



# Show Your Artistic Side

Carrying art in your garden center — from indoor paintings to outdoor sculptures — can offer your customers something new and unique for their homes and gardens.

By Meghan Boyer

*You already know that any time you can bring people into your store it means more money, but have you thought about using more than plants and fertilizer as bait? Many garden centers now carry home décor and gift items as a regular part of their offering. What about other items? What about products that are not usually considered garden products...things like pet supplies and gourmet food? These kinds of ancillary categories are proving profitable for garden centers around the country.*

*"Developing Markets," a monthly series that will appear in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer, will profile eight of these potential new markets, giving insight into the health of the market, relating how other garden centers have mastered the category and profiling some of the best new products in the category.*

**January: Fashion Accessories**  
**February: Cause Merchandise**  
**March: Candles**  
**April: Children's Department**  
**June: Apparel**  
**July: Art**  
**August: Books**  
**November: Home Accessories**

**F**or garden center owners who are not well versed in art and artistic styles, works of art may be the last products they would ever consider selling. Yet, the art industry can be quite accessible, especially when you realize almost anything can be perceived as art — from priceless works hanging in

museums to the finger paintings your kids hang on the refrigerator.

This is because the definition of what is and what is not art lies largely with each individual, which makes the category quite broad: Furniture, sculpture, paintings and even some landscaping projects all can be perceived as art.

For garden centers, carrying art

can mean creating an in-store gallery area to house pictures and paintings or focusing on outdoor garden pieces; it can mean working with local artists to carry original works or bringing in mass-produced artistic reproductions. No matter what type of art you choose to carry, you can be sure you are offering customers something new and unique to stylize their homes and gardens.

## Industry Overview

Like art itself, the art market is hard to quantify. This is largely because it is not regulated: Art can be created by anyone and sold anywhere for a range of prices (a quick search for "art" on Ebay helps prove this point). Despite how broad the category is, those who directly deal in the art business have a good idea about the state of the industry.

Alan Bamberger, an art appraiser and consultant who also writes about and critiques art, feels the market is currently pretty healthy. He sees a lot of people interested in young art stars — artists who are thought to be on the verge of a healthy career.

Consumers from a variety of demographics help fuel the industry. Pam Danziger, president of Unity Marketing, pointed out, "The traditional market for art is shifting as consumers find better quality art reproductions more widely available in home furnishing and discount department stores at very attractive prices. On the other hand, affluent consumers are trading up to original art from cheaper reproductions, as they view the art they display on their walls as a collection rather than simply decoration."



Outdoor art can accentuate plants' natural beauty, add focal points and provide different textures and colors.



Outdoor garden art is a natural fit for garden centers.

### Price Points

Because price points and types of art vary, when choosing which pieces to carry, keep your consumers in mind: Danziger stated that luxury consumers (those with household incomes of \$75,000 and above) are the primary market for today's art. The typical luxury consumer spent an average of \$8,962 on art and antiques in 2005, Danziger reported. Consumers who have lower incomes also appreciate art, though they are unlikely to purchase high-end items. However; they are more likely to appreciate and buy quality art at reasonable prices.

Art pricing also is quite variable. Often, Bamberger pointed out, the price of a piece of original art reflects the amount of work the artist put into it and how famous the artist is. Just as someone pays more for a brand name car, pair of jeans or box of cereal, art aficionados will pay extra for a work by someone with an excellent reputation. "If you want to buy something that is more reasonable in price, you would generally go to an artist who is just starting out. That's not to say the art isn't any good; the art can be good. It's just more affordable because the artist has less of a track record," explained Bamberger.

If you are unsure if you are purchasing or selling art at appropriate prices, try consulting with art experts. They can help give you a good idea of what prices to pay and sell at. Just keep in mind that experts are likely to charge fees for their services.

### What To Carry

Outdoor garden art is a natural fit for garden centers. Like many garden accents, outdoor art can accentuate plants' natural beauty, add focal

points and provide different textures and colors. While Bamberger usually encounters garden art in the form of sculpture, he's also seen handmade furniture and landscaping art.

You can create an outdoor gallery of your own and display pieces of garden art by incorporating them with plant displays or within the landscaping of your center. Doing so will show consumers the effect art can have on a garden.

Carrying indoor art such as paintings, prints and sculptures is another option. You can choose works that center on a garden or nature theme, or simply sell what appeals to you. Create a gallery by hanging pictures and displaying sculptures in one section of your retail space, just make sure to have proper lighting; customers should be able to see the details of each piece clearly.

For those who like the idea of carrying art but don't want to buy and sell original pieces, try stocking artsy products in your store: hand-blown gazing globes, unique sculptures and hand-painted decorations. Many companies sell mass-produced products like these that are usually less expensive and easier to stock than original art.

### Artful Promotions

If you choose to carry art, make sure your customers know about it, especially if you are working with artists from the community. You can get the word out by creating a local art scene at your garden center: Hold exhibit weekends and invite artists to display their works. You can make the exhibits special events by serving wine and cheese and inviting your most loyal customers to have

**Y**amagami's Nursery, Cupertino, Calif., features an art gallery on site. Preston Oka, president of Yamagami's Nursery, describes how the garden center's gallery got started and the type of art his garden center features.

#### How long have you been stocking art?

It started off with just a few pieces probably about six or seven years ago. My wife has been the great motivator for doing this, with her [art] background.

