

Features

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Cheap Tricks

Ellen C. Wells



Picks of the Pack

The 2009 California Pack Trials were loaded with great display ideas. Here are just a few of the highlights we saw on our seven-day journey between San Diego and San Jose.

Putting Walls to Use

The Pleasant View Gardens exhibit at Proven Winners' trial offered two neat tricks. Instead of placing benches of plants against a wall, they used individual shelves to highlight varieties. Spotlighting the pots separately makes the pot or plant more special and draws attention.

Here, Pleasant View lined the top edge of a stand-alone wall with billowy plants (Proven Winners' new Snow Princess lobularia, to be exact). Almost like white clouds sitting above, the plants soften a hard edge and also demonstrate how they can be applied in the landscape.

Succulents Two Ways

EuroAmerican Propagators created a display that shows two different applications of their line of succulents: use them in a utilitarian manner in the landscape and between pavers, and use them creatively to fashion stunning wall art. A display like this helps the consumer understand the many different ways the same product can be used.

From Post to Pretty

A post at the Ecke Ranch trial was made more attractive and put to good use by adding colorful buckets and flowers. The post goes evolves from "in the way" to "what a lovely display!"

Attractive Wildlife Attractors

Let your customers know that certain flowers aren't just pretty, they also attract butterflies and other wildlife. Place decorative butterfly or hummingbird garden ornament in your plants that attract those creatures. You

may end up selling more plants and more of the garden ornaments.

Busted

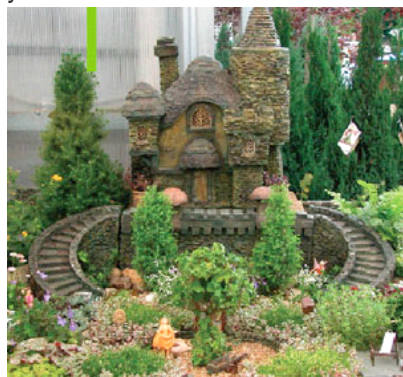
Even a broken pot can be put to good use. This display at Plug Connection offered up a gorgeous use for an old cracked container: pot it up with a collection of succulents. If you think about it, the broken container actually offers an increased planting surface so you can squeeze in more plants and sell it at a higher price point.



Fun With Fairy Gardens

A Proper Garden in Delaware, Ohio, is in its sixth season of offering fairy gardens. “It’s something we’ve built on each year, and it’s grown,” says Bob Van Cura, owner of A Proper Garden. “Last year was without a doubt the biggest year yet.”

The garden center got its start with fairy gardens after seeing a display at the Atlanta Gift Show. Bob bought the whole display, much to the chagrin of his two buyers. “They thought I had lost my mind,” Bob says. Yet in spite of their skepticism, the fairy gardens and accessories received quite a bit of positive response that first year.



The Proper Garden staff puts the gardens together themselves. The must-have elements in a fairy garden include some sort of house (either specifically made for the purpose, or a small structure), small accessories such as mini pots or furniture, and of course, you need the fairies. “We mix and match pieces from different vendors,” Bob says. “We’ve used antique pieces, broken pots. It’s a great way to use some odds and ends that we’re looking to get rid of.” And the more options you give customers to use as accessories, the more fun they’ll have. “This is also a great way to sell some of the dwarf conifers, miniature 4-in. plants and small bonsai,” Bob says.

A Proper Garden dedicates barely 100 sq. ft. to the fairy department, but is able to create lots of excitement—and cash—from that small area. After five years, it’s one of the highest square-foot returns in the store. Bob says you need to oooh and aaah the customer, and suggests creating a larger display fairy garden—say 4 ft. x 4 ft.—to inspire and show them the possibilities. He also suggests creating a few pieces that show customers how to use these gardens without them having to make a full commitment to a fairy garden.

Who’s buying these? Bob says fairy gardens do not appeal to kids. “Adults are buying this stuff, a lot of grandparents,” Bob says. “They say they’re doing it for their grandkids, but ...” He also points out men with garden railroads will buy the fairy garden items to go into their garden railroads.