



Wax Works

Candles can create an inviting atmosphere, compliment existing gift departments and please candle-loving customers.

By Meghan Boyer

Candles aren't a new product to hit retailers' shelves: In fact, candles have been around for more than 5,000 years. The earliest candles were highly functional, used to light homes, aid travelers and celebrate religious ceremonies. While not needed as a primary light source any longer, present-day candles are still used in celebration, and in addition, they have entered the realm of home décor.

With a variety of styles, scents, colors and price points, candles are an easy way to accessorize and create ambiance in and around homes — and retail outlets. Garden centers may find that carrying candles in the store can create inviting atmospheres, compliment their existing gift departments and please candle-loving shoppers.

State Of The Industry

Most Americans like candles: They are used in seven out of 10 U.S. homes, and two-thirds of all candle purchasers say they use candles at least once a week, according to the National Candle Association. As Americans use candles frequently throughout the year, most candle sales — 65 percent — are non-seasonal purchases. The National Candle Association finds that the remaining 35 percent of sales occur during the winter holiday season.

This year-round popularity fuels a healthy industry. The National Candle Association estimates annual U.S. retail sales of candles at approximately \$2 billion, excluding candle accessory sales. In July 2005, *Forbes* magazine described the market as "strong" and placed the industry total at \$3 billion.

The success of candle companies such as the Yankee Candle Company

is a testament to the health and popularity of the industry. *Forbes* reported that Yankee leads the candle industry with an 18-percent share. The company's earnings rose 11 percent in 2004, and 90 new store locations were planned over 2005 and 2006.

Overall, "there are more than 400 commercial, religious and institutional manufacturers of candles in the United States, in addition to scores of small craft producers for local, non-commercial use," states the National Candle Association. Candle products can be found in many different retail outlets from mass merchandisers to specialty gift shops and prices can range anywhere from \$.50 for a votive to more than \$200 for artisan candles.

Candle Basics

There are 11 basic categories of candles: tapers, votives, pillars, jar or container candles, tealights, gels, floating candles, outdoor candles, novelty candles, utility candles and birthday candles. Of these, votives, container candles and pillars are currently most popular with American consumers, according to the National Candle Association. Ronni Emrich, director of marketing of Colonial Candle, Des Plaines, Ill., agrees that container candles and pillars are the best-selling items. "Consistently year after year, you'll see that the strongest performing format is the jar or container candle. However, what we see happening now is an upswing in pillars," said Emrich. She feels the surge in pillar candles is because that format is used a lot for decorating.

Decorating with candles is a quick, affordable way for consumers to dress up a room. Candlescaping — the displaying of multiple candles at varying heights in a room or home — is becoming increasingly popular as a means of home and yard décor. "Approximately one in five women say they use candles to decorate the yard, patio or other exterior areas, as well as

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



Sixty-five percent of candle sales are non-seasonal purchases; the remaining 35 percent of sales occur during the winter holiday season.



Jar or container candles are popular with American consumers.

the interior of their home,” states the National Candle Association.

In addition to being a fashion accessory, candles are also used for aromatherapy purposes. In fact, fragrance is the most important characteristic influencing candle purchases. The National Candle Association reports that three-fourths of candle buyers say fragrance is “extremely important” or “very important” in their candle selection. “When it comes to candles, it’s fragrance, fragrance, fragrance. That’s number one,” said Emrich. She also described two other trend categories that consumers notice: candle format (shape and type) and color.

In The Store

Having a burning candle at the cash wrap or featured in a display can help create an inviting atmosphere in the garden center: “Nine out of 10 candle users say they use candles to make a room feel comfortable or cozy,” reports the National Candle Association. The pleasing aroma and warm glow of a candle may entice customers to browse longer or take more notice of candle displays.

Of course, be sure to always practice safety with an open flame in a retail setting and encourage customers to burn candles safely at home. In addition to standard safe candle practices, when using candles in a store, place burning candles in large, secure, fireproof containers; this will prevent customers from accidentally coming in contact with flames.

