

WILSHIRE GARDEN MARKET

Winter, 2005 Newsletter

2821 Wilshire Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73116
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Established 1997

LET YOUR GARDEN GO TO POT

There is mystery, nostalgia, and even romance held within a vintage terra cotta pot. Who made it? Who owned it? What plants did it contain? Did the owner have a beautiful garden?

Christy and I first came to appreciate terra cotta pots prior to opening Wilshire Garden Market, while we were accumulating garden shop props from estate sales. We became aware of vintage McCoy pots with their pale clay and distinctive geometric rim designs. At one estate sale, we found a huge cache of moldy old pots in all shapes and sizes languishing in an even older barn east of the city. We bought 100; by the pencil markings on them, they were apparently well used by their former owners for starting roses and all sorts of perennials. From that day on, we have been hooked on pots, our eyes trained to spot the unusual.

Our penchant for pots is not unique. No one knows for sure when the first terra cotta pot was made, but it is said that the idea for using pots as plant containers evolved out of the need to move plants. Very early pots had large rims; the rims served as grips for caretakers as they carried indoors heavy pots filled with lemon trees in order to protect them from cold weather.



Most gardeners know that pots made in Italy are individual works of art to be cherished and passed down to the next generation of gardeners. There are several regions that have produced fine terra cotta for 500 years.

Impruneta terra cotta is the most durable in the world; the clay has high iron content. Containers made of this clay get high marks for frost resistance, durability, and beauty. Terra cotta from Umbria is softer in texture and appearance. As its light pink color darkens in appearance, it develops a patina. The shapes of Umbrian pottery are ancient in origin. The clay from Sienna feels similar to Umbrian but it is redder and finer. Because

this clay is easier to work with, pots can be produced less expensively.



England also produces some very fine terra cotta pots as well. Whichford pottery produced in the Cotswolds in England is high fired to produce a very adequate frost resistance. Their pottery is easily recognizable by its meticulous attention to detail in the basket weave or

floral embossed pieces.

Local collectors are familiar with the unique high fired terra cotta pots hand made and signed by potter Mike Paluska. Years from now Paluska pots will still be in use by avid gardeners and terra cotta pot lovers, passed down in this part of the world as quality terra cotta has been passed down around the world for centuries.

Did you know that high fired terra cotta will "ring like a bell" when tapped with a finger? Try it the next time you're in the store!

Besides being interested in terra cotta, consumers have been asking for other lightweight and durable containers. We have searched for and found attractive, high quality containers realistic in appearance that fulfill those criteria and foster healthy plants: polyethylene, fiberglass, and glazed terra cotta.



Polyethylene pots are basically plastic with the look of aged terra cotta. Even the most discerning terra cotta fanatics have come to praise these pots. They feature micro pores, so the material breathes like terra cotta, providing air to plant roots. Polyethylene

expands and contracts with the temperature and will not shale or crack like inexpensive terra cotta. Polyethylene

pots are available in large sizes (up to 52" wide x 39" high!). Their light weight makes it easier to move plants.

Fiberglass is another lightweight container material. It has been fabricated to resemble materials such as cast stone, cast iron, and bronze; with finishes that will actually age as do the real materials. Like polyethylene, fiberglass will expand and contract with the changing temperatures and acts as an insulator to buffer the plant roots from extreme temperatures, making it a lightweight alternative to their counterpart likenesses.



Glazed terra cotta has gained popularity during the past year. Our brand of glazed terra cotta is made in Vietnam and is glazed and fired to be as durable as cast stone, without the weight. Homeowners like the added splash of color to their patio, entry, in their perennial bed, or next to their koi pond. Even an empty glazed terra cotta pot is a delightful spot of color in the midst of winter.



Concrete pots, with their durability and stability, always look stately at an entry or entrance to a driveway. Their weight makes them ideal for holding small trees around a pool or in an area exposed to the Oklahoma wind. Our stone planters

have been cast with added fiberglass, making them nearly as durable as highway concrete. They can be ordered in eight finishes.

The choices of materials, styles, and sizes are many; there is a planter for everyone, in every setting. This spring, you can let your garden go to pot, as long as they are pots from Wilshire Garden Market!

THE ORGANIC REVOLUTION

Greener grass can now be had without chemicals! As consumers become aware of the harmful chemicals in their garden shed arsenals, they are becoming alarmed and turning to natural solutions to pest and disease problems. Today natural approaches to lawn and garden care are easily found.

Start with mowing! Mowing has done a 180 as they say, or maybe even a 360. Reel push mowers were pretty hard to use and quickly went by the wayside with the advent of the gas mower.

