

“lemonading”

Turning challenges into opportunities

Garden Media 2026 garden trends report



A partnership:



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our 25th annual report

“Garden Media’s 2026 Garden Trends Report reveals an evolving industry, where gardening is becoming an expression of values, not just a hobby.”



Katie Dubow
Managing Director, GMG

For years, Organizzazione Orlandelli has been a partner of Garden Media, a leading American magazine in the gardening industry. Together, we provide you with the essential tools to interpret emerging trends and prepare for future consumer demands.

With this report, you're one step ahead, ready to meet consumer needs and shape the future of gardening!

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when life hands us lemons we play

Every year, we look for a theme that captures not just where people are, but where they want to be. This year, that theme is **Lemonading**.

You've heard the phrase. But in 2026, it's not fake optimism. *Lemonading* is about curiosity in the face of chaos. Asking, 'What can I do with this?' Transforming setbacks into opportunities through creativity, mindfulness, and a sense of joy.

It's not about ignoring the hard stuff, but acknowledging it, feeling it, and then asking: How can I grow from this? Lemonading doesn't pretend everything is okay. It simply allows us to shine light on what's possible—without losing sight of reality.





Play is more than fun it's functional

\\ Why Play? Why Now? Play Isn't Just Fun — It's a Competitive Edge

According to recent research from Oregon State University, playful individuals showed higher resilience in times of crisis. Play is a psychological toolkit—it reframes problems, reduces anxiety, and fuels creativity.

This is the essence of lemonading. It helps us reframe problems, redirect our thoughts, and spark creativity. It builds emotional endurance and makes space for experimentation.



But, change is hard and risky. We're slow to try and slower to admit when something isn't working. But play offers a way out. It helps us:

- Break free from shame around being wrong
- Turn flopped ideas into experiments
- Build team cultures based on trust.

IDEO refers to this as the “Fail Fast” mindset—the idea that prompt, honest feedback helps us find the right solution more quickly. And when we embrace the “Fail Fast” mindset, play becomes a strategic tool. It detaches our ideas from our identity. We're more likely to try something new, get feedback faster, and land on the right solution sooner.

the great exhaustion is real

\\ People are burnt out. There's a deep craving for simplicity, authenticity, and slowness.

- Simplicity over hustle
- Beauty over burnout
- Connection over consumption

\\ We're seeing a shift toward what really matters:

- Mindfulness, community, and joy in the everyday
- Redefining success as emotional well-being, not a job title or mortgage payment

We're celebrating “minorstones” instead of outdated *milestones*—small but meaningful personal wins. Things like paying off a loan, running a 5K, celebrating a half birthday (Madewell now offers half-birthday perks!), or pet birthdays. Today's consumers are less focused on status and more on intentional living.

So when we talk about trends this year, we're not just talking about products- we never are-we're talking about values. About how people want to live, and how gardening is helping them get there.



where joy takes root

The horticulture industry is uniquely positioned to embrace lemonading because we're rooted in resilience. We work with living things, face seasonality, unpredictability, and failure as part of the process.

But we've hidden behind perfection: flawless blooms and pristine plants. Today's consumer wants transparency and relatability. They want to see what really grows, even after things go wrong. Lemonading gives us permission to say it aloud. **Lemonading in the garden means:**

- Playing with something new, even if it flops
- Turning your space into a joyful, living experiment
- Laughing when something dies — and replanting anyway

This mindset shift isn't fluff- It's fuel for innovation, agility, and deeper connection. Our consumers are curious, resilient, and eager to engage. Let's meet them where they are—and invite them to play. Because this is where joy takes root.



2026 Garden Trends

purpose-driven

precision gardening

level up

personal museum

botanical bento

‘bark’itecture

kusumi colors

purpose

driven gardening



why we garden is changing

\\“It’s not just what I plant. It’s why I plant it.”

Gardens are no longer just private sanctuaries, they’re powerful tools for personal expression and collective impact. Today’s gardeners are using their hands and wallets to heal the world.

In a time when many feel overwhelmed by global challenges, gardening offers a way to take tangible, visible action, right outside your door.