Typically, Emrich finds that candles are most frequently merchandised with other home decoration items such as picture frames, though consumers burn candles throughout the home — in the kitchen, living room, bathroom, bedroom and outdoors. Because of this broad use, candles can be cross-merchandised with other product categories as well.

For instance, incorporate some candles into outdoor living displays or bath and body areas. Cross-merchandising is a good way to remind customers of the many uses of candles and, most importantly, that you carry them. Also try creating candlescaping displays throughout your store, not just in the gift section, to show customers how candles can be used for home décor.

Candles And Consumers

Ultimately, carrying candles in your garden center can give your main consumers more of what they like. Women, the most frequent garden center shoppers, are also the main purchasers of candles: “Manufacturer surveys show that more than 95 percent of all candles are purchased by women,” states the National Candle Association.

Emrich feels that, unlike gender, there is not one set age demographic of candle purchasers. “It is a pretty broad spectrum of people when you’re looking at the whole candle world in general: I think it [age] is typically 18-55. There’s not one strong demographic, though it does fall off after 55.”

Candles are a good option for gift shoppers as well. The National Candle Association finds that candle purchasers (both men and women) feel candles are appropriate gifts for holidays, house warming parties, hostesses, thank yous and birthdays. The range of prices available makes them an easy add-on to other gift items. Have employees match fragrant plants with corresponding candle scents and colors for unique gift possibilities.

An important factor to consider is that candles don’t last forever in consumers’ homes: They are purchased and used, which means consumers need to continually buy more. Additionally, consumers who find a favorite fragrance are likely to stock up on it: “Often times the consumer will buy multiple formats in the same fragrance because they love that fragrance and want it all over. We call that fragrance layering — taking one fragrance and spreading it across all kinds of formats at your home,” explained Emrich. The bottom line is that consumers who find a favorite candle brand or scent at your store are likely to return to purchase additional candles. ▶

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Bob’s Garden Center, Egg Harbor Twp, N.J., carries a large candle line. I talked with Jackie Hudson, president of Bob’s Garden Center, about their candle business.

How long have you been stocking candles?

Since 1985, [which is] as far back as my computer records, so possibly even longer than that.

What made you decide to add candles?

In our area, it was probably just that it was a gift item. We used to be very rural, no malls. We’re right near the shore, so you had to drive about an hour to a mall. There just weren’t a lot of gift shops.

How much space do you devote to it?

I have 24 running ft. of Yankee Candle and then we probably have another 16 running ft. of candle accessories. We almost have a whole little candle room.

What kind of candles do you sell?

Yankee is our main candle. We tried Village Candles, and because we’re so engrained with Yankee Candle, it’s hard to pick up another candle line because I don’t have the space to show it. I always want to try a new one but then I never get enough of it because I don’t have enough space for it. It never does well because you can’t show enough of it. And Yankee has still in the past been a very good seller for us.

What is your philosophy in choosing the products?

Yankee was just a very good seller for us, so pretty much we carry all of Yankee, all their accessories. We just really make a big statement with Yankee Candle.

What products sell best?

Their [Yankee’s] large jars are the best sellers. Actually, they have a car jar product. It’s a car freshener we have at the registers; we sell a ton of them. Fall is the best time for that, for all the candle scents: fall and Christmas. Summer for us is not a big time for candle sales. The bulk of it is in the fall.

What kind of margin do you get?

We get 48 percent.

Who is responsible for product selection and helping customers?

Most of the time Yankee sells itself. We really don’t have someone in there.

Does this category bring people into the store more often or when they wouldn’t otherwise be there?

I would say no. It’s an added bonus [for customers that are already shopping]. We’ve found that for us, our candle sales are declining with Yankee because they are selling to a lot more stores like Bed, Bath & Beyond. Since it is such an impulse item, I feel it is hurting us because it is so many other places. ❧



Bob’s Garden Center mainly sells Yankee candles.

