

ACCESSORIZING OUTDOOR ROOMS

A lot of consumers don't know how to decorate inside their homes let alone accessorize their outdoor spaces. By applying some basic indoor decorating ideas to the outdoors, you can help consumers beautify their outdoor rooms and increase your garden accent sales as well.

By Meghan Boyer

Constructing outdoor living spaces continues to be a popular trend among consumers, but how many of your customers are proclaiming their outdoor rooms complete after only adding lawn furniture and some all-weather cushions? Accessorizing the outdoors is just as important as accessorizing a living room or bedroom — and it's up to you to help garden shoppers realize this.

From magazines to home makeover television shows, there is a lot of consumer information available for how to go about decorating a home: the right types of accents to include, how to arrange furniture, the best lighting and lots of tips for aesthetically pleasing organization. What isn't available for consumers to such a large extent is information on how they can tackle decorating their outdoor rooms.

The prevalence of so much home décor information indicates that consumers need help when it comes to decorating indoors, so imagine the difficulties they encounter when faced with accenting their outdoor spaces. You can boost garden décor sales and demystify outdoor decorating for consumers by translating a few simple indoor decorating ideas to the outdoors and applying them in your displays.

Incorporating Indoor Décor Ideas

An outdoor room and an indoor room should be decorated using the same principles; your customers will have more success in accenting their gardens if they understand this basic idea. Once consumers see both areas in the same way, logic can dictate a lot of garden accent placement: For instance, consumers should neither place a large statue in between an indoor seating area and a window with a view nor block the views of interesting plants and scenery from seating areas in the garden. For more involved decorating tips, give your customers these ideas:



Left: Many home decorators suggest enhancing a focal point by adding to it: The addition of a colorful fence section behind this display makes an impact. Consumers can use the same idea in their gardens. **Right:** Grouping accessories with similar colors and varying heights is a good way to create visual interest in an outdoor room.

Find a focal point. Well-decorated rooms tend to have one major focal point that catches the eye and attracts attention. This could be the fireplace or couch in a living room or the bed in a bedroom. When a natural focal point isn't present, one needs to be created. Consumers can purchase a dramatic garden accessory to create a focal point, such as a fountain or large piece of statuary, or they can call attention to items that already exist in their outdoor spaces.

Many home decorators suggest enhancing a mediocre focal point by adding to it. For instance, beds without headboards can have interesting artwork placed above them. The addition of a trellis behind a garden bench or a mirror behind a fountain can create more drama in your customers' gardens.

Draw the eye up. Creating vertical lines and arranging objects of varying

heights in the garden is a good way for consumers to add aesthetic interest. Christopher Lowell, a design guru and author, explains this point: "A great example of using different levels for display is a buffet table at a quality hotel during Sunday brunch. The tables are arranged at about the 4-ft.-high level. The food and serving dishes are at various levels, with fresh product and flowers tucked here and there. If the food were displayed on the table at one level, it wouldn't look half as great and you probably wouldn't want to shell out the 25 bucks it's costing you," he wrote in his book *Christopher Lowell's Seven Layers of Design*.

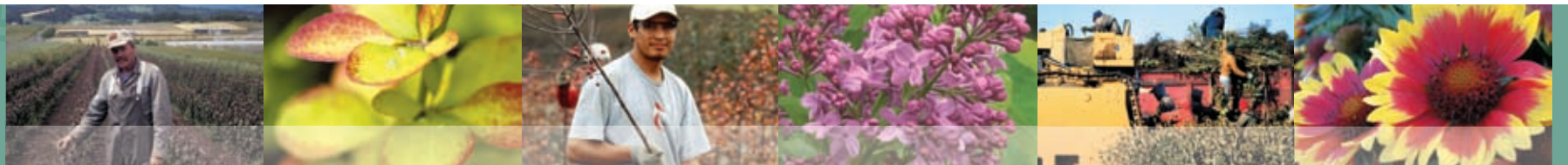
Some gardens are in danger of looking like the flat buffet Lowell described. Suggest that consumers create varying heights in their gardens by adding assorted shrubs, raised flower beds and accessories in different sizes. If a customer wants such a look but owns accents



that are all roughly the same size, suggest he or she overturn different containers to elevate the accents to different heights. Accessories that hang from trees or shepherds' hooks can help draw the eye up from the ground. ♦



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PRODUCT FOCUS ACCENTS & DÉCOR

Balance the area. While accessories grouped together at varying heights is interesting, there can be too much of a good thing. Tell consumers to avoid clutter by grouping their outdoor accents by color, theme or purpose. For instance, a gold-colored statue, a gold gazing ball and some smaller gold accents grouped together can look smart while the same combination in all different colors has the potential to look disorganized. The right combination of accents can even serve as an outdoor room's focal point.

Show And Tell

Your customers will better understand how to implement these indoor decorating ideas in their own gardens if you show them how to do so in your garden center's displays. A complete, expertly accessorized outdoor room would be great, but it's not a necessity for communicating the importance of decorating outdoor spaces to consumers. If you don't have the space to arrange a whole outdoor room at your store, put together vignettes that apply the different decorating principles. This way, consumers can get

ideas for their own gardens while at the same time viewing how well your products work together. Add signage to the displays that explains each decorating tip and how it can be applied to an outdoor room.

Try taking the home decorating idea further by creating "decorating tips" handouts or including tips and ideas in newsletters, E-mails or other communications with customers. You and your staff should always be on the lookout for new indoor decorating trends that can be applied to outdoor rooms. Have workers clip articles and pictures dealing with decorating trends to keep on file in case a customer is looking for a new, special idea. ✂

For more information on this article, please contact Catherine Evans, Lawn & Garden Retailer's managing editor, at cevans@sgcmail.com or (847) 391-1050.

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