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Are you a wine lover? Do you want to create a space in which to store your favorite bottles? Before getting started, you should know that many elements must be considered in order to preserve your best vintages. Here are five recommendations for setting up the perfect wine cellar.

**KEEP OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE**
Your wine cellar shouldn’t be too cold or too hot. Ideally, the temperature should be kept between 54 and 57 °F. Otherwise, your wine runs the risk of premature aging.

**MANAGE HUMIDITY LEVELS**
The ideal humidity level for a wine cellar is usually between 60 and 80 percent. If it’s too high, the corks could get moldy; too low, and the wine’s quality could be affected.

**INDIVIDUAL COMPARTMENTS**
To avoid having to move your bottles around too frequently, store them horizontally in individual compartments. Wine doesn’t respond well to being moved around, so storing each bottle in its own compartment is the best way to preserve its flavor.

**AVOID STRONG LIGHTING**
Since wine is very sensitive to light, it’s best to store it in a dark place. Choose a low-intensity light source for when you need to see what you’re doing.

**KEEP STRONG SMELLS AWAY**
Avoid storing or using strong-smelling products in your cellar, because the smells could eventually get through the cork and alter the taste of the wine.

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Looking for an easy plant to care for? Try a succulent. Any plant with fleshy stems or leaves is called a succulent. Aside from cacti, only a few other plant families have succulent members. All those succulents, cactus or not, are low-maintenance.

SOME NON-CACTUS SUCCULENTS

One family of non-cactus succulents is Crassulaceae, which counts among its members the familiar jade plant, which has thick stems and shiny green, fleshy, spoon-shaped leaves. After years of selective stem cutting, my jade plant has developed two thick trunks that give it the appearance of a venerable tree in miniature.

Kalanchoe is another family member, notable for the small plantlets that grow along the edges of its leaves and periodically drop off to give rise to new plants. Hence its other name: mother-of-thousands. Shortening daylight hours in fall coax out this plant’s salmon-red or apricot-orange flowers, which contrast nicely with the bluish cast of the green leaves.

Sedums are yet another Crassulaceae. My burro’s tail (Sedum morganianum) has braids of thick, fleshy leaves that hide its stems as they cascade over the edges of its hanging, coconut planter.

Moving on to another family of succulents brings us to the Euphorbiaceae. Milk-striped euphorbia is named for the milky line down its stem, but I think the Latin name, Euphorbia pseudocactus, is more descriptive. With thorns and upright stems off which branch ‘arms,’ the plant could easily be mistaken for a cactus.

CONTINUED >>
Crown-of-thorns, aside from its beautiful pink flowers, is another Euphorbia species, this one armed with spines as fierce as those of any cactus. Not all Euphorbiaceae are succulent: poinsettia is one that’s not.

The lily family, Liliaceae, is a third plant family with many succulent members. Aloe is most famous as an ingredient of hand lotions and shampoos, but the plant itself is attractive and care-free — mine has gone whole winters without watering! Over time, it has filled its pots with wheels of thick, fleshy, lance-shaped leaves.

Sansevieria is a succulent lily with an unflattering common name: mother-in-law’s tongue. Unflattering to mothers-in-law, that is, because the plant is a cluster of long, sharp leaves speckled like snakekin.

**WATERING: LESS IS MORE**

An advantage and a disadvantage of succulents as houseplants is their adaptation to survive without water. If you remember to water your plants only when you’re driving in your car, or if you want a living plant that needs water only slightly more often than a plastic plant, then grow succulents.

On the other hand, if you tip a glass of water on your plants every time you walk past them, you’ll soon transform any succulent houseplant into a mass of brown rot. The key to caring for succulents is to hardly ever water them. Once every couple of months in winter, and a couple of times a month in summer, is sufficient. More generally, let the soil dry out between waterings.

When repotting is needed for any succulent plant, use a potting soil that drains water quickly, made so by adding equal volumes of sand or perlite to any mix used for other types of plants.

