

Trends in Pots & Planters

By Teresa McPherson

A display garden at Michael Carr Designs provides visual examples of the pots planted up. Photo credit: David Akoubian



What's new, what's hot and what's the best way to merchandise this product category in your store.

What's new in a product category that's thousands of years old? A lot! I recently connected with four pots and planters suppliers on what's currently trending, what they're working on, and what garden centers can do to sell more product.

What trends are you seeing in pots and planters? How has that changed over the past few years?

Michael Carr, Michael Carr Designs:

For us, over the last several years, white has been a very, very hot color. Cobalt always stays up at the top. And often it's with a very simple design. One of the best things we have done is what I call our volcanic finish — that's where we apply the smooth glazes underneath with a special outer glaze that creates a lava type exterior finish over the glaze. This technique puts the outer lava finish on the top of the piece with a dripping effect, giving it an Old-World look with the beautiful glazes still popping with color. We offer these volcanic styles in about 16 different base color glazes. This has been a really hot area for us for about three years, and it just continues to grow. What makes these pieces and all of our others special is our secret glaze recipes and the process we use to extract the impurities from the raw clay before using it for production. This gives our pieces an extremely smooth glass-like finish with colors that really pop from a distance that allows them to be great focal points in the garden and home.

Daniel McClelland, sales

representative, Vasesource: With the introduction of quality Fiberstone to the market, Vasesource has seen a graduation from the more traditional cement planters. Fiberstone is lighter and more durable, but instead of having a "plastic" look of fiberglass, it retains the organic and clean look of stone

because of the finish. Where we are in New York, Fiberstone has replaced expensive built-in planters and heavy cement for rooftops and lobbies; it's a luxury choice at an affordable price. White and black remain the most popular for our customers.

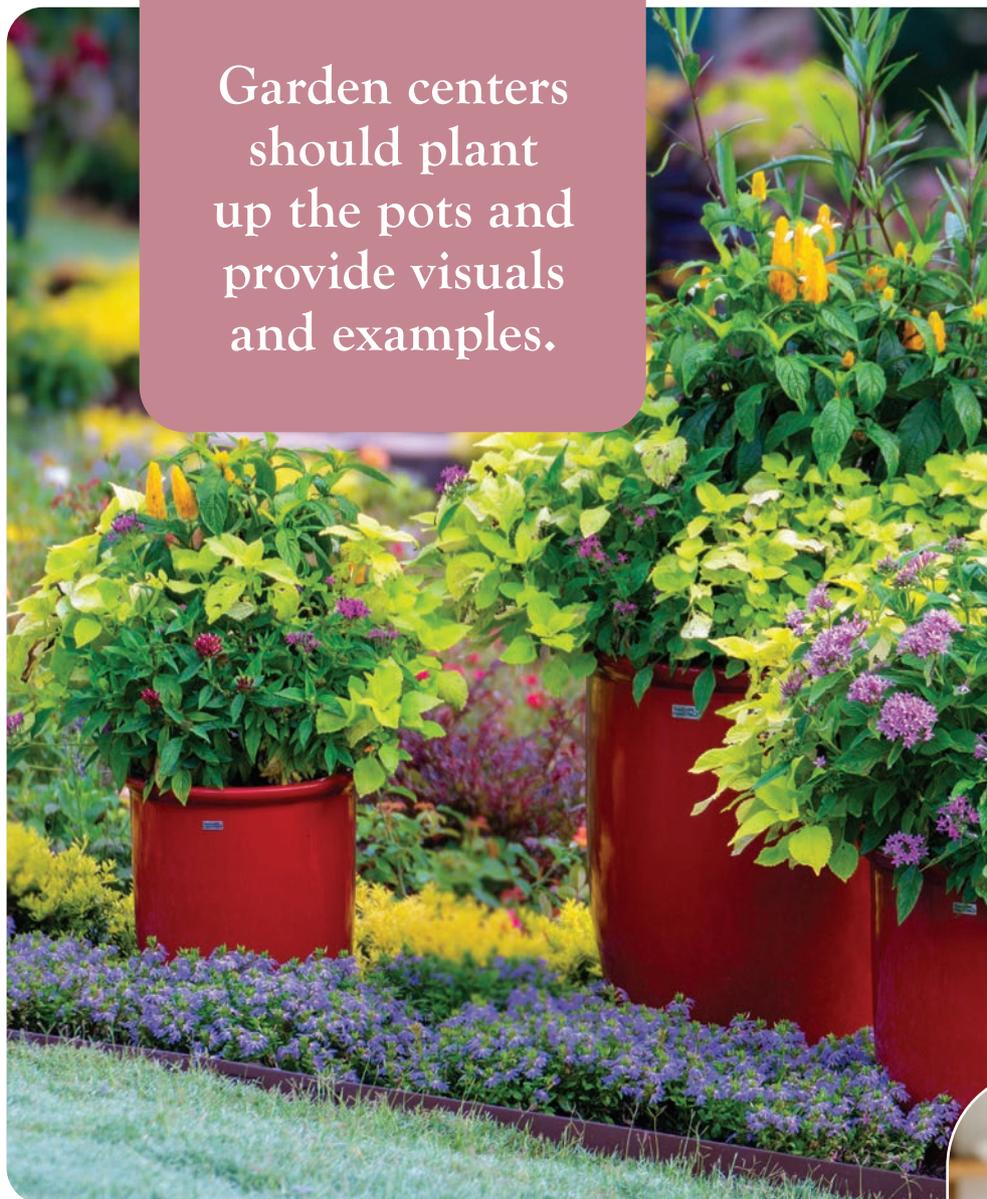
I have been pleased to see more and more commercial and hospitality properties incorporate biophilic design and architecture into their common areas. White ceramic has been the top choice for our Vasesource customers for a long time — it's classic and timeless. As with all our products, we want the flowers or plants to be elevated by the container, not distracted by it. Our customers seem to appreciate understated design elements that have beautiful form and great functionality.