Giving Is Being Reimagined

Gen Z, in particular, is driving a more democratized, values-led, and hands-on approach to philanthropy.

- 76% of 18–34-year-olds say they prefer peer-to-peer giving
- Platforms like GoFundMe have generated \$3.1 billion
- People want transparency, impact, and immediacy



make giving easy & genuine

\\ Consumers want more than products. They want purpose.

Consumers reward brands that support local initiatives - they see a **85% increase in trust**.

At Roger's Gardens in Corona Del Mar, giving is local and seasonal. By blending profit with purpose, they create measurable community value and long-term customer loyalty with events and products.

Targeted product lines that donate proceeds to conservation or education efforts are driving engagement and action. In 2025, the National Wildlife Federation recorded the **highest number of Certified Wildlife Habitat registrations since 2020**.

Southern Living® Plant Collection is working with public gardens in the South to expand institutional capacity, inspire the public, and educate the next gen of gardeners.



\\ Round-up campaigns work

Retailers have seen participation rates as **high as 20%** when customers are invited to round up their purchases for a charitable cause.

Garden centers like Homestead Gardens and Piedmont Feed & Garden Center raised over **\$5,000 this spring for Seed Your Future** through simple point-of-sale asks like, Do you want more young people to enter the horticulture workforce in our community?

purpose

in practice

- **Storytelling:** Develop a straightforward narrative about the value and impact. Customers want transparency and results.
- **Align Causes with Brand Ethos:** Support missions you *and your* customers care about, natives, pollinators, and endangered species.
- **Introduce Experiential Giving:** Test innovative formats like POS giving. Blend options with community events or workshops to make giving interactive and engaging.
- **Launch Limited-Edition Plants or Branded Merch:** Proceeds support charities, a tangible link between product and purpose.

- **Build Customer Loyalty:** Create visible, meaningful community programs, such as recycling stations, community gardens, or habitat restoration projects. Bonus: It also builds employee loyalty.
- **Involve Customers:** Allow them to vote on which charities to support or offer donation tiers based on purchase levels. Make customers feel like partners in your brand's mission.

In 2026, the most meaningful brands do more than grow or sell plants — they grow impact.



precision

gardening



how we garden is also changing

In healthcare, customization is standard.

- Precision medicine is expected to hit \$175.6 billion globally by 2030
- 72% expect tailored experiences from brands
- 74% of healthcare leaders say personalization is the future

This same expectation for data-driven results is now expanding into horticulture, where every plant, patch of soil, and drop of water is part of a smarter, more sustainable system.

This is Precision Gardening. it uses site-specific, data-informed strategies to grow healthier, more resilient landscapes. It is not about guessing. It is about gardening with intention.

Why it matters:

- Cuts the guesswork, saves resources, time, and money by preventing overwatering or overfertilizing
- Builds customer trust
- **Sets you apart from the rest**

Technology like soil sensors, localized weather tracking, and plant monitoring tools gives gardeners access to the kind of personalized insights that are transforming healthcare and wellness.



no longer just aesthetic, but strategic

Modern technology already exists to give gardeners access to the same kind of hyper-personalized info transforming medicine.

- In the Netherlands, precision pollution tracing is happening using mini drone bots.
- Davey Tree's research and consulting in **climate-resilient tree care** underscores this shift, using **advanced diagnostics and GIS mapping** to help communities plant smarter, longer-living urban forests tailored to future climate conditions.
- Meadow Lab's new Wildflower Sod™ offers native, pre-designed plant palettes tailored for regional ecological performance.

And our customers want it. Webinars on drought- and fire-resilient gardening, offered by Oregon State and the University of Maine Extension, sell out.

Let's move away from broad, zone-based planting toward hyperlocal, site-specific strategies. With your help, designs will be based on details such as microclimates, soil health, and resilience to drought, fire, and flooding.



take action

The New Gardener wants a bespoke, future-proof garden, science-backed plant choices, and low-fuss, high-reward gardening experiences.

- **Find Data-Driven Tools** - Soil tests, climate mapping services, plant recommendation, and identification apps.
- **Promote Plant “Prescriptions”** - based on soil tests or ZIP Code microclimates, site-specific plans.
- **Stock Up** - Invest in resilient, native, drought, fire, flood-adapted. Create low-input landscaping packages.