Besides their ease of care, succulents are easy to propagate. Use the leaves, stems or offshoots, letting any of these plant parts dry and heal for a few days before potting them up. Leaves that occasionally drop off my jade plant often take root just sitting on the soil.

---

*CROWN OF THORNS*

*Euphorbia milii*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia prolifera*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia cyparissias*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia regale*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia* species

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia obesa*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia emerus*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia griffithii*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia tirucalli*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia lancifolia*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia fulgens*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia amygdaloides*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia helioscopia*

**CROWN OF THORNS**

*Euphorbia pulcherrima*

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Gardening trends for 2020: Think unconventional, sustainable

Gardening in 2020 will veer from the beaten path, opting for unconventional varieties and eco-conscious surroundings, according to a plant trends study by horticulturalists with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS).

Their forecast is based largely on market observations and feedback from people seeking information from Extension offices.

Interest is strong for native plants, drought-tolerant, "re-wilding" gardens, edible settings, wildlife-friendly landscapes, dark foliage, succulents, novel prices, landscaping for natural disasters, and softer, leafier floral arrangements, the horticulturists said.
"More and more folks are wanting to think about sustainability," said Mark Tancig, a UF/IFAS agent based in Leon County.

"They’re wanting to plant things that don’t require as much water or fertilizer," he said. "Plants that resist disease and insects. Plants that provide for wildlife use and need less maintenance and input. That not only saves money but it looks good, too. It’s restorative to the environment."

Breaking down the study’s trending Top 10:

--Native Plants. These plants original to a specific place generally are lower maintenance, requiring less water, pruning and fertilizer.

--Dwarf Hybrids. Gardeners without a lot of living space increasingly are choosing the dwarf varieties of their favorite plants. They also require less pruning.

--Re-Wilding Gardens. To encourage beneficial insects and the health of your garden, allow shrubs to return to their natural shapes, let grass grow longer and permit a few weeds to flower, said Theresa Badurek, horticulture agent for Pinellas County. "Some of those volunteer weeds may be great wildflowers."

--Edible Settings. Fruit-bearing plants, ornamental vegetables and edible flowers do double duty, adding beauty as well as nutrition to the home landscape.

--Plants for Wildlife. "Most contemporary landscapes lack diversity, so gardeners should choose a variety of plants that flower and fruit," Badurek said. Plants with berries attract birds, and layering plants of varying heights provides hiding places for other species.

--Dark Foliage. Plants with red, purple or black leaves are striking additions to any landscape, making them attractive to gardeners looking for something new in 2020, said Marguerite Beckford, a horticulture agent in Sarasota County.

--Succulents. People are reaching out for lesser-known succulents that offer interesting shapes, textures and growth habits, the University of Florida horticulturists say.

--Novel Greens. Vegetable gardeners will be looking to diversify their harvests with leafy greens generally grown outside the United States — bok choy, mizuna and komatsuna among them, according to the horticulturists.

--Landscaping for Natural Disasters. "Wildfires are becoming more erratic and more feared," Tancig said. "Plant the kinds of trees around your home that reduce risk."

--Softer, Leafier Floral Arrangements. Flowers combined with foliage are gaining in popularity. "We are going away from the bundle bouquet of solitary flower blooms to the soft, organic feel of greenery," said Karen Stauderman, an Extension horticulture agent for Volusia County.

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In the best-selling book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, Japanese author and expert organizer Marie Kondo outlines her technique for turning a cluttered home into a tidy and peaceful place.

The KonMari Method differs from other decluttering methods in that it recommends cleaning by category rather than room by room. There is an order to "Konmari" your home:

1. Commit to tidying up the whole home within a timeframe of a few weeks.
2. Tidy by category, not by room. The categories are clothes, books, paper, komono (miscellaneous goods), and sentimental items. It might help to try and imagine your ideal lifestyle.

CONTINUED >>>

If you’d like to know more about the KonMari Method, pick up the book at your local bookstore or library, or watch the television series of the same name.
3. Touch each item and ask yourself if it sparks joy. The answer will help you determine whether you should keep it.

