

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL



Tools have traditionally been made for men, even in the sphere of gardening where women dominate. But times are changing, and the next generation is upon us: tools for women.

By Brandi D. Thomas

cent of the population by 2030. A boom in new retirees means more consumers with free time and is a possible indicator that garden centers may be seeing this sector in growing numbers.

To put it all together, what we've got here is a very large and growing group of women and seniors with their hands in the dirt who need tools designed for their special needs. Many manufacturers are responding by creating such tools — in colors that traditionally appeal to women and in sizes more appropriate for women's and seniors' smaller frames.

WOMEN ARE NOT MEN

"One thing that's clear is that when somebody takes up the [gardening] activity, they've got to buy the tools," says Bruce Butterfield, market research director for NGA. "Driving the market is increased participation in various types of lawn and garden activities. Having said that, the one thing I find interesting is that all of the gardening activities are much more popular with women, while the maintenance activities — lawn, tree and shrub care and insect control — seem to be where the gender line is drawn. Men do more of the maintenance, and women do more of the gardening." Furthermore, he

adds, one size does not fit all where gardening tools are concerned.

With this information in hand, what does your tool department look like? Garden tools have traditionally been designed for men and can often be too large and unwieldy for women's smaller frames. The repetitive motions involved when using garden tools can also exacerbate such medical conditions as carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis.

Are you carrying tools made specifically for the ones who most frequently patronize your store? Before you decide on the products to stock your shelves with, make sure you do your research; painting a trowel pink that's been designed for men will not make it any easier on a woman's back or wrists.

Mira Loma, Calif.-based Garden Pals conducted research from late 1997-98 using consumer focus groups, Internet surveys, market surveys, large garden clubs and American Arthritis Foundation testing labs to discern what female gardeners were looking for in a gardening tool. Of the 2,500 women surveyed, here's what they found out:

- Women were most concerned with the size, weight, grip, cutting potential, color and operating ease of hand cutting tools.
- Bypass pruners — featuring two

Fact 1: According to the National Gardening Association's (NGA) 2001 National Gardening Survey — a study of consumer gardening practices, trends and product sales — eight out of 10 U.S. households, or 85 million households, participated in one or more types of do-it-yourself indoor and outdoor lawn and garden activities last year.

Fact 2: Forty-five million of these households purchased some form of garden tools, up from 30 million five years ago.

Fact 3: Any garden center manager knows that the majority of their customers are women. According to Loren Lum, vice president of sales and marketing for Garden Pals, \$33.5 billion is spent on gardening purchases per year, with 70-80 percent of those purchases made by women.

Fact 4: According to the Administration on Aging, people 65-plus represented 12.4 percent of the population in the year 2000, but that figure is expected to grow to be 20 per-



Top: Landscaping tools, V&B Manufacturing, (800) 443-1987 (write in 1150); Left: Specialty tools, Earth Bud Eze Co., (877) 504-9088 (write in 1151). (Center photo courtesy of Joy Stirling Studios)