

Outside decor: What was old is new again

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Photo 1: A group of stone balls, some drilled to use as fountains, are grouped in a Zen setting at Satterlee Landscape Nursery. Photo 2: Steve Evans displays large glazed pots and gazing balls at Satterlee Landscape Nursery. The grouping includes a sunflower gazing ball. Photos 3 & 4: Copper torches can be used in the lawn, on a deck railing or in a pot, and glazed French pottery is expected to attract gardeners' attention. Photo 5: A gazing ball rests in a scepter at Satterlee Landscape Nursery. - STAFF PHOTOS BY STEVE SISNEY

IT'S the time of summer when about the only plants thriving are tropicals, drought-tolerant native plants and dandelions. Temperatures are bumping record highs, cities are rationing water, and gardens are pretty much left to their own devices.

That doesn't mean gardens have to be empty, crispy voids. Other elements can keep these outdoor sanctuaries inviting spots for relaxation.

Carol McPheeters and Christy White at Wilshire Garden Market say it's a good time to add interest to the landscape with accessories.

McPheeters and White recently returned from a trade show and market where they saw French glazed garden pottery in blues and yellows. The two expect international influences to have a big effect on new garden accessories.

Bamboo and other Asian influences also were shown, they said. Other popular looks were French linens, large glass vases and colored floating glass balls.

The worldwide trend is toward "inside-out" decorating - the blurring of indoor and outdoor spaces, McPheeters and White said. People are creating outdoor "rooms" with furniture built for relaxation, as well as bringing plants into the home for decoration.

Their customers continue to buy fountains to add the sound of moving water to the garden, as well as carved teak benches for seating. Large pots filled with flowers are popular for marking a home's entry or to use around pools, White said.

Accessories are taking on new looks with more attention to detail. Copper torches with shaped tops come with poles sized to fit on a deck, a railing or in a pot.

The "shabby chic" look continues strong at the store. Sap buckets and reclaimed building materials are growing in popularity, McPheeters and White said. New wall pocket vases for dried flowers are made from reclaimed barn tin, and old lamp globes become votive holders and vases to hang in trees.

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Reclaimed wood from fencing and barns is being used for birdhouses and habitats for butterflies.

"They're using old rusty baling wire, anything that people can find that's old," McPheeters said.

She said the old look is being paired with a new generation of silk plants that look more authentic. Examples are topiary shrubs made of faux boxwood, freeze-dried flowers and fruit.

Lightweight plastics with the look of heavier bronze or terra cotta are being used for large pots as well as lawn ornaments and statues, White said.

Gardens appeal to several senses, as do accessories. Steve Evans, a horticulturist at Satterlee Landscape Nursery, showed several items that bring serene sounds into the garden, including large, precision-tuned wind chimes and fountains.

"Bird baths and fountains bring water into the gardens for people who don't have ponds," Evans said. "The noisier ones are more popular because they cover more of the city noise." Newer fountains made of granite bring an imposing modern style and don't have to be drained in cold weather.

Traditional ornaments are taking on a more inventive style, he said. Gazing globes and stands have updated looks in new materials. Cast aluminum globe stands have ornate designs. Globes also are fitted into scepters that can be placed around the garden, and smaller, hollow gazing balls made of stainless steel can be sealed and floated in a pool or pond.

Satterlee's carries several garden statues with an Oriental flavor, as well as religious and whimsical statues.

White and McPheeters said this is a good time for die-hard gardeners to look at new tools. Their store carries a bypass pruner with a special handle. The curved handle design allows the tool to be used as a hand pruner or a lopper. They also have garden shears for dead-heading flowers, gardening gloves, and plant markers and pens that resist sun fading.

The store carries a tool that can grab mistletoe out of trees and trim wisteria. A lip on the blade can grab cuttings, or the tool can be turned over to allow the cuttings to drop.

McPheeters and White also sell stained glass stepping stones.

"They are expensive but gorgeous," McPheeters said. "They make it fine in cold weather, too. They look gorgeous in among the flowers of a garden."

McPheeters said one of the big shopping times in their store is right after school starts, when people start thinking about decorating for fall and then the holidays.

"It's really great that so many people are interested in decorating their homes and planting," McPheeters said. "It's encouraging to see that spread."

She also said that early fall is a good time to plant perennials.

"As soon as the heat eases, it's a good time to plant. It gives the plants more time for roots to establish for winter and next year," she said.

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