4. Discard items before beginning to organize what’s left.

The third step may be confusing to people who are just starting with the KonMari Method. Kondo herself admits that this can be awkward at first, but that people get used to it quickly. Think of it as choosing what to keep instead of choosing what to discard.

In addition to outlining a way of decluttering your home, Marie Kondo also advocates new ways of organizing and storing what you’ve kept, including her own techniques for folding clothes.

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Floral patterns bring a touch of nature and an organic element into a room, she says, noting the popularity this spring of bold, large-scale floral murals. “While floral patterns are nothing new, we’re seeing modernized versions that appeal to people who in the past may have shied away from florals as being too fussy or old-fashioned,” Lagos says.

At Hudson Valley Lighting, floral offerings include chandeliers with bouquets of crystal flowers, a wall fixture with lights surrounded by delicate petal shapes, and a variety of ceiling lamps and sconces reminiscent of leaves, buds and blossoming flowers. Ben Marshall, Hudson Valley Lighting Group’s creative director, says florals create “a lively energy in the home which is both beautiful and powerful.”

Floral patterns are about nature and an organic element into a room, she says, noting the popularity this spring of bold, large-scale floral murals. “While floral patterns are nothing new, we’re seeing modernized versions that appeal to people who in the past may have shied away from florals as being too fussy or old-fashioned,” Lagos says.

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“Florals are about nature, but they’re also about culture, and bringing plants and plant imagery into the domestic sphere,” says Geall.

In her book, she offers practical advice on flower arranging, as well as floral style.

“Somewhere along the line, floral design got divorced from the idea of home gardening,” says Geall. “My focus is on the basics. And understanding the principles will help you adapt to what’s around you.”

Foraged branches, twigs, invasive species, and even fruits and vegetables can be made into stunning arrangements, she says. Some of the arrangements featured in her book include tiny yellow tomatoes mixed with flowers. Grapes and berries are also fair game.

“Just because it’s edible doesn’t mean it can’t be beautiful,” she says.

In their new “Gathering: Setting the Natural Table” (Rizzoli International Publications), authors Kristen Caissie and Jessica Hundley explore ways to marry flowers and handmade objects into table designs. Photographed by Gemma and Andrew Ingalls, the table settings include ceramics with floral patterns, colors and designs inspired by nature, and natural-looking floral arrangements.

“When life gets overwhelming, I try to find my way back to my original love of flowers,” says Caissie, a floral designer at Moon Canyon, in Los Angeles. ©
**Quiche Lorraine**

**INGREDIENTS (CRUST)**
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cold, unsalted butter, cubed
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ tablespoon ice water

**DIRECTIONS (CRUST)**
1. In a food processor, combine the flour, salt and baking powder. Add cubes of butter and mix until pea-sized chunks are formed.
2. Add the egg and water. Mix again until dough begins to form. Add more water if necessary.
3. Remove dough, shape into a ball and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 2 to 24 hours.
4. Preheat the oven to 400 ºF.
5. On a floured surface, roll the dough to about 1/8 of an inch thick and carefully place into a 9-inch pie pan. Lightly press on the bottom and sides. Add salt and pepper to taste.
6. Trim the bottoms from the asparagus spears. Coat the asparagus spears with 1/4 cup sesame seeds. Spray with cooking spray and set it aside.
7. Reduce oven temperature to 325 ºF.

