plants are now transitioning out of dormancy and it is possible to force blooms ahead of their normal period if brought indoors. Good choices include pussy willow, forsythia, flowering cherry and crab apples. Cut branches are often found in Gardening Centres. Luckhardt also suggests "Fresh herbs provide a taste of summer all winter. When kept in a sunny window, they can be transferred to the garden once the threat of frost is gone."

Novice gardeners will discover many gardening websites, blogs and videos to fuel their inner green thumb. Luckhardt recommends you also visit your local nursery for information about product and care tips suited specifically for our own hardiness zone.

I asked Luckhardt about new plants making an appearance this year. "People are always excited about adding something new to their collections. Sheridan is celebrating its 100th anniversary and has introduced many namesakes to mark the occasion: delicately fragrant floribunda rose Sheridan's Anniversary Blush; a floriferous ninebark Mahogany Magic; Hosta Flash Forward; and a re-blooming Dwarf Lilac Purple Be Dazzled," she says.



Many of these plants were featured at Canada Blooms in mid-March. Popular colours in gardens often follow the pantone colour of the year. This year is Emerald Green, which works with any flower hue. You only have to walk through a shopping mall to see the return of bright and bold colours in clothing and accessories. Luckhardt explains that this also translates into gardens, with more people favouring strong colour over pastels. White is always a garden staple and looks especially striking in shade. She adds that in an online survey, Proven Winners – a developer of new annuals, perennials and flowering shrubs – learned that purple annuals won over traditional red and ever popular pink. Expect to see some new purple plants in the next few years.

As Geranium is a new-home builder, I was keen to ask what landscape planning suggestions Luckhardt would offer to the first residents of a house. She responds, "Any time of year is a good time to start to plan a garden. New-home owners are fortunate to have a blank slate to work with. Creating a landscape plan can save both money and time in the long run, as plants purchased will be chosen to thrive in a specific location. The garden can be phased as your budget permits. Of course, a design should ensure the garden will look good in all seasons."

If you've never owned a home with a garden before, you might not have the tools you'll need to get you started. Luckhardt recommends investing in tools of the highest quality, even if it means buying fewer at first. "At a minimum, a new gardener should start out with a sharp digging spade, a fan rake, a garden fork, a hand trowel and a pair of bypass secateurs," says Luckhardt. And, don't forget a couple of good pairs of gloves!

This is part of a series of articles on topics of interest to new-home buyers, authored by Sue Webb Smith, marketing director for Geranium Homes.



TOP
Dwarf Lilac
Purple Be
Dazzled

BOTTOM
Ninebark
Mahogany
Magic