



Big Grass Living's Happy Pig Pot.



Big Grass Living's Kanok Pedestal with a coordinating lantern on top.

Merchandising Accent and Décor Items

Garden center customers are shopping for unexpected and unique accent and décor items — here are some tips and tricks to sell more of these items.

By Teresa McPherson

Today's customers are looking beyond the big box stores for high-quality and unusual garden accent and décor pieces. Here, two suppliers share how independent garden centers can sell more of these items in their stores.

What trends are you seeing in accent and décor items?

Maura Godat, creative team director, Studio M: Garden centers and other outdoor-focused retailers, like pool and patio supply shops, are looking to build up the “softer” side of their offering. IGCs are searching for something unexpected and eye-catching to bring in alongside plants and utilitarian “hard” goods.

We spoke with many retailers at the Atlanta Market who were very excited to find a burst of color and uniqueness in items like Art Poles and Floor Flair. These are categories

shoppers aren't seeing everywhere else, so our retailers love bringing them in to be able to offer something fresh.

When it comes to landscaping, people crave color, so anything that fills that need is a hot item for IGCs. Products like Art Poles that can brighten up a hard garden scape, poolside, patio, or front yard year-round are in especially high demand.

John Hanesworth, owner, Big Grass Living: Big Grass has always focused on high-quality, handmade and artisan-produced planters and décor items. We are seeing the broader market move toward these values, especially with small planters and garden décor. Today's customers are more in tune and interested in handmade, limited-production pieces. They are also more curious, and thus more informed about how pieces are made. Mass-produced, machine-made products that try to mimic the handmade are rejected by these more discerning consumers.



Studio M's Mini Art Pole in a planter.

Do you provide fixtures/displays for your products? How can garden centers use them?

Godat: We offer a variety of great fixtures that our retailers love because of the way they help maximize space, but sales will always increase when IGCs think beyond the fixture and show products in a merchandised vignette as well. Everyone likes to envision what their garden or patio could look like with the addition of a few great plants and décor items. Don't make shoppers think too hard to piece together their space — pull together a handful of coordinating products, along with plants and flowers to create a scene that shows how it all comes together. (It's the same reason a staged house sells faster than an empty one!) You'll see cross-sales increase and you'll boost your customer's average spend.

This being said, don't underestimate the importance of giving each product category a "home." Staple items like garden flags should be shown in a few vignettes but really require a fixture where shoppers can browse all the available styles. Providing a destination in your store like this, and keeping your display full, can generate great volume. Make your fixtures easy to find so customers



Studio M's Painted Peace collection.

always know where to go for that next seasonal item.

Hanesworth: We do not provide fixtures or displays for our products. Instead, we encourage our wholesale clients to display our products throughout their plant offerings and in their garden market. We have found at our retail store that the best merchandising for the planters and décor items is their use throughout the business, sometimes planted to show how they complement a variety of different popular succulents and small tropicals. Our Kanok Lanterns can be lit internally to attract attention to garden center entryways or for evening events. We encourage display of our Fern Fiddlehead sculptures throughout their large tropical plants for powerful impact.

What tips or tricks do you have for IGCs to merchandise accent and décor items?

Godat: Use what you have! IGCs have a huge advantage in their live plants and flowers. Just make sure they aren't totally separate from your accent and décor offering — blend them together! Use live plants to complete your vignettes and use décor items to create surprise elements among your greenery.

Try popping a few Art Poles among your flowering trees to create an element of surprise and delight. Not only will blending these categories look great in your IGC, it will help you upsell. Include a few decorative plant stakes (our Bird



Studio M's flag collection displays.

Song pokes have been a hit!) in a pot of flowers as a quick gift-to-go for Mother's Day. Just don't make it too hard for your customers to find the product open stock — create an idea for them but also have a display nearby so they can shop items separately if desired.

What can IGCs do to differentiate from the big box stores?

Godat: Big box stores will always take a more utilitarian approach than independent retailers. They're not going to spend a lot of energy merchandising and most of their offering is separated by category. IGCs can use unique décor items to highlight their staple products — use a colorful flag display to draw attention to certain plants or use a few Art Poles to break up the sea of green.

And perhaps most importantly, IGCs should partner with vendors who don't sell to big box stores. The easiest way to set yourself apart is by offering products that can only be found at specialty shops like yours!

Hanesworth: An informed staff can show customers how to use our decorative products and planters by enhancing the beauty and interest of their garden center. Displays of products in-use throughout the garden center inspires customers to visualize the products in their own home and garden. Encourage questions and provide information about the origin of products and production techniques. All of our wholesale decor and planter products are handmade by family producers in Thailand. 🌿



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