**FILLING**
- 2 French shallots, finely chopped
- ¼ lb. thick cut bacon or ham, cubed
- 3 eggs
- 1-½ cups gruyere cheese, grated
- ¾ cup 35% cream
- 5 teaspoons ice water
- ½ cup cold, unsalted butter, cubed
- ½ tablespoon baking powder
- ½ tablespoon salt
- 1-½ cups all-purpose flour
- Salt and pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS (FILLING)**
1. In a pan, sauté the French shallots, bacon and gruyere cheese. Carefully pour mixture into crust.
2. In a bowl, whisk the eggs, cream, milk, salt and pepper. Add the shallots and bacon or ham until cooking, turn chicken pieces and cook uncovered for 30 minutes.
3. Sauté onion without letting it brown, then brown chicken pieces on all sides. Add salt and pepper.
4. Meanwhile, in small saucepan, bring honey, lemon juice and rosemary to a light boil.
5. Using a knife, score the top of the cheese to create a checkered pattern. Pour honey mixture over chicken and bake covered. After an hour of cooking, toss chicken pieces and cook uncovered for 30 minutes.
6. Salt and pepper to taste, garnish with fresh parsley and serve immediately.

**Asparagus & Gruyere Puff Pastry Bundles**

**INGREDIENTS**
- 14-ounce package puff pastry
- 16 thin slices of Gruyere cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg yolk, beaten
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1/4 cup sesame seeds
- Fresh thyme sprigs, to garnish

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set it aside.
2. Trim the bottoms from the asparagus spears. Place 1 slice of Gruyere, 3 asparagus spears, 1 more slice of Gruyere and 1 tablespoon of grated Parmesan in each puff pastry square. Bake the puff pastry dough until it’s about half an inch thick. Cut it into 8 equal-sized squares.
3. Diagonally across each puff pastry square, place 1 slice of Gruyere, asparagus and 1 slice of Parmesan cheese. Add parmesan cheese, pancetta, cut into cubes or small strips, 1 onion, finely chopped, 1 clove garlic, finely chopped, 3 eggs, 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, Salt and pepper, Fresh parsley, to garnish

**Rosemary Chicken**

**INGREDIENTS**
- 4.5 lbs. chicken pieces
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup liquid honey
- 3 tbsp butter
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- Salt and pepper

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Preheat oven to 325 ºF. Melt butter and oil in a large ovenproof pan.
2. Sauté onion without letting it brown, then brown chicken pieces on all sides. Add salt and pepper.
3. Meanwhile, in small saucepan, bring honey, lemon juice and rosemary to a light boil.
4. Top with walnuts, honey and rosemary and bake for 10 minutes or until the cheese is just starting to melt.
5. Combine the egg yolk and the water. Using a pastry brush, lay a thin coat of the egg mixture over the pastry and sprinkle on the sesame seeds.
6. Bake for 30 minutes or until the puff pastry is golden brown.
7. Garnish with the fresh thyme and serve.
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Adopting sustainable design practices is a key component in fighting climate change. Here’s how the average homeowner can make their renovation projects greener.

**WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DESIGN?**

The guiding principle behind sustainable design is that the negative environmental impacts of erecting and maintaining modern buildings can be minimized by implementing certain practices. These include curtailing waste, reducing the consumption of non-renewable resources, conserving water and creating healthy functional spaces.

Building an energy efficient home with recycled materials is a prime example of how sustainable design methods can be used to construct residential buildings.

**HOW CAN I APPLY THESE PRINCIPLES?**

Homeowners who are renovating can implement sustainable design practices in a number of ways. Here are some ideas:

**Flooring options.** Reclaimed wood, such as from scaffolds, is a great way to revamp your floors. Plus, they’re pre-seasoned and won’t warp once installed.

**Paint options.** Eco-friendly paints, which contain no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are a good option. For an even greener choice, seek out retailers who sell recycled paint.

**Surface options.** Countertops made from recycled materials are increasingly popular and vastly more sustainable than those made from man-made materials such as engineered stones. Some companies also offer ceramic tiles made from recycled kiln linings.

**Plumbing options.** If updating a bathroom, opt for low-flow toilets, faucets and showers.

**Furniture options.** Consider looking for reclaimed furniture, or furniture built from recycled and upcycled materials.

**WHERE CAN I FIND SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS?**

Most hardware stores carry at least some of these materials. Low-flow fixtures, for instance, are readily available. In addition, there are suppliers and artisans who specialize in offering sustainable and recycled products.
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