

Cover Story

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From Drab to Fab

Jennifer Polanz



Objectively, it's pretty impressive what a couple of well-designed winter pots can do for a dreary porch in December and January. It's an area that more and more retailers are jumping on as a way to extend the season and add more live green options for consumers who want to either pick up a pre-made pot or design their own with friends via workshops. These are great for spaces of all sizes, too, from porches to decks and even balconies.

Retailers who offer multiple points of entry to winter pot opportunities can enjoy additional sales through greens, picks, bows, pots and more. I asked some of the companies who offer these products what they're seeing trending with porch pots and what makes up a great pot. Let's dive in.

Mixed Greenery

Just like with spring and summer mixed containers, winter containers should have texture and contrast with multiple types of cut greens. Beth Lorentz, product and marketing director at Glenhaven Home & Holiday,

sees her retail customers using cuts of noble fir, pine, cedar and juniper. They can mix and match live with faux, too.

Shannon Kuhrt, vice president of M&M Wintergreens Inc., added on to that. "Nature provides us with natural textures and accents, and that is a popular trend right now," she said. "Incorporating foliage like magnolia, eucalyptus and other 'leafy' textures against the traditional 'fir' is a beautiful contrast."

Shannon noted, too, that just like those spring containers, winter pots can have a "thriller-filler-spiller" design. She broke it down: "You need a 'thriller' for height, which can be branches, evergreen toppers or spruce tops. You need several options for 'filler' like juniper, pine, magnolia leaves, red huck, boxwood, eucalyptus. At least two to three varieties of differing textures are ideal for filler. For the 'spiller' any variety of cedar or Carolina sapphire works great, as they have more drape and will 'spill' over the edge of the container."

Adding in More Color

Now that you have the texture, shape and contrast, let's add some color. This is where you can really go nuts and offer as many options as you want to provide ways for customers to personalize the pots.

"We've noticed that there are more naturalistic porch pot styles being offered," Beth said. "Also, we see retailers

showcasing higher price point porch pot arrangements that feature unique decorations and accessories like LED lighted twigs, hanging metal lanterns, glass globes and metal obelisks.”

Shannon has noticed localized themes, like ribbons, branches and painted accents in local school colors, for example. “It’s a great way to make porch pots more personalized to the local community,” she added.

Thinking outside the box related to colors can help extend the life of the pots, too, so they aren’t just holiday décor. For example, she offers branches in non-holiday colors like yellow, orange, blue, purple and pink (especially pink this year!) to allow for more whimsical, long-lasting designs.

“As more box stores are copycatting the porch pot trend, horticulture retailers need to continually set themselves apart by not only doing the basic expected Christmas and winter colors,” she added.



Pictured top: An elegant and simple porch pot from Glenhaven Home & Holiday that offers color, texture and a natural, woodland feel (very trendy for this year!).

Middle: Here’s an example from M&M Wintergreens of unique colors that can help extend the life of a winter pot, as well as set retailers apart for unique offerings.

Bottom: Red berries, bells and ribbon—like these from Glenhaven—are all components that can be added to porch pot kits or sold individually.



What Else?

Of course, pots are important to the mix, and very neutral pots help set off the winter greens and their accents. Consider the different looks—traditional with urns or modern with sleek lines. I also found a very helpful guide written by the folks at Wallace’s Garden Center in Bettendorf, Iowa, and they recommend selecting pots that won’t break or crack in freezing cold weather. To that end, fiberglass, concrete or frost-resistant glazed would be the way to go. (Scan the QR code to see the full blog post, including recommendations for additional ways to dress up porches with greenery.)

Beth also noted that offering a variety of price ranges, sizes and styles can appeal to customers with different tastes and budgets, giving everyone a chance to jump on the porch pot bandwagon.

When it comes to the components that go in the pots, they can be sold multiple ways:

- Pre-sorted and loose so customers can pick and choose what they’d like to include
- Put together as a kit for customers to pick up and design on their own (consider offering a flyer or QR code to a blog post about key components for winter pots)
- Via a paid workshop where customers have a set amount of options and

instructions for creating them

Shannon recommends, along with the pots and soil base, adding a floral foam topper which allows for extra moisture retention and design control. She also recommends considering a different audience when setting up the workshops.

“Yes, the ‘girls night out with wine’ is still a popular choice, but making a family-friendly workshop allows for slowing



down and making memories as a family during the busy holiday season,” she said. “The youngest in attendance will think of the retailer fondly when they remember the fun they had with their family.

“Also, don’t only focus on young children—be sure to remember your teens and incorporate TikTok trends, fun photo booths and teenage options.”

T-Swift-themed porch pot, anyone?

[GO HERE](#) for recommendations for additional ways to dress up porches with greenery. **GP**