- **Market Resilience** - Frame plants not just as beautiful, but bulletproof: drought-tolerant, flood-resilient, low-maintenance.
- **Educate** - Position your brand as a trusted advisor with precision guides, webinars, classes, and tools.

This is a shift from a generic garden center to a niche expert in resilient landscapes, moving from doing more to doing smarter. This proactive approach to design requires less intervention and is about embracing science-backed strategies to cultivate gardens that are personalized, resilient, and future-ready.



Level 1

UP



gaming grows up and calms down

\\ It's called Kidulting.

Gaming today is bigger and more diverse than ever.

There are over **3.4 billion gamers worldwide** — nearly half the globe. YPulse claims 97% of 13-39-year-olds are gaming. But what's more interesting is how they have evolved. Nearly half of them are women, with an average age of 36.

In our stimulated and stressful world, cozy gaming is booming.

- Mentions of cozy games grew **57% this year**
- **67% say relaxation** is the top reason they play

Designed to lower stress, prioritize relaxation, creativity, and gentle, nature-inspired activities, Cozy games mimic real-life; planting crops, caring for animals, fishing, and exploring nature. They offer small, achievable rewards that tap into the same satisfaction and mindfulness as tending a real garden.

It's gaming for mental health.



hort gaming is a natural fit

\\ Cozy gaming has deep ties to nature.

Games like Harvest Moon and Stardew Valley (41 million copies) paved the way, focusing on farming, gardening, and building community.

And it's capturing the next generation: Grow a Garden, a Roblox-based farming sim, drew over **16 million concurrent players** in June 2025, that's more than Fortnite at its peak. These 13-year-old kids planted seeds, raised pets, and grew a garden. No guns. No fighting. Just the joy of nurturing.

Cozy gaming spaces, such as the r/CozyGamers subreddit, are filled with hundreds of thousands of players sharing their digital landscapes alongside real-life gardening inspiration.

As one user put it: *“It's not just a game — it's a mindset.”*



how garden brands can level up

Create a 'Cozy Gaming' Space

- Show customers how to transform their home gaming spaces into real-life nature nooks with a Gamer Plant Pack from Costa Farms, featuring Alocasia Silver Dragon, [Pink Princess Philodendron](#), Pilea, and more.
- Pair plants with LED lights and tuck them into console-themed planters for extra fan points.

Tie Products Into Popular Games

- Create collections inspired by popular games.
- Design limited-edition items with nods to game aesthetics — pixel art, vintage games, or avatars.
- Carry merch from the popular games

Host Meetups and Events

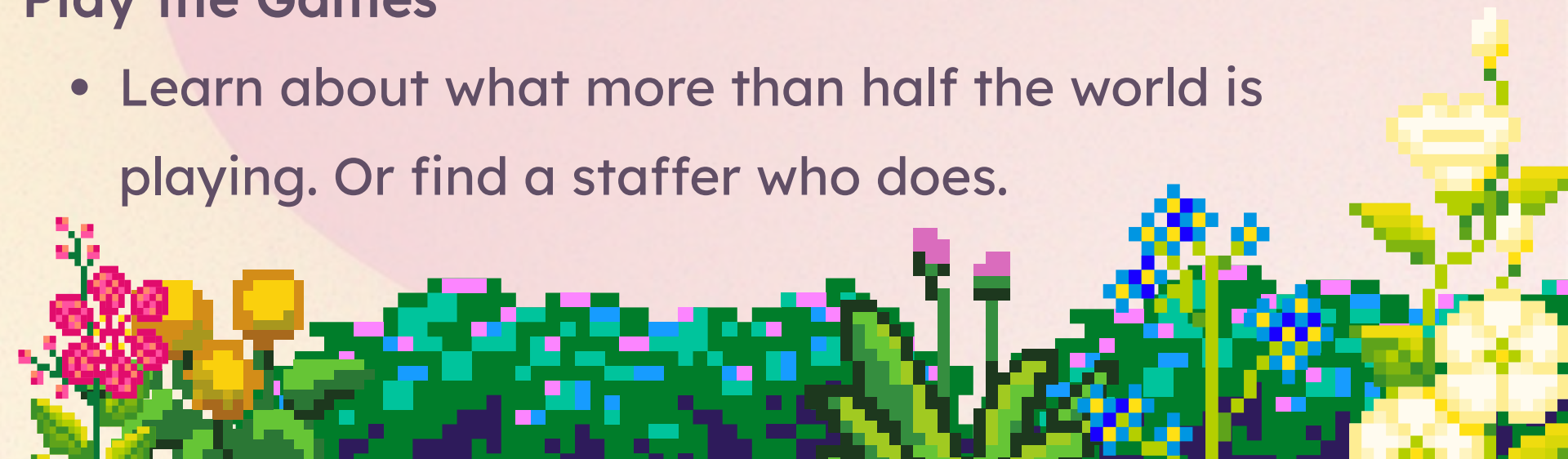
- 45% of 13-39-year-olds report [not having a third place to go](#). Host in-store game nights themed on popular farming and gardening games. If Chuck's Arcade can do it, so can you.
- Design cozy corners and organize community meetups for cozy gamers — consider activities like plant swaps and garden parties.

