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## A Real Opportunity

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Last year in this space I lamented my haphazard container collection. I have pots abandoned by the previous owners to our home (nine years ago), as well as containers I've purchased over the years in varying sizes, colors and types, ranging from plastic to pottery. It's chaos on my back patio.

This year, like many other Americans, we're planning to create a new outdoor space. The goal is a new patio, furniture and—finally—matching pots. We're determined to make an investment in our outdoor space, both for our current enjoyment and for resale value later.

We're not alone. When Axiom Marketing asked consumers in a home improvement survey which outdoor living projects they were likely to tackle in 2022, answers like "creating a more comfortable outdoor space," "upgrading my outdoor entertaining space or deck," "upgrading my hardscape—patio, retaining walls, fountains" and "creating a new deck or patio" all topped the list.

I talked to Jack Barnwell, creator of the AquaPots sold by Proven Winners and landscape architect, for this month's cover story on containers. Jack, who splits his time between Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Naples, Florida, says his business in Naples is almost 100% container design, installation and maintenance, and they are slammed. His biggest challenge is finding the labor to meet the demand.

"We are trying to make outdoor spaces super comfortable so we can work outside, entertain outside and have more space. Be home, but feel like we're getting away," he observes.

Another key indicator for outdoor renovations is home purchases. Whenever someone buys a home, they need to personalize the space, right? Realtor.com is predicting a 16-year high in home sales this year, with home sales growth of 6.6% expected. One in five homeowners are looking to sell their home in 2022 and single-family housing starts are expected to increase by 5% over last year. Of course, there are caveats to all of this, including supply chain issues, labor shortages and inflation.

However, if these numbers hold true, then lots of people will be moving—and acquiring new décor to accentuate their new homes, indoors and out. We've got you covered on the container front with expectations for 2022, what's trending and tips for selling more.

Once you're done with containers, we have tips on increasing another closely related category: potting soils. Then roll right into featured container and soil products in our Trending Now special section. Finally, you're going to need

some plants to go along with those pots and dirt, right? We have new combos to knock the socks off your customers (I've got my eye on a few of these for our new outdoor space). There's lots of other goodies in this issue, so keep reading to find ideas that could make your season.

This year could be another exciting, busy, challenging and exhausting year. But at the end of it, your customers are going to have some amazing outdoor spaces in which to work, play, relax and unwind. **GP**