#### What made you decide to add art?

[My wife] was always suggesting, "You know what goes well with the décor?" And I guess people's lifestyles have to do not with just plant material and patio furniture and pieces, but there's also art. And art ranges not only from paintings or mixed media but also sculptural pieces.

#### How much space do you devote to it?

We're probably devoting somewhere around 500 sq.ft.

#### What kind of art merchandise do you sell?

We sell [everything from] reproductions to original artwork. Actually, the original artwork is primarily by my wife, Kathy Fujii-Oka. I have to say at this time, we probably do not have a lot of her pieces in, and part of the reason has to do with her finishing up her fine arts degree. But then we also have been purchasing reproductions and bringing them into the store.

#### What is your philosophy in choosing the products?

It relates to some form or theme of nature.

#### What products sell best?

[Before my wife went back to school], I think we did really well with the paintings, and reproductions seem to have filled that void. It's something that I don't think a lot of other garden centers necessarily associate themselves with. And it does seem to work quite well. We find a lot of people using many of the pieces not only in the home itself, but kind of in a cabana area or an open-air garden room kind of setting.

#### What kind of margin do you get?

They range from 55- to 65-percent gross margin.

#### Who is responsible for product selection and helping customers?

Previously it was my wife, but now we have someone dedicated to the area.

#### Does this category bring people into the store more often when they would not otherwise be there?

I think we're starting to get a following. What I mean by that is initially the pieces did not sell rapidly. But we are seeing more of a turnover in that category. I think we do get people revisiting the store on occasion to see what's new. It's almost like there is a sense of seasonality to the pieces. Just as in other décor items going through spring, summer, fall, winter seasons, I think it also holds true for art. ✿



Yamagami's Nursery sells both original artwork and reproductions.

## DEVELOPING MARKETS

the first viewing. You also can invite local art classes to sit among your displays and paint what they see. Any art-themed promotion will work as long as it tells your customers about the new and different genre of products you are carrying at your garden

center; products they are unlikely to find at the nearest big box. ❧

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### Resources

#### Magazines:

*American Style*  
[www.americanstyle.com](http://www.americanstyle.com)

#### Associations:

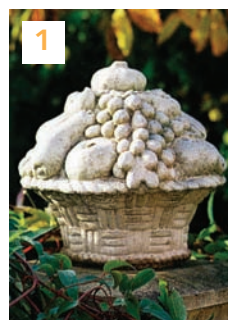
National Art Education Association  
[www.naea-reston.org](http://www.naea-reston.org)

#### Web Sites:

[Sculptor.org](http://Sculptor.org)  
[www.sculptor.org](http://www.sculptor.org)

Art Business  
[www.artbusiness.com](http://www.artbusiness.com)

Artprice.com  
[www.artprice.com](http://www.artprice.com)



#### 1. Ornamental finial

This ornamental finial depicts a small basket of fruit; the basket features a relief basketweave pattern. It is 12¼ inches tall, 12¼ inches wide overall and 7½ inches wide at the base. It weighs 46 lbs. Haddonstone (USA) Ltd. (866) 931-7011. **Write in 1484**

#### 2. Outdoor art

WeatherPrint is art designed for the outdoors. Each piece is intended to withstand the elements for five years. Prints come with universal mounting brackets and stainless steel and aluminum hardware. Available in nine standard sizes, the prints can be prepared in a smooth or canvas texture. Custom images and sizes also are available. Open Air Designs. (866) 760-8244. **Write in 1486**

#### 3. Solar garden art

This 3-dimensional heart is hand-painted with red stripes and made of hand-blown glass. It measures 3 inches wide, 3½ inches tall and 1½ inches deep. The heart attaches to a 60-inch stainless steel stake. During the day, a photovoltaic solar cell is designed to collect and convert sunlight to energy and store eight hours worth of light in two AA NiCD rechargeable batteries. An amber LED light is intended to turn on automatically as darkness falls. Allsop. (866) 4-ALLSOP. **Write in 1483**

#### 4. Glass tray

These rectangular trays are made of hand-painted, beveled glass. They measure 19½ inches wide, 10½ inches tall and 4 inches deep. Different styles, such as Hummingbird/Hydrangea, Birds of a Feather, Purple Irises and Snowmen, are available. Joan Baker Designs. (800) 248-1983. **Write in 1480**

#### 5. Handmade vase

Each mosaic vase is handmade of porcelain. The tall vase is 12½ inches tall, and the small vase is 9 inches tall. Andrea by Sadek. (212) 679-8121. **Write in 1481**

#### 6. Note card

These note cards feature Judith Frances' film photography of flower blooms. Each glossy card is sold individually with a standard A-7 envelope; they are blank on the inside. The folded size measures roughly 4½x7 inches. Landscapes Within, Inc. (866) 759-1333. **Write in 1488**

#### 7. Iris sculpture

This iris sculpture is available in two sizes. The smaller sculpture features one iris blossom and measures 22x25 inches. The larger sculpture features four blossoms and measures 30x36 inches. Z Garden Party. (800) 766-1668. **Write in 1487**

#### 8. Sunflower furniture

Blooming chairs and tables each depict a different flower including sunflower, poppy, clematis and geranium. The chair is designed to have a contoured seat and back. Furniture is constructed of Cyprus; it is intended to be weather and insect resistant. Chair, end table and ottoman sold separately. Bird Brain. (800) 289-4748. **Write in 1485** ❧

### LearnMore!

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