Partner with the Games Themselves

- If Stardew Valley is too big, what about smaller games like Garden Joy?

Play the Games

- Learn about what more than half the world is playing. Or find a staffer who does.



personal museum





curating identity

\\ In a world of digital sameness, instant gratification and mass production collecting is making a comeback, especially with Gen Z and Millennials. They're reclaiming individuality through collecting. A quiet rebellion against disposable culture.

On TikTok and Instagram, influencers are flexing curated collections, that feature sneakers, vinyl, and cars. But this wave is more about the story-driven ownership—building meaning and identity through curation.

Aesthetic-driven subcultures, such as **#cluttercore** (158M+ views on TikTok from 3M in 2021), **#cottagecore**, **Eclectic Grandpa**, and **Kitschy Kitchens**, are trending, signaling a preference for layered, nostalgic, and curated environments. In a disposable culture, collecting offers something radical: permanence.

“My shelf isn't cluttered. It's curated.” — r/ClutterCore



collecting

is booming - digitally and physically



The collectibles market is thriving:

- Projected global revenue: **\$1T by 2033** (Statista)
- U.S. collectibles market CAGR: **4.8%** through 2030
- Etsy reports a **47%** increase in searches for vintage, botanical, and collectible home décor. Their latest Trend Report reveals that shoppers seeking "intentional clutter" and "personality-driven design" have increased by 27%.
- eBay redesigned its entire platform in 2025 to attract this exact younger audience, and according to its latest Recommerce Report, 80% of Gen Z shoppers bought a collectible or vintage item in the last year.

Collecting is driving real-world buying behavior — from Labubu plushies to plants.



fastest growing category is plants

Collecting plants is the new Pokémon; rare cultivars, new foliage colors, and variegations are being chased. Plant collecting taps the same emotions as gaming: achievement, progression, and control. It's slow joy.

Collectors range from:

- Specialists: curating 50+ monstera varieties, leading to an all-time best-seller from Costa Farms®: Burle Marx Flame
- Explorers: hunting rare, high-demand cultivars like Thai Constellation or Alocasia 'Dragon'
- Nativists: curating gardens to support pollinators, preserve ecosystems, and restore biodiversity



Collecting from the Wild

Foragers add a living layer to the Personal Museum, gathering nature's treasures: branches, seed pods, moss, blooms, bark, and berries. This isn't scavenging, it's intentional curation.

Each item collected tells a story of place, season, and moment.

Tools like OASIS® Forage Products™ help people turn their findings into living art, from wild wreaths and ikebana-style arrangements to seasonal installations.

Foraging is collecting with a purpose:

- It teaches seasonal awareness
- Builds a deeper relationship with nature
- Transforms the mundane into meaningful
- Emphasizes impermanence and observation





botanical
bento

curated compactness

We're living in an age of compression. Everything is distilled into smaller, smarter, and more intentional formats, from communication to content to consumer products.