Holly Mundy, vice president, marketing and business development, TDI Brands: Growth, growth and more growth. The demand for indoor pottery and planters continues to rise. We are excited to be able to supply indoor ceramic pottery from Germany. High-quality pottery, made in Germany from natural, native clay and 100% rainwater. These pots are 100% waterproof. Our line includes sizes from 3.1 inches to 6.1 inches. All are selling well, and we are looking to expand into a few larger pots.

Pam Schechtman, vice president of marketing, Behrens Manufacturing LLC: Trends we're seeing in pots and planters as a manufacturer who sells not only to independent retailers, but also big boxes and direct to consumer, are: pots and planters that are versatile; a pot or planter that could be used to grow your own food, as well as being able to grow perennials or annuals in them. Things that have legs, and those legs can either stay functional or they can be taken off and you still have a container that could be used differently. We sell tubs, etc., and things that have legs that are removable, and you could use it as a planter on the ground or a beverage tub, or you can put the legs on it and it can be a raised garden planter — we're seeing that as a trend.

And we're also seeing a trend in the form of material. Our products are made from galvanized steel; galvanized steel is 100% recyclable. Climate change, sustainability and circularity are all real ... Behrens products are

Garden centers should plant up the pots and provide visuals and examples.



100% galvanized steel, so [consumers can] take it to a metal recycler and actually get money back for that metal, and it gets completely recycled and made into a reusable product all over again. So that's what we're seeing: products that are multi-use, products that are made from a recyclable material, and people can feel good about that material.

None of our products require a Prop 65 label; we test all of our products for lead content, and none of our products require a Prop 65 label, which is big.

What is your best seller? Why do you think it's performing so well?

Carr: The best sellers are basically what I call the economy size pieces, 15 inches and down, because it offers

a less expensive option allowing more people the opportunity to enjoy truly beautiful, high-quality hand-made planters. The other would be the volcanic collection, where you have that old-world look across the top dripping down over the glaze.

McClelland: Our Fiberstone CARLO and CUBE collections are our most popular. Both the square and rectangle shapes can accommodate any design and fit seamlessly into the linear space. These collections are color matched (as is all our Fiberstone), so that you don't need to worry if you have multiple sizes. They can withstand all four seasons and require minimum maintenance if handled properly.

On the indoor side, our TARVA ceramic contoured bowls are an amazing choice for succulent gardens and orchids. We partner with designers

Michael Carr Designs'
display gardens.
Photo credit: David Akoubian



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in Belgium and the Netherlands to have the best design and quality of ceramic. There seems to be a resurgence of orchid sales in the past two years, and Vasesource has focused on stocking all the bestsellers while also bringing in new designs all the time.

Mundy: They are all selling well. Our size range is not large at this time, so we don't see any standouts at this time. We are only a year into this new product line.

