

SOLITARY PLANTS

SOPHISTICATED ACCENTS IN THE GARDEN AND ON THE BALCONY

Plants with character attract our attention. They trigger feelings and conjure up pictures in our mind. Whether filigree like a pen-and-ink drawing or wild and nonconformist: as living sculptures, character plants make an impressive impact on their environment. Giardina 2016 is putting the spotlight on a plant typology that is occupying garden owners and plant lovers in equal measure. Switzerland's biggest, indoor 'live your garden' event is being held at Messe Zürich from 16 to 20 March.

A token of individuality

In the jewellery trade, a solitaire is a set gemstone that dictates the aesthetic tone when worn on the hand. And a solitary plant has this selfsame impact too. With its special growth form, sumptuous flowers or autumnal colouring, it provides a leitmotif to which all the other plants gallantly play second fiddle, giving rise to a harmonious ensemble. In most cases, it is the garden owners, rather than the garden designers, who select a solitary plant. And quite rightly too, given that striking plants, with their particular force of expression, appeal to the individual's notion of an ideal shape. If a garden lover falls in love with the shape of a specific tree or shrub when walking through the nursery, this emotion will subsequently be inseparably linked with the point at which the plant is positioned – be this in the garden, on the terrace or on a balcony.

A major impact in a small space

Expressive solitary plants are positioned individually or in small groups. They make a particular impact on small spaces. Solitary plants do not necessarily have to be trees or shaped ornamental shrubs. Delightful flowing plants with a touch of romanticism, such as rose shrubs, hydrangeas or phlox, will also make their mark on a garden's style as lead plants.

For private gardens, the more slowly-growing Japanese maples constitute some of the most popular ornamental trees. With their striking foliage and intensive autumn colours, they have just the right character for solitary plants. The somewhat lesser known, elegant wedding cake tree (*Cornus controversa*) also makes an ideal solitary plant. Its branches extend horizontally, giving it a tiered look. And the linden is one of the oldest trees that has featured as a solitary tree. Like the oak and the weathered fir, it enjoys cult status in the truest sense of the term.

Trees with a history

Alongside trees and woody shrubs with captivating natural growth forms, wild shapes are also enjoying increasing popularity, including unique trees with their own story to tell. Many of these trees, like picturesquely gnarled espalier-grown apple trees that are way above 50 years old, have been rendered homeless by building projects in recent times. Specialist tree nurseries are now able to save these witnesses of history in many cases and, through their professional nursing, prepare them for a new life with a new owner.

At Giardina 2016, experts from leading tree nurseries and garden centres will be available with advice and also with examples of appropriate designs – whether for gardens surrounding detached houses or small urban balconies.

Giardina – Europe's highest-quality indoor 'live your garden' event.

This unique exhibition heralds in the season in a dazzling fashion at the start of spring each year. The most important suppliers from the sector present new products, creative solutions and upcoming trends in garden design on an area of some 30,000 m². Amidst spectacular sample gardens and artistic installations, visitors will find a wealth of inspiration and ideas for their personal world of flowers and plants in the garden or on their terrace or balcony.

16 to 20 March 2016 / Messe Zürich
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