

Cover Story

6/1/2021

Feathering the Nest

Jennifer Polanz



Statistically, a lot of the studies done on how fast the garden décor category will grow through 2025 were done before the pandemic hit, and therefore only showed moderate growth. Anecdotally, retailers can't keep the stuff in stock and manufacturers are shipping it out as fast as they receive it.

Pictured: The Fiddlehead Fern terra cotta sculptures have become big sellers for Big Grass Living.

The truth is, garden décor is blazing hot right now, but demand may taper off as consumers begin to spend discretionary income on other activities as states "open up" and more recreation like concerts and nights out (or even big vacations) become available again. Which, if we're all being honest, may give manufacturers and distributors the breathing room to restock and replenish.

As I write this in mid-May, though, these items are selling like hotcakes, and it doesn't matter if it's big or small, art or fountains, furniture or pottery—it's all zooming out the retail doors. Here are just a few trends we've been able

to discern.

Water Features

Nothing creates a soothing oasis more than the sounds of a bubbling fountain and gently cascading water.

"Since you can't escape to or travel to that tropical destination, you can try to create those within your own boundaries," says Ashley Goldman, marketing manager at Anamese Garden + Home. "I think fountains have become more relevant."

Anamese has a program that helps retailers (and even end consumers) create their own fountains out of their pottery. They have a step-by-step guide in their blog on the website, as well as a how-to video. Ashley says typically retailers buy the pottery and the kit they offer and build them for customers. The pottery fountains can vary in size, style and colors, and they can provide recommendations about which pottery lines work best for these projects.

Nancy LaMotte, president of Anamese and Ashley's mother, has a couple of key recommendations for retailers looking to make these fountains: buy the largest basin you can accommodate in the space so the customer doesn't

have to constantly fill it, and if it's near an irrigation line, add a dripper line to the basin to keep it full. Ashley's last tip is to keep those fountains running in the retail space—that entices purchases faster than any other method.

“That’s the best sales tool they have, is setting up something that everyone can fall in love with,” she adds.



If fountains are hot, then ponds and water features are on fire—and in the case of a new line from Aquascape, Inc., they are literally on fire. The company known for its over-the-top water features has taken it to a whole new level with products that incorporate moving water and fire.

Pictured: The Fire and Water Spillway Bowl from Aquascape, Inc. marries fire and water in a fun, outdoor accent.

“There has always been a demand for the fire and water element. Our internal construction team has been using fire elements in pond designs for years,” says Mitch Feltz, social media coordinator for Aquascape, Inc. “They incorporate them along the edges of ponds or they use fire to create a focal point. In the past, our designers have drilled out stones and pieced together burner systems in order to create this element of fire.

“We, as a product development team, just took this idea and ran with it. We tried to keep in mind ease of use, as well as beauty and durability.”

There are a couple of different looks available, including a Fire and Water Spillway Bowl that has a flame center with water surrounding it and spilling out one side, as well as the basalt columns using the Fire and Water 3-Piece Basalt Torch System. The new line of fire and water products is available wholesale for retailers, and after its debut at last year’s Pondemonium event demand has been high, Mitch says.



Outdoor Furniture

Of course, everyone wants to spend more time outside, and some of that time includes lounging and eating outdoors. So naturally furniture is going to be a big part of that.

“Many people are turning their gardens and outdoor spaces into a place to relax, escape, unwind, entertain, play, eat and work,” says Tom Durkin, founder and CEO of Glenhaven Holiday & Home. “We’re doing more relaxing, grilling, gardening, exercising, dining, playing with pets and children, and entertaining outside. We are

truly living outdoors!”

Pictured: The Kanok lanterns attract customers’ attention when lit at night at the retail store so they come back to purchase during the day.

He’s seen demand for outdoor furniture growing, and they offer a wide range of everything from dining sets to sofas, chairs, lounges and accent tables.

“We see increased interest in sustainable, durable and low-maintenance materials,” he adds. “Our Outdoor

Furniture Collection offers many styles and material choices, such as lightweight aluminum, cast aluminum, powder-coated steel, PVC wicker, teakwood that is legally and sustainably harvested and certified, and synthetic composite wood that is made from recycled materials.”

He agrees with Ashley, too, in creating an immersive experience for customers at the retail setting, allowing them to experience whole sets that would mimic what it looks like outdoors.



“Also, cross-merchandising is a subtle, but effective, way to increase order sizes,” he adds. “This practice promotes product discovery and entices shoppers to look at items that complement what they’re already buying.”

Pictured: Glenhaven’s Lattice style Outdoor Dining Set features cast aluminum frames for artistry and lasting durability.

Statuary & Décor

On the décor side, John Hanesworth, co-owner of Big Grass Living, says demand has increased dramatically (they also have a retail store in San Antonio so they know first-hand, experiencing close to double the sales so far in that category compared to 2020). Some of the bigger wholesale sellers are the unique Fiddlehead Fern terra cotta sculptures that come in three sizes.



“They’re purely decorative, but they look really cool in a green landscape,” he says. “We have a hard time keeping them in stock. They’re so striking in the landscape and people end up buying multiples because they’re different sizes.”

Pictured: The Shangri La Jar in Malachite is a favorite for fountains from Anamese Garden + Home.

John also carries traditional Thai terra cotta lanterns called Kanok lanterns, which are known for the unique pattern of light they throw due to the perforated designs. John’s store displays these lighted at night, and he says he often has customers come in to buy them after driving by and seeing them lit up. They can be lit either with low-voltage lighting or candles.

He says he’s noticed a trend that people are buying items faster than they used to, as well.

“If they’re going to get it, they’d better get it now—there’s a lot less reluctance to buy now,” he says. “There’s a sense of, I deserve this. I survived this.

“There’s a new dynamic that’s shaken things up and gotten people out of their purchase cycles. It used to be higher-dollar item purchase decisions would take several months ... they’d bring a friend, a spouse, an in-law to get ‘permission’ to buy it. Now they come back the next day and get it.” **GP**