

PROFITABLE POTTERY PLACEMENT

High-traffic, high-value floor space deserves to be merchandised with higher-dollar items, such as your decorative glazed pottery.

By Sean Gillman

At Max and Hildy's, Hillsboro, Ore., we merchandise our pottery very differently than many garden centers. The primary difference is in our basic attitude toward what pottery is and where it should be placed in the store. Many nurseries stock their pottery with hard goods such as fertilizers, soils and so on. This space is often off to the side of the main aisles or possibly in the back of the retail area.

USING YOUR SPACE THE RIGHT WAY

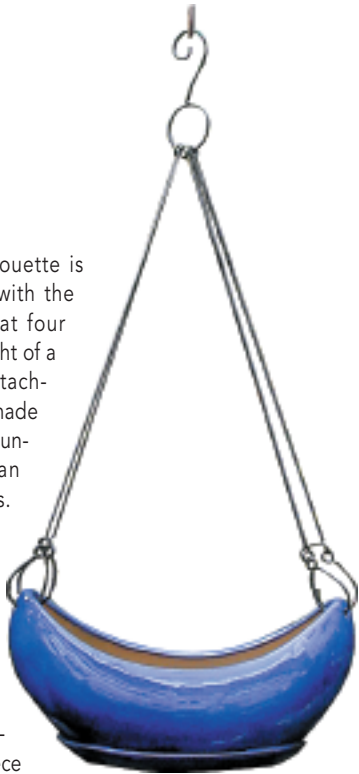
We tend to think of stoneware and ceramic pottery as more than hard goods items. They are art, albeit very functional. If well-displayed, pottery makes a bold and beautiful statement in frontal displays and main areas of traffic flow. What's more, it will usually prove worthy of this valuable space in sales dollars. Think about it: You can sell a \$3 box of fertilizer to every fifth customer who walks by a high-traffic area, or you can instead sell a \$30 pot to every tenth customer. You do the math. This usually applies only to finer glazed pottery. Plastics and simple wood products will just look like an item that hasn't been stocked yet.



Top: At Max & Hildy's, pottery displays are strategically placed down a high-traffic center aisle, making the most of valuable space with valuable items; Bottom: Merchandising matching pots one inside the other, or "nesting," makes for a very appealing display. Resist the urge to stack pots too high, which can present a danger to customers trying to dig out just the right pot from the bottom of a stack.

Planter

This unique boat silhouette is designed for safety, with the boat shape secured at four points to hold the weight of a potted plant. The detachable metal holder is made of recycled metal in gun-metal color that can weather the elements. Available in four colors: blueberry, sage, raspberry and lavender. The pot measures 13 inches long x 5 inches wide x 5 inches high, and the detachable metal hanging piece is 25 inches long. Rainrock. (888) 257-3281. **Write in 1432**



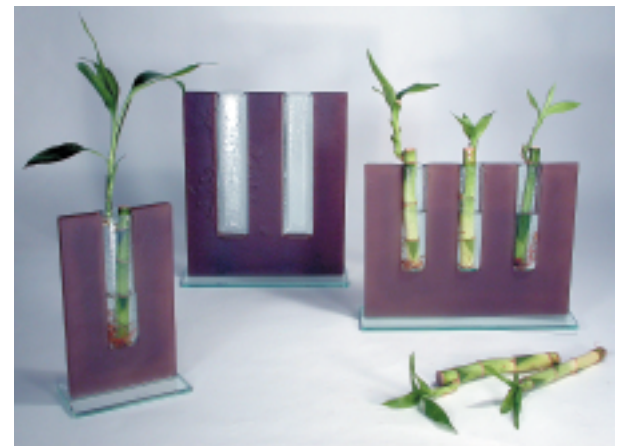
Planting cart

Ye Old-Fashioned Grape Picking Cart is a classic recreation of the turn-of-the-century, grape-picking push cart originally used to harvest vineyards in the early 1900s along the shores of Lake Erie. It can be used as an indoor/outdoor planter or flower caddy for the lawn, garden or patio. JMD Manufacturing. (800) 774-4470. **Write in 1433**



Vases

These Venice vases are made in Portugal and are available in brown or gray and in five sizes. To see all sizes and colors, go to www.potina.com and click on products/modern. Wholesale prices range from \$18-\$27. Potina. (704) 342-9808. **Write in 1434**



Stone chair

This new cast-stone Lion Chair has very detailed clawed feet and winged lion armrests. This piece works well in a private garden or the entryway. KC Art Statuary. (888) 261-3929. **Write in 1435** ♦



THE SECRET TO SUCCESSFUL DISPLAYS

The trick to making pottery sell this well is in displaying it correctly. It should always be kept clean of soil and dust buildup. Pots should not be stacked too high, as this format is very hard to shop (and potentially dangerous to the little old lady trying to get a pot down). Often a “nesting” effect — a pot inside another matching, larger pot and slightly raised so the customer can see both pots — is very attractive. The display should be close to the ground, so nothing falls a great distance in case of an accident, but not on the ground, as this looks cluttered. Low, wide tables, usually with 2-3 levels, work well. The display needs to be tidied often, as customers tend to handle several items before making a selection.

How the pots are grouped is important as well. We usually group our pots by color scheme — all the green tones here, all the blues on this table, etc. This allows pots of various sizes to be displayed together, which makes for more appealing displays. Also, it is easy to help a customer narrow down what they want and make a decision with this set-up. Just ask the simple question, “What colors can work in that room?” There are other ways to group them — by size, by material, etc. Experiment, but remember that if the display looks good, then the product suddenly becomes more than just another hard goods item. This is the key to making it a successful pottery department. 🌱

Sean Gillman is assistant manager at Max & Hildy's in Hillsboro, Ore., and is responsible, among other duties, for hiring for the store's pottery department. He may be reached by phone at (503) 645-5486.