Schechtman: Our best sellers right now are our nesting storage cans; they come in a large, medium and small. For a wholesale and consumer, you can have an assortment of sizes to create that beautiful assortment on your deck or your front porch. It's also great for merchandising at retail because you can show those different sizes, but they also nest, so you can sell them at wholesale as a set or you can break them apart independently ... anything that can create the scale appearance — whether that be at a variable scale, what does that be at retail or in

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Our new Signature Collection, which are bushel baskets now made in a colored steel — that's an industrial steel made from refrigerators or air conditioning units, garage doors, and so we have that ... collection in our bushel baskets that come in a traditional galvanized, a red galvanized, and a beautiful navy blue. And those are starting to become very, very popular.

As a newcomer to offering pottery, what has surprised you since adding pots to your product offerings?

Mundy: Indoor pottery has been by far our best new product launch. TDI Brands is best known for the wide variety of hardgoods that we carry, so we were not sure how a commodity product would do. We are thrilled with our launch of SK Pottery.

TDI Brands' Basel Elegance indoor pottery.



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What can IGCs do to sell more pots and planters in their stores and differentiate from the big box stores?

Carr: What I've seen is this: you can't just dip your toe into it; if [your IGC is] going to be in the planter business, then the people who come in your store need to know you're in that business. If you just have a couple of pieces here or there, or 40 or 50 pieces throughout your store, they're going to get lost and you're going to look like more of a specialty store.

The [IGCs] who do it right, in my opinion, do two things: they have a big enough offering to where they can supply customers whatever they want; customers want options. And the other is [show what the pot looks like potted up] you've got to take one or two of them and pot them up. Invest in the look so when customers walk in, they say, "I want that." Sometimes

Photo from Behrens' photo shoot at Tonkadale Nursery.



[customers] need help to spur that imagination.

Two years ago, I instituted a display garden for the pots, so now I do many pots and plant them up and provide visuals and examples; I think a garden center should do the same thing for their customers when they walk in the door. Pot them up, plant them up, change them, have your fertilizer and all the things that you need and show them: here's what you need to make this happen.

Have a spot somewhere around the pots where you have all of that available; at least have the fertilizers and the soils and the tools or whatever it is close by, because you may be dealing with somebody that's never done it before. The whole idea is to spur the customers' imagination, because then they can take it to another level themselves.

McClelland: This would be an opinion, but I have a retail background

We want to constantly bring in new designs so that your customers always have something new to look forward to.

from many years ago working at a big box bookstore, but I loved the independent shops fiercely. You could always find someone who was as passionate as you were about reading and would provide exceptional service and recommendations. In the almost 12 years I've been with the company, I know Vasesource to be focused on providing the best product for each store and buyer. Our account managers care about their clients' needs and what their customers are searching for. If you have a favorite collection, we want to make sure we always have it in stock for you. We want to constantly bring in new designs so that your customers always have something new to look forward to. Our customers don't want a huge shipment at the beginning of the season to sell through, but a consistent stock of great sellers and new pots to impress with.

In addition, we have structured our product line to focus on 4-, 5-, and 6-inch pots so that garden centers can drop in their grow pots and give the customer a great selection. Nothing to re-plant — so you have less labor for the garden center and a quality choice for the customer.

Mundy: I believe that the IGCs should plant some of the pots up — everyone wants plants in their home but many do not want to take the time to actually plant them.

Schechtman: We just went to Tonkadale Nursery — they're one of our neighbors here at our offices — and did a bunch of photos. [We chose them] because of the great way our products can be merchandised within a garden center ... We took our boot tray with our bird feeders, and some of our trough planters and created this

POTS AND PLANTERS

lifestyle collection within a lawn and garden independent retailer, showing that their rubber boots can go in the boot tray, but then they can put some of their plants — whether that be poinsettias or mother-in-law’s tongue or any of their other plants — and some of the other pieces, and they create this vignette of all those things that somebody who’s working outside or gardening is going to need — you’re going to need your boots, but you might need a boot tray. And then you have your bird feeder there, and you might have your bird feeder storage. And then you have some planting ... but they’re creating these vignettes with products that are a mixed amount of product and telling the story, and I think that can really sell.

We also work with Gertens, which is a very big independent garden center. They have used some of our galvanized platters and trays to put plants in, almost like they’re like a watering tray, so that they can show different ways that you can display your plants, but on



Above: Vasesource Fiberstone planter. Right: White ceramic is a top choice for Vasesource customers.



beautiful multi-functional trays, so that they can look more home decor, and not necessarily only for outdoor. And that’s where I think the consumer is. The consumer is saying, I don’t know if I really want all of this just to be outside;

I like to bring some of my plants in, I like to bring my plants inside and keep greenery in the house, but I wanted to look and blend with a more home decor look and lifestyle looking, then simply looking very core lawn and garden. 🌸



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