

Myplant & Garden, International Green Expo

Growth of gardening compartment in Italy

The traditional annual bulletin compiled by the International Green Expo confirms that Italians are keen gardeners. The gardening industry keeps showing signs of growth in 2022. Focus on trends for 2023.

Myplant, the most important professional gardening trade fair in Italy reports signs of steady growth in the Italian gardening industry. Sell-in for 2022 will be between 3.35 and 3.40 billion Euro, with a growth of 5 million from 2021, with a growth of almost 40 million from 2021*. Since the year of Myplant's debut in 2015, sell-in has grown by 290 million Euro.

“These numbers are in line with our expectations and the results from the last edition of Myplant last February – the management comments. We are waiting to understand what will happen in the next few months because of the pressure of inflation, the costs of energy and the development of the international scene”.

Italians love gardening

Plants, pots, accessories, battery-powered tools, irrigation systems, plant food: Italians are passionate about home gardening, they invest in the aesthetics of their homes and take care of their outdoor spaces as well. Gardening is a urban phenomenon sustained by new products, technologies, widespread and more and more online-based retail solutions, and new apartment buildings that include bigger balconies, decks and gardens. The green trend is catching in an industry that is moving forward from traditional concepts of agriculture to include concepts like wellbeing, health, sustainability, ecology and remedy against stress within urban agriculture and hobby gardening. These are significant factors in the growth of the gardening industry, that is developing new products to meet the new needs, such as designer pots, ergonomic tools and batteries of latest generations. Millennials and Generazione Z (18-35 year-olds) in the USA are already worth 30% of the market.

Trend 2023 as seen during the trade fair

During the last edition of Myplant & Garden new consumer trends have been shown: terrariums, xerophilous plants, mushrooms and algae that can be cultivated, such as marimo, a ball-shaped algae with a velvety appearance into a symbol of eternal love, succulents and cacti, plants with variegated leaves, officinal herbs sold with recipes for infusions, homemade beauty product and essential oils, smaller fruit trees, especially citrus and previously-unseen-in-Italy kumquat and calamondin orange, rich in vitamins and also very ornamental. According to the National Garden Bureau, which is headquartered in Illinois, USA, 2022 is also the year of peperomia, gladiolus, lilac, phlox, verbena and lettuce, whereas 2023 will be the year of orchids, broccoli, celosia, amaryllis, rudbeckia and spirea.

Plants are more and more often placed into very nice pots, which are more decorative rather than merely used as containers. They are often made using recycled materials and vegetable fibres. The soils used are more natural and sustainable as well.

More importance is also given to organic plants and plant care products, especially when hobby gardeners grow vegetables for their own consumption. Gardening requires passion, time, sensitivity and a lot of maintenance. Private outdoor spaces host small greenhouses, raised beds, smaller raised bed kits for balconies, smart irrigation systems, and robotized tools. New products on the market also meet the needs of elderly people and children.

Survey about consumers

A survey presented during the last edition of the International Green Expo** has highlighted how Italian people are more interested in gardening than in the past, be it indoor-plant collectors or hobby gardeners, going from 16 to 19 million between 2019 and 2020 (about 39% of the entire Italian population), growing from the 12 million home gardeners in 2012. According to the estimates, in 2020 7% of the population more than the year took to gardening, with a forecast of 17 million people steadily interested in gardening in 2021. Before new data are published regarding 2022, recent research has shown that more and more people spend their time outside and devote more resources to embellish their outdoor spaces, and there has also been a 200% increase in online purchases of gardening furniture and equipment in general.

According to the survey presented during Myplant last February**, two typical kinds of gardener emerged: enthusiasts and experts. Enthusiasts are mainly women with an average age of 45, passionate about home gardening and cultivate herbs, ornamental plants, succulents and vegetables. Their favourite indoor plant is the orchid. 49% are busy indoors, 51% also outdoor. Experts, instead, devote more time to their outdoor vegetable gardens (smaller in the North, bigger plots of land in the South) every week, cultivate vegetables for their own consumption are 53 on average, and get their supplies from specialized retailers, and garden centers.

Another survey,*** instead, shows that Millennials (people born between 1980 and 1994) are ‘narcissistic ecologists’, some of them even ‘idealists’. These traits are also typical among people of Generation Z (people born between 1995 and 2010), who think more about aesthetics and sustainability. Generation Z, however, is defined as more ‘pragmatic’, entrepreneurial and less inclined to compromise than Millennials. This is also reflected in the use and impact of social media, that are exploited to decide whether or not to purchase a product.

Connecting gardens

A recent American research titled “Gardening trends for 2023 are about personalization”. Now that people have re-discovered outdoor areas, they are going to transform them and personalize them according to their tastes and connection with nature, the environment, friends and themselves, also exploiting the Danish concept of hygge.

Xerophilous plants, which are more resistant to dry weather, will become more and more popular. American producers are experimenting new solutions to produce plants that can be more resilient to lack of water without compromising their health and appearance. According to Grownomics Report 2022/23 published by Simple Spring (Chicago), an ever growing number of Americans who are 25 and older are inclined to spend more money for gardening.

Shadows on production

Italian horticulture is under pressure. Even though Italian people are passionate about gardening, inflation, cost of energy and the international political scene are impacting production, which translates into reduction in production, increase in prices, lack of planning. During the first semester in 2022 export has shown an increase of 9% as compared to the first semester in 2021. 2021, however had shown a 21% increase as compared to 2020. Import, instead, has grown by 60% in the first semester of 2022 (2021 on 2020 instead had been +8%). This puts the end-of-year trade balance at risk. Also in light of these data, appeals are being launched towards politicians and institutions. The increase in the price of energy are frightening: almost +100% between Summer 2022 and 2021 for electricity, +80% Spring 2022/Spring 2021 for gas, +1,200% July 2022/July 2021 for methane.

“Horticulture is a very important industry for our country – the fair management comments - with 30 thousand hectares of lands cultivated by over 20 thousand companies, located mainly in Liguria, Tuscany, Lombardy and Campania, with Tuscany leading over Lombardy and Sicily for the production of plants, and Liguria leading for the production of flowers and plants, followed by Sicily and Campania (data Masaf-Crea). After a few years of growth which has also helped the development of the passion for gardening, the industry is experiencing some stress”.

*Statista, Technavio, Research and Markets, Mordor Intelligence, Grand View Research, GM Insights, Euromonitor International, Istat, Nomisma, Businesscoot.

**Nomisma in collaboration with Passione In Verde/Edagricole at Myplant 2022.

***Istituto Piepoli for Gruppo Intesa Sanpaolo.