

# From drones to phones, new tech is making gardening easier

May 29 2018, by Dean Fosdick

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This Feb. 10, 2013 photo provided by Dean Fosdick shows a hobby greenhouse in Langley, Wash., which was built in a sunny location capable of capturing an immense amount of summertime heat. It was later equipped with a timed irrigation system that automatically turns on early in the morning to water a wide assortment of potted plants. Smart devices are being introduced to make gardening less demanding and more efficient.(Dean Fosdick via AP)

New technology is easing the way we garden, store equipment, monitor watering and re-shape landscapes. And some of those tasks can be done remotely, using phones or tablets.

The innovations extend well beyond downloading a few apps. New to the horticultural mix are 3-D modeling, GPS mapping, [laser technology](#), drones, robotics, devices that can read the weather and moisture in the soil for precision planting and irrigation, and battery-powered and low- or no-emission equipment.

"We are seeing an uptick in landscape professionals using advanced technology to plan designs for clients," said Missy Henriksen, vice president of public affairs for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

"Today, professionals are using drones to survey homeowner properties to get a birds-eye view before and during the design-creation phase," she said. "Drones can also help landscape companies save valuable operational and manpower time that can be used elsewhere on a project."

Three-D modeling also helps streamline landscape design. It can provide a clear picture for homeowners of their property's potential, Henriksen said.

Upgrades in battery technology have hastened the move toward lighter, easier-to-carry garden tools.

"Cordless tools that use storage batteries offer the most flexibility and freedom to move around your yard because you don't have to worry about cords getting in your way," Henriksen said.

A number of companies build multi-purpose engines that are used to equip a variety of implements ranging from walk-behind and rider

mowers to power washers, snowblowers and more.

At least two of these companies—Kohler and Briggs and Stratton—have introduced small engines that don't require oil changes for the life of the engine. Simply check the dipstick and add oil as needed. No more tilting these walk-behind machines on their sides to drain the oil, spilling some around the driveway or onto your clothing in the process.

Other innovations have further simplified small engines by eliminating manual chokes and purge bulbs. Just pull the handle once to start.

Consumers want easy, and many of these innovations are boosting purchases, said Michelle Gross, a Briggs & Stratton marketing specialist.



This 2018 3D computer rendering of a prospective residential property was done by Groundworks Landscaping, East Hampton, N.Y., in the spring of 2018. It provides a clear picture for homeowners to use for seeing their property's potential. Landscaping and gardening are being made easier via new technology and innovation.(Courtesy of Groundworks Landscaping via AP)

"Our own surveys of consumers indicate that ease of maintenance continues to be in the top 10 purchase factors for walk-behind mowers," Gross said. "And the No. 1 thing people say they would like to improve after owning a lawnmower is the sound level."

Mowers equipped with Briggs & Stratton's Quiet Power Technology make roughly 50 percent less noise, meaning homeowners can do yard work any time of the day without disturbing neighbors, Gross said.

Efficient storage for lawn and garden equipment makes for less garage clutter and creates space for recreational items like kayaks and mountain bikes.

Another new Briggs & Stratton design allows lawnmowers to be folded in half and stored upright without causing fuel or oil leaks. It reduces their footprint by up to 70 percent, Gross said.

Scotts, meanwhile, recently introduced a series of devices for precision irrigation. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates traditional irrigation systems waste as much as 50 percent of their water by overwatering.

"Our goal is to give homeowners simple ways to use water more resourcefully and responsibly, and to make watering and caring for your lawn easier and more efficient," said Josh Peoples, president and general manager of Scotts.

"From using a smartphone to monitor sprinklers and the moisture in plant soil to only watering in specific areas where plants need it, we're committed to providing effortless ways to not only conserve water, but also to inspire people to grow, indoors or out."

**More information:** For more about landscape design hardware for homeowners, see this fact sheet from University of Florida Extension: [edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep526](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep526)

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