

Artistic Flare

Using something handmade or artistic in the garden is something consumers are running off with at retail.



By Catherine Evans

Handmade, hand-painted, artsy — do those words seem to be coming out of your customers' mouths a lot lately? More and more consumers are looking into items for their gardens that are artistically based, including anything from garden gifts, accents, outdoor furniture, green goods and more.

People often get sick and tired of the ordinary everyday garden items and want to use something different to liven up their homes. Even if the products are not necessarily handmade or created by an artist, the look is what the consumer wants. It can even come from some of your favorite manufacturers; as long as it looks the part, it will probably work. Many of the manufacturers are adding artistic lines to their selections. Not only can you get them in a larger quantity, but you can most likely get them at a cheaper price than buying from an artist.

However, just because prices may be better, it does not hurt to have local artists display their pieces in your store as well. Many people like to support local artists as well as the community by purchasing those items. You can also present it as part of your niche. You know very well that the big box up the street is not going to have that local artistic feel to it. They will have the everyday non-original items; this is where you come in, your differentiation is what makes you well known.

Not all of the items have to be for the garden, some of the best items for your gift department can have that artistic look to them. Paintings, pottery (more than just pots), collectibles, homemade candles or bath products are just some of the things that can be used in your gift department for that artistic burst.

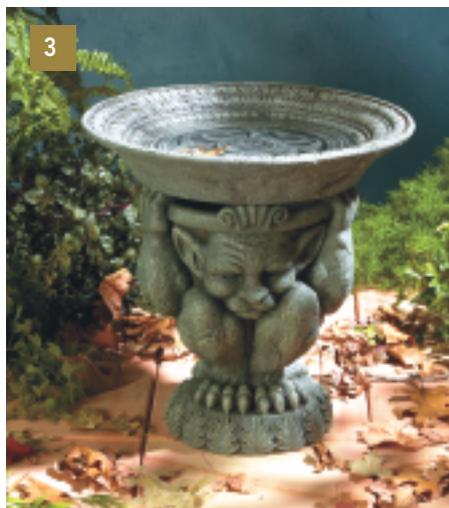
Letting your customers know that your staff members have put

together colorbowl combinations or hanging baskets, which is an art unto itself, is another way to add to it. Using your green goods is a way to add your own personal touch to the artistic aspect your customers are looking for. Informing them that you have creative employees will make it easier for customers to approach your staff when they need help choosing items for their homes, giving you that extra customer service edge.

There are a number of things that can be done all around the garden center that can add that artistic flare. Just look around, go to the gift shows, see what other retail outlets are doing, go to local craft/art fairs and see what you can find. You may be very surprised at the number of people looking for out-of-the-ordinary products to add to their homes. That might be just another way to add your name to a new customer's preferred list. 🌿



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1. Garden plaque

These garden plaques are made of urethane resin and are great for the outside. They are hand poured and painted, and the material works like wood. They can be sanded, repainted, screwed or glued. Made in the USA, and there are many styles to choose from. Garden Images. (803) 283-9857. **Write in 1406**

2. Birdfeeder

These three-dimensional glass birdfeeders are waterproof and completely safe for outdoor use. The bright colors will never fade, even in the hottest sunlight, according to the manufacturer. The copper finish will not tarnish, turn green or rust. Gallery Inc. (800) 752-9146. **Write in 1405**

3. Urn/birdbath

Gargoyles have been standing watch over architecture for centuries; now they make perfect guardians in today's popular gardens. The aged appeal of the Troll Gargoyles Urn and Gothic Birdbath/Basin are a nice complement to a garden setting. The urn is 13½ inches tall, and the birdbath/basin is 16½ inches in diameter. Each are sold separately. United Design Corporation. (800) 727-4883. **Write in 1411**

4. Planters

Larger sizes have been added to the Fairfield Group of planters. The largest is now 44 inches in diameter and 34 inches tall and weighs 621 lbs. This style group has 10 sizes, including three-square planters. The planters come in a variety of color and surface choices. The Fairfield Group can also be ordered with no "shell" ornamentation, or with your custom logo. The Brookfield Co. (706) 375-8530. **Write in 1404** ▶