



## Trends

With so many frightening things going on in our world these days, is it any wonder that our cocooning instinct is even stronger than before. Our comfort is extremely important to us, nowhere more evident than in our gardens. The trend to outdoor living is growing and landscape designers are getting more requests to create outdoor rooms, including cosy seating arrangements, dining areas, outdoor fireplaces and even outdoor kitchens. Outdoor furniture is designed to be more comfortable and weather resistant. Teak, cast iron and lightweight cast aluminium are very popular but Yellow Balau, a dense tightly grained hardwood is becoming more popular. Y.B. is fine textured, similar in colour and appearance to teak but less expensive due to over harvesting of teak. Another new material is "Wittex" an outdoor wicker that is very durable and weather resistant. It comes in dining sets; sofa or loveseat sets and comes in a variety of colour choices, with or without outdoor cushions covered with sunbrella fabric.

Ground covers are becoming an increasingly popular choice over lawns partially due to water concerns or the increase in additional outdoor living space requirements. This is especially apparent in shady or hard to mow areas. An additional benefit is the reduced use of pesticide and herbicides required to maintain the "perfect" lush lawn.

People are more interested in learning about and using environmentally friendly products such as insecticidal soaps, nematodes for grubs, or weed suppressing corn gluten meal.

Many people are even considering planting their own vegetable gardens thereby controlling what goes on the plants or in the soil.

One such trend is called "potager gardening" originating in France which combines growing vegetables, herbs and flowers especially edible flowers attractively together. We are also seeing an increasing number of certified organic herb and vegetable seeds becoming available as organic gardening becomes more popular.

It seems to me that these trends are a reflection of our desire to enjoy nature and the relaxation of the outdoors.