

### NEW TREND: Earthlink

A new trend is developing in America based on a belief that people are not simply placed on Earth; they're as much a part of it as animals, plants and minerals.

The Earthlink trend, which will blossom in the emerging Global Age, will fundamentally transform people's views about how they live on the planet.

This new trend will be spawned by a convergence of three existing trends as they move through their growth stages. They are:

- Search for ancient wisdom.
- Rebirth of the environmental trend.
- Mainstreaming of the New Age movement.

But the trend will take on a life of its own as people perceive a genuine interconnectivity between land, water, air and life. They will conclude they are not simply on the earth, but of the earth.

While this appreciation is being newly discovered and discussed, it is not new.

#### MOTHER EARTH

Ancient philosophies were based on an axiom that human life had a reason for being, and that people weren't accidental glitches in an unfeeling universe. (See "Ancient Wisdom," Winter 1994, page 1 ff.)

Indeed, until the Industrial Age, people felt a holistic kinship with the earth, and a respectful awe of it.

But the industrial revolution, which spread across the United States from the mid- to late 19th century, began to separate us, physically and intellectually, from planetary connection. Under the new Industrial Age belief system, humans thought of themselves as above the earth — and free to conquer it.

With the rise of urbanization in the early 20th century, Americans did appear to conquer Earth.

City dwellers became more and more insulated from the "natural" world. Earthly activities such as rain and snow became inconveniences

rather than necessities for life.

And with the advent of space travel, people found further evidence supporting this sense of removal with confirmation that humans could leave Earth and conquer new frontiers.

But now, with so many of life's once-stable institutions and belief systems failing, people are turning back to the earth for groundedness, nurturing, truth and beauty.

#### WAVES OF GREEN

Much of the Earthlink trend's early strength will also come from a revived environmental movement.

Environmentalism is developing a clearer identity and taking on a sense of national ethic, despite Washington's attempts to reverse the trend's momentum. (See "Green Rebirth," Winter 1995, page 4 ff.)

As the Earthlink trend matures and New Age awareness grows, people will acknowledge both the unity and inner diversity of the earth.

They'll once again become aware, and in awe, of the planet as a living, self-regulating organism — of which they're part. ■

### Back-to-the Land Trend

A confluence of natural, social and economic forces is sowing the seeds of a back-to-the-land trend that will bloom into an agricultural revival in America.

The trend, now only in its infancy, will flourish throughout the next century as Industrial Age factory farms are supplanted by microfarms and high-tech kitchen gardens. (See "Microfarming: New Life for Old Trend," Spring 1994, page 4.)

Riding the crest of the New Age trend, leading-edge baby boomers are the first to reap the harvest of the back-to-the-land trend. They will be followed by like-thinking members of Generation X, who will in turn be followed by members of the next two generations.

And like early settlers of generations past, the new pioneers will perceive themselves as protectors rather than exploiters of the earth. (See also "Pioneering," Winter 1995, page 7.)

Trends stimulating growth in the back-to-the-land movement include:

■ **Economic fallback:** Legions of Americans falling out of the middle class will be forced to change their life styles to survive. Whether it's replacing their suburban ornamental lawn with a productive garden or homesteading in exurbia, they'll do what they have to do to make ends meet. (See "Economic Fallback," Winter 1995, page 3.)

■ **Voluntary simplicity:** This first wave of back-to-basics do-it-yourselfers is already fueling a \$1.2 billion home-vegetable gardening movement. (See "Voluntary Simplicity," Winter 1994, page 7.)

■ **"Clean" food:** Increasing food-safety scares — combined with a growing New Age demand for high-quality foods that are free of artificial preservatives, coloring, irradiation, synthetic pesticides, drug residues and genetic engineering — will push consumer demand for foods that are guaranteed unaltered and fresh. (See "'Clean' Food Trend," Spring 1994, page 4.)

White collar, blue collar and no collar — millions of people are renewing their romance with the land.

Note: *Growing consumer demand is already enticing retailers such as Central Tractor Farm & Country, which is on a 46-store building spree, and Home Depot, which is testing stores with a farm motif.*

*This is only the beginning. Global Age consumers will increasingly engage in edible landscape gardening — replacing carpets of grass with rows of crops, bushes of berries and trees of fruit. And they'll rely on the highest levels of technology and ancient wisdom to help them produce the highest-possible yields.*

*Businesses that flourish will expand horticulture knowledge and embrace the concept of conserving the earth by protecting its capacity for self-renewal. ■*