- TV? Curated shorts.
- Fitness? Micro-routines with a purpose.
- Wellness? Tiny rituals with big emotional payoff.
- Shopping? Beautiful, minimal packaging and drop-shipped delight.

But we're not just rushing. We're refining. **This isn't about more, faster.** It's about experiences designed with care, efficiency, elegance, and emotional resonance.

The rise of the bento box mindset reflects this: small-scale, highly considered, and deeply satisfying.



be a bento

A bento box isn't just a container—it's a concept. This is the real magic behind cult hits like the Oishii omakase berry box (retails for \$50 a box) or luxury airline kits—not just the product, but the presentation. Thoughtful, convenient, aesthetically pleasing, and emotionally generous. Everything has its place. Every element is curated. It's portable pleasure, packaged with care.

That's what today's consumer craves. Not just “little treats,” but lovely moments made accessible. It's not random. It's art.

This is the antidote to doomscrolling—and brands that offer organized delight stand out.

Can you create the same feeling for a garden in a box?



how to **do this**

- **Curate seasonal “garden bento” boxes** – beautifully packaged, compact, and coordinated. Native plant samplers could be arranged by pollinator type
- **Use grid-style layouts and tidy visual merchandising** — like those from Plant by Number
- **Pair plant palettes with experiences** (e.g., “Grow Your Cocktail Garden” or “Salsa in a Box”)
- **Add unboxing joy** – think stickers, elegant guides, soft-touch cards
- **Feature time-lapse content** showing how a bento-style garden matures over 30 days

Botanical Bento isn’t just snackable treats—it’s stylishly compact, emotionally satisfying, and designed to delight.



‘bark’itecture



a growing movement

Pets and gardening go together like peanut butter and jelly. Surveys say **70% of gardeners also own pets**, and that pets aren't just companions; **87% consider them family**.

#spoiled is the **4th highest-used** term on PetTok. Those who use **#spoiled** for their pets are statistically more likely to care about homes and gardens.

As pet ownership rises, especially among Millennials, it's unsurprising that gardens and outdoor spaces are evolving to accommodate them.

But after 24 years of reporting, why would they hit now?



passing the sniff test

Monty Don made history by designing a dog-inclusive garden at the 2025 RHS Chelsea Flower Show. He reminded us that thoughtful design can also be pet-friendly.

Key Principles:

- **Lush Native Lawn** — unusual for a show garden — so dogs can roll around and play. Diverse lawns are more hardy for pets' needs, as well as offering many new things to sniff. However, clover is especially beneficial because it remains green during periods of drought and dog waste, whereas grass will turn yellow.
- **Non-Toxic Plants:** Choose plants that are safe for pets.
- **Secure Fencing & Boundaries:** Ensure the space is escape-proof with pet-friendly, durable fencing that meets your needs.
- **Shade & Water:** Provide cool, shaded areas with trees or shrubs and access to water.
- **Play & Relaxation Zones:** Add agility spaces, splash areas, or comfy resting spots.



pet-friendly plants

Designing outdoor spaces with our furry friends in mind is more than a luxury — it's a necessity!

Make it easy with a curated collection of pet-friendly plants:

- [Lavender](#) – Plant along paths for a calming scent and natural pest deterrent
- [Bee Balm](#) – Use in borders to keep curious noses out of the pollinator party
- [Nepeta Cat's Pajamas](#) – Edge garden beds; resilient to pet traffic and full of texture
- [Coral Bells](#) – Add to shaded areas for color without toxic worry
- [Creeping Thyme](#) – Ideal as a groundcover between stepping stones; soft on paws and fragrant
- [DownHome Harvest® Hello Darlin'® Blueberry](#) – Sweet treats for the whole family and safe for Fido!
- [Mojo® Pittosporum](#) – Beautiful variegation makes this a safe and stunning structure shrub