DEVELOPING MARKETS



1. Candle collection

On the Coast features four new fragrances: Carefree Morning, Coolwater, Peony Breeze and Sky Blue. Each is available in oval and round jars, pillars, votives and potpourri. On the Coast accessories include whitewashed pillar stands, candle-scaping plates, starfish taper holder, lighthouse lantern, and urchin votive/tealight holders. Colonial Candle. (800) 343-4534. **Write in 1498**

2. Candle gift pack

The Trio Gift Pack includes three 3.2-oz. votive-size candles in clear glass holders. The box features a wrap-around grosgrain ribbon. Three fragrance sets are available: Dewberry, Mia and Casuda; Kapitala, Madison and Casuda; and Holiday, Douglass and Cannelle. Bluewick Candle. (866) BLUEWICK. **Write in 1489**

3. Italian-design candles

These hand-made, Italian-design candles feature lacquer and metallic colors of gold, blue, burgundy and green. They are available in a variety of sizes including cone, pillar, ball or teardrop. Alfresco Home. (610) 630-0502. **Write in 1490**

4. All-natural candles

These candles feature three new fragrance blends: Coral sunset peony, basil and pomelo, and water lily and quince. They are made of an all-natural tropical palm wax blend. Joya Candle. (718) 852-6979. **Write in 1491**

Resources

Magazines:

Gifts & Decorative Accessories
www.giftsanddec.com

Giftware News

www.giftwarenews.com

Trade Shows:

July 11-19, 2006
AmericasMart Atlanta
Atlanta, Ga.
www.amercasmart.com

July 19-26, 2006

Chicago Gift & Home Market
Chicago, Ill.
www.merchandisemart.com

Organizations:

National Candle Association
www.candles.org

British Candlemakers Federation
www.britishcandlemakers.org

International Guild
of Candle Artisans
www.igca.net

Web Sites:

Candle Safety
www.candle-safety.org

All Candle Info
www.allcandleinfo.com

Candle Making Techniques
www.candletech.com

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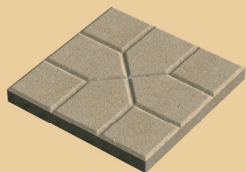
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5. Poured candle

Poured Glass Candles come in a square glass that is packaged in a gift box. Approximate burn time is 40-60 hours. Greenleaf. (877) GREENLEAF. Write in 1496

6. Jar candle

These jar candles come in three sizes: 22 oz., 14 oz. and 3 1/4 oz. They use organic dyes and zinc-core wicks. Bridgewater Candle Company, LLC. (877) 843-2743. Write in 1497

7. Vintage-inspired candles

The vintage collection comes in chocolate-brown tins that are each printed with a story and sepia-toned photograph. Five fragrances and two tin sizes are available. The large tin measures 3 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches and burns for approximately 80 hours. The medium tin measures 1 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches and burns for approximately 25 hours. Paddywax. (866) PADDYWAX. Write in 1494

8. Food-scented candles

Candles within the kitchen collection come in white ceramic pieces and include fragrances such as Baking Bread, Cinnamon Roll, Snickerdoodle and Hot Chocolate. Container options include 14 oz. oval with two wicks and round with three wicks. Two votive tri-packs are also available. FDL Fragrances, Inc. (877) 617-4593. Write in 1493

9. Tulip-shaped candles

Shaped like bunches of tulips, these candles are available in two heights: 9 and 7 inches. Color options include white, red, yellow and pink. Europa. (800) 383-0291. Write in 1492

10. Square tapers

Dripless Square Tapers are 14 inches tall and have an approximately 14-hour burn time. The original eight fragrance selections include Citrus Twist, Green Tea, Jasmine Tea, Lavender Mist, Lemongrass, Spicy Bergamot, Vanilla Blossom and White Ginger. Maroma U.S.A., LLC. (888) 376-3381. Write in 1495

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