

Features

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Creating a Vibe

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We focus a lot on live goods in this magazine and for good reason—they're generally the most profitable part of a garden center business. But oftentimes, retailers are looking to expand their sales to include nonperishable products that are adjacent to the live goods. And that's where we look to décor to add form and function to the outdoor space.

Some (mainly larger footprint) garden centers have gone all in on creating the full outdoor space, with furniture, accessories, art, statues and fountains and more. Others have to decide which aspects of décor are right for them. Here I'll take a look at a few examples I've seen in garden centers, as well as some services that may help close the sale and trends for this year and next that could help with buying decisions.

A Few Key Segments

If you're heavy on live goods, it makes sense to keep your décor offerings adjacent to the categories that perform best for you. For example, offering trellises for climbing plants (and merchandising near them or even showing an example, like a clematis growing up a wrought iron trellis). I recently saw trellises merchandised up on walls inside a retail store, which allowed the customer to get a full look at each of them.

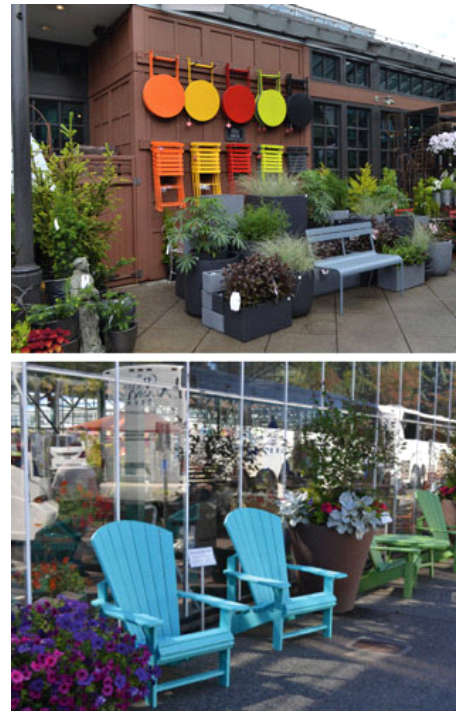
Small footprint items can be an easy way to offer décor without taking up a ton of space. Examples here include a standing display of windchimes, birdfeeders and/or decorative stakes. Rain chains can be a cool addition that can hang from just about anywhere. Decorative outdoor pillows can be hung, too (see page 20 for an example).

Pictured 1: Garden centers that cater to those looking for durable, high-end products, like this dining set in the AURA collection from Barlow Tyrie, can also offer high-end services, like special delivery terms that include unpacking, setting up and removal of packaging materials.

2: These bistro tables at Ravenna Gardens are out of the way, yet still eye-catching so they aren't missed. One is displayed on the ground among the plants, creating a small oasis.

3: Lining up Adirondack chairs, like we saw at Swansons Nursery in Seattle, not only provides inspiration and a pop of color, but it also gives tired customers a place to rest.

A segment I've seen become more popular over the years is outdoor lighting. From string lights to lanterns and tiki torches, retailers can merchandise these on a relatively small footprint for an impactful addition to any patio or porch. There are higher end products available now that will withstand the elements better, making them a long-term option versus a yearly purchase. Hanging a display vehicle from the ceiling can help save space here (like a ladder or other structure you can merchandise with lighting options).



Going Bigger

If you're looking for ways to offer furniture without taking up lots of space, there are a couple of options. Adirondack chairs, like the ones that are a wood and plastic blend, are a durable seating choice that look great and last. They come in lots of styles now aside from the classic (which can be a little hard to get in and out of), so offering a couple of options may be best.

Bistro tables are another great way to provide a furniture option without taking a ton of room on the sales floor. Oftentimes, these can be folded and stored out of the way, with a few on the floor as a display. Outdoor art can similarly be displayed on the walls and then stored out of the way until a customer requests it.

And, of course, there are the bigger, high-end sets that you can offer if you have lots of space to cover and a dedicated salesperson to talk about the benefits. If you offer casual seating and dining sets, be clear about delivery and return policies. Some retailers (for example Costco, but also a few larger garden center retailers) offer different levels of delivery that you might want to consider. The highest level allows the customer, for a fee, to choose their delivery day, and comes with unpacking and complete setup, as well as discarded materials disposal.

Other services you can offer include custom ordering, which allows you to offer more options in colors and fabrics, as well as consultations on designing the complete outdoor room (if you have someone with that expertise).

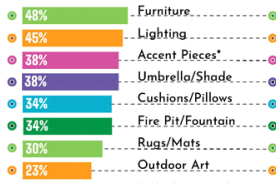
Replace, Renew, Refurnish

Designing and Decorating Outdoor Living Spaces in 2024
CONSUMER TREND DATA

82%

Underutilize Their
Outdoor Spaces

What They Want:



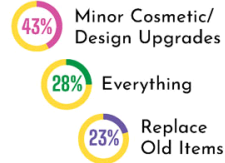
Their Desires:



57%

Plan a Purchase

What They Need:



Their Ideal Outdoor Feel:



The research was conducted by Wakefield Research on behalf of the American Home Furnishings Alliance and International Casual Furnishings Association among 1,000 nationally representative adults ages 18 and older across the U.S., between January 17-21, 2024.

Trends for 2024

The International Casual Furnishings Association in May published its annual 2024 Outdoor Trend Report asking consumers what they're looking for in outdoor spaces. The study, conducted by Wakefield Research, found the majority of consumers are looking for practicality and durability foremost. Of those surveyed, 67% planned to purchase new outdoor furnishings and 44% wanted multiple pieces of décor. **GP**