reshape

outdoor spaces

- Pet ownership isn't just influencing small changes — **it's reshaping home design.**
- **Nearly half of pet owners already have dedicated outdoor spaces for their pets,** and many more plan to add them. Homeowners and renters are factoring pets into their outdoor and interior design decisions, creating what's now dubbed "barkitecture."
- This trend shows no signs of slowing, from **feeding stations and catios to custom sleeping areas.** The takeaway? The future of home and garden design is pet-inclusive, making life better for both pets and people.
- Meanwhile, brands like Lowe's are responding with "**PETio**" **shoppable blueprints** with products and project resources to help you set up a stylish backyard that appeals to your entire household. Lowe's aims to be the one-stop destination for design-minded pet lovers and their outdoor companions, offering a range of products from durable, no-dig picket fences to chic, stain-resistant rugs and sleek, multifunctional doghouses.
- The message is clear — gardens are no longer just for people. **They're for pets, too.**



beyond cats & dogs

- While dogs and cats have driven much of the pet-friendly garden movement, other animals are also increasingly shaping outdoor spaces.
- The rising interest in backyard chickens and goats reflects a broader cultural shift toward self-sufficiency, sustainability, and reconnecting with nature — values that naturally align with gardening.
- Backyard chicken keeping is booming, with Tractor®Supply Co. predicting record chick sales in 2025 — fueled by high egg prices and a shift toward food self-sufficiency and sustainability.

- **Goats** — especially miniature breeds like Nigerian Dwarf and Pygmy goats — are finding a place in suburban and even urban backyards. They offer multifunctional benefits, including milk production, natural lawn maintenance, and even companionship.
- **Geese, runner ducks, quail.** These birds are not just a homesteader's dream, but are trending on social media.
- Plus, therapeutic uses like goat yoga and baby goat cuddle sessions highlight the emotional connection people build with their animals outdoors.

In short, gardens are evolving into multi-species sanctuaries — places where people, pets, and livestock can coexist harmoniously.



