

ESCAPING THROUGH

LANDSCAPING

September 11th and its consequential cloud of disquiet is turning many Americans into homebodies. Landscape products are one of many add-on categories that, merchandised effectively, will help consumers turn their gardens into spaces of comfort and respite.

By Harrison F. Pettit

With the future uncertain, and the news constantly reminding us of our vulnerabilities, where but in the garden can one turn for reassurance?

Generations have tilled the soil in times of turmoil and uneasiness. The difference this time is that we look not to build a victory garden but to develop a place of solace — a refuge, a haven, a garden room. With vacations getting a smaller share of household spending; home improvement spending should increase, and landscape products will appear especially attractive as people have the time and money to do larger garden projects.

Garden retailers need to make it easy for people to connect the dots — to envision the end result of a landscape project. That may mean adding a fountain, constructing a pond, installing a decorative garden structure or purchasing outdoor furniture. These large-ticket items are project purchases and drive the sale of many other garden center products and services.

Not every garden center can justify installing a 1,000-sq-ft. koi pond, nor a scale model of the herb garden at Monticello. However, with the plethora of decorative landscape products now available in a wide range of scales and price points, no garden center can afford to neglect this highly profitable category.

Garden retailers should demand that landscape product manufacturers provide effective, point-of-purchase merchandising and assistance in planning the retail space. Likewise, garden retailers must reciprocate by utilizing the advice and providing the necessary feedback on what works. Get manufacturers' toll-free numbers and give them a call. The ones that work with you are the ones worthy of your patronage.



NATURALISTIC LANDSCAPING

People are becoming more aware of the delicate balance of nature and are focusing more on reducing the size of lawns by using groundcovers and by creating more naturalistic garden areas.

To maximize growing space for smaller suburban lots and provide a more personalized welcome, the front yard is becoming another garden room. In terms of landscape projects and products, this trend is

huge. What better way to frame the entrance to a front yard than with an elegant garden arbor alive with a rambling rose or mandevilla?

Also on the naturalistic garden's list of key landscape features is water. Whether it takes the form of still pools, rills or steaming prehistoric rock pools, water is a must-have in the 21st-century outdoor room.

GARDEN ENTERTAINMENT

Lifestyle is inherent in the garden room concept. Gardens are no longer the green space viewed through the back door. Patios, dining areas and other entertainment spaces are now being integrated into the garden.

This trend offers a plethora of products for the garden center. With the concept of the garden as an outdoor room becoming more firmly rooted in the mind of the gardening public, furnishing gardens is the name of the game.

Garden furniture is the most obvious opportunity. Why relegate this profitable sale to a department or specialty furniture store when the customer is at your garden center buying their plants and planters?

Stick with trusted manufacturers and suppliers, and they will guide you into the enormous opportunity of garden furniture. If it is a garden product, there is no reason why another retailer should get the sale.



ART IN THE GARDEN

Whether pieces of art are used for impact as a classic focal point or set amidst the planting schemes, art is in. But don't expect to see only the demure Aphrodite taking shelter in a clipped yew or a profusion of cherubs spouting water. The traditional formalism that has governed art in the garden has given way to a wide array of options from the bold and modern to the rusted antique. For more information about art in the garden, see the garden accent focus on page 32.

Opportunities abound for the garden retailer who understands how to communicate to and inspire their customers. Clear, effective point of purchase signage and artful displays are the key ingredients. Please remember that the structure of the garden space is what drives the plant and landscape product purchases; so take full advantage of your loyal customers' perception of you as the garden expert and be a one-stop shop for all that is needed to decorate the garden room. 🌿

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