

small concept GOES BIG

Thanks to staff creativity and customer interest, the fairy gardening department at Tonkadale Greenhouse provides gardeners a reason to shop no matter the season.

By Anna Risan

About five years ago at Tonkadale Greenhouse in Minnetonka, Minn., I started making indoor container gardens using small houseplants to sell in the greenhouse during the winter season, and I thought how cute it would be if I could add some small accessories to make it look like a small outdoor garden. I found a small bench and used pebbles for a path and started making tabletop miniature gardens.

These gardens didn't have any fairies in them at the time, but you could just imagine them being there. They had the "essence of fairies," as I like to call it. Later, when I found the fairies, there was the option to include them in the scenes.

We started with only a few tabletop fairy gardens on a greenhouse bench, but as interest grew and the pots sold, we decided to expand. We now have an area in the corner of the greenhouse to display all of our indoor and outdoor fairy items. The area is approximately 720 square feet, with custom arbors and a corrugated tin awning above the wall display areas, which gives the effect of being in a backyard setting.


Included in this area is a 60-square-foot planter made with interlocking retainer wall block. In this planter, I created a large miniature landscape with houses, walled gardens and waterfalls. I have tried to include as many miniature accessories as possible in this landscape so that they will inspire others to buy the pieces to create their own landscapes. Sometimes people



Tonkadale Greenhouse's fairy garden department started with only a few tabletop fairy gardens on a greenhouse bench, but as customer interest grew and the pots sold with regularity, the decision was made to expand. Its current greenhouse location is approximately 720 square feet in size, and in this area is a 60-square-foot planter made with interlocking retainer wall block (right).

OFF-SEASON IDEAS

Have a Little Class



Every fall and spring, Tonkadale Greenhouse holds fairy garden seminars on Saturdays, which are well attended. The Tonkadale staff participates in making container fairy gardens to show at the seminars. They explain what types of plants to use, how to keep them alive, and how to trim them to keep them small.

In the spring seminars, the concept goes outdoors and staff shares tips on creating a fairy landscape in the backyard.

Tonkadale encourages its customers to e-mail in pictures of their fairy gardens, which are then displayed on a flat-screen television near the checkout.

ALGOFLASH®

Making your tomatoes grow, has just been simplified.



Our customers tell us they grew stronger, healthier tomato plants with more tomatoes per plant. **And they're tastier too!**

Algoflash® Tomato Formula is designed with a higher percentage of Potassium in order to promote the greater production of bigger and better fruit. It can also be used for the growing of all melons, cucumbers and peppers.

ALGOFLASH AMERICA, INC.
 6833 Phillips Industrial Blvd.
 Jacksonville, FL 32256
 Tel: (800) 714-4384 • (904) 886-9917
 Fax: (904) 886-9517
 email: algoman1@aol.com

Over 28 World Records in the Guinness Book of World Records!

Write in 817



www.achla.com

Established in 1994

800-626-1114
Color catalog available upon request

ATLANTA AmericasMart, Bldg. 2 WestWing #9A37
LAS VEGAS World Market Center, Bldg. A #449

wrought iron brackets *bird feeders* *Bottoms-Up Planter* *birdbaths w/ stakes*

wader statuary *crackle glass lawn décor* *animal statuary* *sundials* *Eucalyptus furniture* *pylons & trellises*

Write in 818

don't know what to do with an item, like an overlook bridge, until you show them it can be placed over a dry stone riverbed and add blue stones to simulate water. For some, seeing is easier than imagining.

If You Build It...

Considerably smaller in scale, we also create and sell tabletop fairy gardens. These are made with our small houseplants and mini flowering plants like violets and kalanchoes. We fill clay or glazed pots with the plants, add an arbor and fence, some pot shards for a patio and put them out for sale. We will make six or more of the same style at a time to make a nice display, but if I have time, I will make unique one-of-a-kind pots.

There was one in particular that comes to mind. I made a fairy garden to resemble a forest campground with a fire pit using pieces of dogwood for the logs and added some chairs around the pit. It must have had a special meaning for someone because they bought it as soon as I put it out. If you think about, these tabletop fairy gardens can take almost any shape and be a great way to promote indoor gardening during winter months.

We have people of all ages coming to our greenhouse to look at the fairy area. Young parents with children in strollers, grade school kids with a parent in tow, and retired grandparents eager to start a fairy garden to share with their grandkids. We have Brownie and Girl Scout troops, as well as tour groups, come to the greenhouse and the fairy garden display is their first stop. New this year, I'm considering incorporating accessories like roads for trucks or a dinosaur diorama to keep the interest of little boys.

Our fairy garden department has done a great job inspiring grade schools to set up gardens in their classrooms and teachers are always stopping by during the winter months to pick up some accessories and plants to add to their classroom display.

Going Small for Bigger Sales

The fairy gardening department has grown year over year. And because we are so crunched for space in the greenhouse, especially

during the spring and summer season, we wanted to make sure that this area was generating revenue worthy of the space it garners.

Since starting this department, we have also increased the sales

of our houseplants. We propagate plants into 3-inch pots and sell them for use in terrariums and miniature gardens. The 4-inch plants like ferns and baby tears have been very popular for the



Since starting the fairy garden department, Tonkadale has seen increases in the sales of its houseplants, sheet moss, river rock, potting soil and smaller glazed pots.

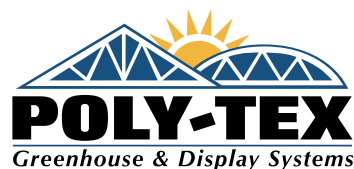
Wishful thinking.



Stop wishing and start moving some product.

Ever try moving a block & plank display? It's back-breaking work. That is one of the reasons Poly-Tex display systems are the smart alternative to heavy concrete block and unsightly planks. Our displays are sturdy and feature quick set up. Oh, and did we mention that most of them are available with swivel-locking casters? So stop wishing and start moving today. Visit poly-tex.com or call us at **800-852-3443** for a free catalog.

©2011 Poly-Tex, Incorporated. All rights reserved.



where fresh ideas are grown®

indoor fairy gardening. Sales of sheet moss, river rock, potting soil and smaller glazed pots have all increased due to the interest in indoor fairy gardens.

If a garden center is thinking of getting into fairy gardening, I suggest they start small by making some tabletop gardens to see if the interest is there. You can tell by the reactions of the customers who come in. They may either buy the finished garden or they may buy the pieces to make it themselves. Have a few different options for containers and a selection of fairy items to fit into those containers.

If you don't have room for a display garden, set some potted houseplants among the fairy accessories. I have found that the live plants really help customers visualize how their garden will look. As interest grows, you can add more accessories. This also keeps them coming back to see what's new.

Anna Risan is the fairy gardening expert at Tonkadale Greenhouse. For additional fairy garden questions, Anna can be reached at anna@tonkadale.com

LearnMore!

For more information related to this article, go to www.lgrmag.com/lm.cfm/lg040311