kusumi

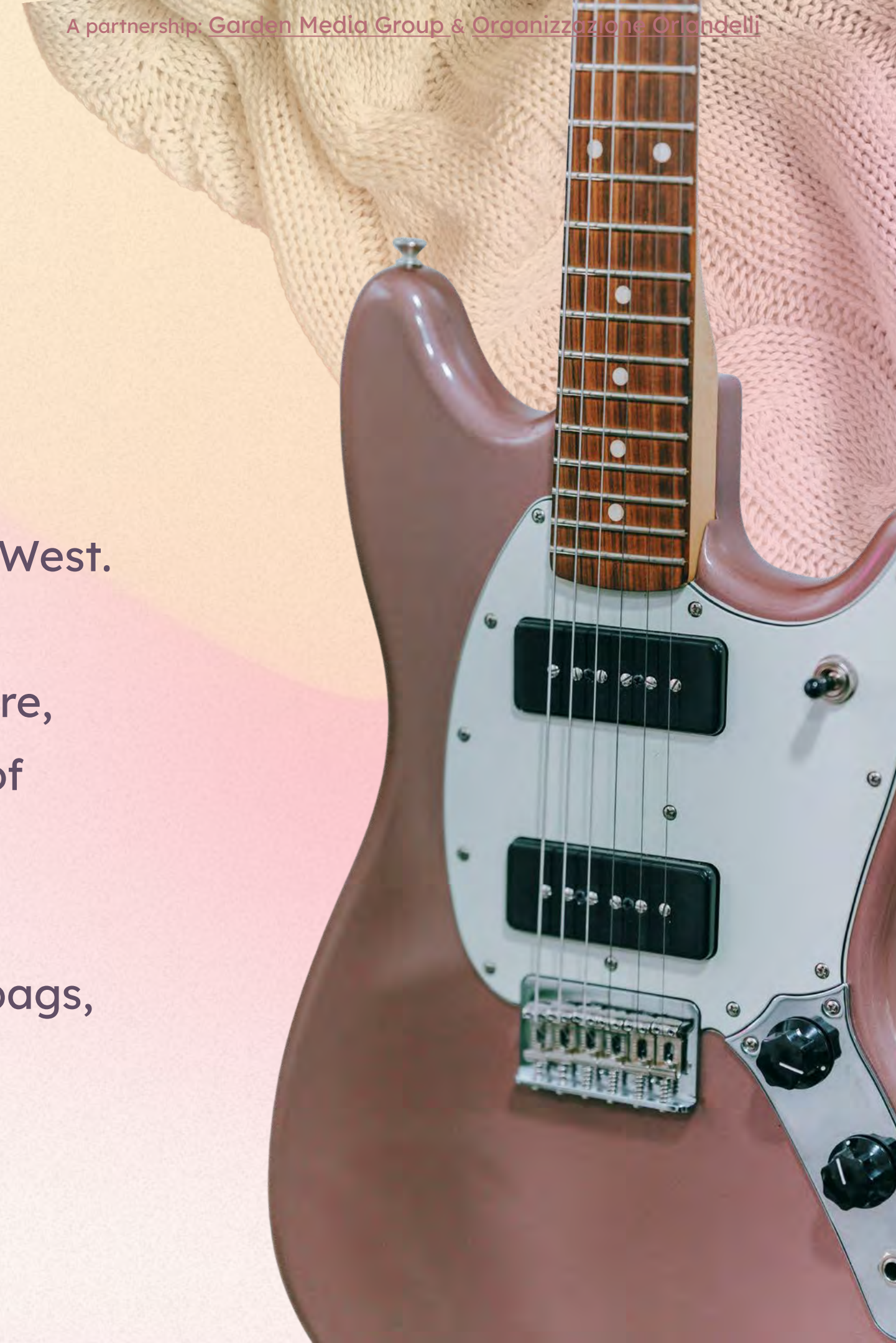
colors

kusumi colors

A gentle veil draped over color. Color covered in ash. Kusumi- A massive hit in East Asia, these shades are now making their way West.

Muted, organic, nostalgic—these dusty shades are rooted in nature, colors shifting subtly with the seasons. They capture the beauty of faded clothing or pressed flowers, objects mellowed by time.

Major brands, from Anthropologie and Fender guitars to Baggu bags, are fully embracing collections in these sophisticated shades.



color of the year

faded petal

This pale, dusty color is a soft blush kissed by ash, quietly romantic yet distinctly grown up. And not Millennial Pink.

In 2026's designs and gardens, Faded Petal will **embody subtle luxury, refined coziness, nostalgia, and romanticism**. It echoes the popularity of the Nancy Meyers era and the brand LoveShackFancy. The term 'Nancy Meyers' home' has increased by 9,900% since 2020 and doubled since 2024.

This muted shade offers innovation in the color space and resonates strongly with Millennials and Gen Z's desire for authenticity and understated elegance.

Paired with earthy tones, lush foliage, and textures like weathered wood or vintage pottery, it transforms gardens and interiors into serene, sophisticated sanctuaries.



cutting gardens

Cutting gardens become living galleries of subtlety, grace, and elegance. Floral designer Ace Berry of OASIS Forage Products likes the following flowers, which hold their shape and dry to muted, papery pastels.

- Strawflower in blush, peach, or rose
- Gomphrena in pink
- Roses in blush and brown-pink like Star® Roses and Plants Princesse Charlene de Monaco® or Mother of Pearl®
- Pink hydrangea varieties fade into dusty mauves and antique rose when aged slightly on the plant
- Scabiosa pods in pink varieties dry with warm, earthy mauve undertones that fit into the faded-petal vibe
- Dried pink astilbe takes on a delicate, aged lace appearance



color of the year

faded petal

- **American Lace™ Pink Hydrangea** (Star® Roses and Plants)
- **Blush Pink™ Nandina** (Sunset® Plant Collection)
- **It's A Breeze® Ivory Blush Rose** (Southern Living® Plant Collection)
- **Mood Ring® Podocarpus** (Southern Living® Plant Collection)
- **Mother of Pearl®** (Star® Roses and Plants)
- **October Magic® Dawn™ Camellia** (Southern Living® Plant Collection)
- **Pink Shades™ Magical® Hydrangea** (Sunset® Plant Collection)
- **Princesse Charlene de Monaco®** (Star® Roses and Plants)
- **Suntastic™ Pink Abelia** (Southern Living® Plant Collection)

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- [LoveShackFancy](#)
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Purpose-Driven Gardening

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