Now retro reel mowers are advertised in upscale garden catalogs. Retooled, they have encased ball bearings and five to seven blades that make them much more pleasant to use. They are adjustable, smooth to push, do not require gas, do not make noise so they can be used early in the morning, or late in the evening, and they provide good exercise. The blades make cleaner cuts on the grass resulting in faster healing time for the grass with less moisture loss. Reel mowers are naturally mulching mowers, leaving beneficial amounts of blade cuttings that add nutrients to the soil and act as mulch to keep roots cooler and conserve water.

For pre-emergent weed control, corn gluten is the answer. By spreading this yellow powder over the lawn, it prevents the growth of weeds, and also decomposes to add nutrients to the soil.

Another way to prevent weeds from getting started is to mow periodically throughout the winter so that the weeds do not have the opportunity to go to seed.

Organic fertilizers will foster a strong healthy lawn without chemicals. Spreading compost directly onto the lawn is one method. Lawns by Murphy has an excellent Rich Mix. Located near the Oklahoma City Stockyards, the company turns manure into usable compost by baking it until the grass and other seeds cannot sprout. Other treatments include spreading a mixture of bone meal, blood meal, and green sand. These three ingredients together build the nutrient levels in soil and feed grass to make it much greener. The product Milorganite has been effectively used for decades.

Gardeners have found solutions to ridding plants of pests and fertilizing lawns in their kitchen cabinets and refrigerators instead of the chemical aisle at garden centers. This is a very encouraging, healthy trend, the effects of which will be obvious for years to come.

GET BUSY, IT'S WINTER!

Seemingly everyone made it through Monday, January 24, reported to be the "most depressing day of the year", when it is cold, perhaps cloudy, rainy, and snowy, New Year's resolutions have been broken, holiday pounds have firmly attached to waistlines, and the credit card bills have come due. There has been a two day school closing due to icy streets and it finally snowed more than 1/4", so this is winter.

Despair not! Wait at the mailbox daily to receive the latest flower catalogs, come to the gardening workshops at Wilshire Garden Market, and plan, plan, plan!. Buy some beautiful planters and make

a statement that your neighbors will be proud of and even a little envious! You can make 2005 the year that "the garden finally came together".

Plant growers are getting ready to showcase the new "plants of the year", and let gardeners know what everyone else seems to want.

In demand this year are drought tolerant plants. Receiving mention are the new Echinacea 'Mango Meadowbrite', the color of a mango with the fragrance of honeysuckle, and 'Sunrise', in the citrus yellow similar to Coreopsis 'Moonbeam'. Heuchera 'Marmalade', a big brother of 'Amber Wave', and 'Sunspot', a brilliant yellow with dark red spots are some favorites mentioned by Dan Heims, president of Terra Nova Nurseries.



Still favorites are the Knock Out roses. In addition to the original bright cherry, the new light pink Knock Out 'Blushing' does well. They are cold hardy, heat tolerant, resistant to pests and mildew, and bloom repeatedly, nearly continuously for 10 months out of the year!

Retro plants that were in our grandparents' gardens are being rediscovered: abelia, deutzia, clethra, and viburnum. Cactus and succulents have been on the rise for the past year or two also. They are now carried in popular catalogs.

The following websites offer fascinating new varieties and seeds:

- www.heronswood.com;
- www.yuccado.com;
- www.heronswood.com;
- www.whiteflowerfarm.com;
- www.asiaticanursery.com;
- www.selectseeds.com.

Keep dreaming, but don't sleep away the winter!

STOP TALKING AND PLANT IT!

Believe it or not, British scientists have designed a new mobile phone cover that is biodegradable and breaks down when discarded in the dirt. Not only

does it break down, but a sunflower grows from a seed imbedded inside the case! The idea came from researchers at the University of Warwick to combat the littering of plastic cell phones that are discarded every year. The covers are expected to sprout up in stores sometime this year.

SEMINAR SERIES 2004/2005

These seminars begin at 10:30 a.m. and are one hour in length, with time for questions at the conclusion. The fee is \$10 per person; seating is somewhat limited, so call now to reserve a space. Door prizes are given at each seminar. Please join us!

The 2004/2005 series is as follows:

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|---------------|-------------|--|
| Sat., Feb. 5 | Linda Vater | "Gardening Fundamentals" |
| Sat., Mar. 5 | Linda Vater | "Kitchen Garden" |
| Fri., Apr. 8 | Linda Vater | "Use of Color in the Landscape" |
| Fri., May 6 | Linda Vater | "Creating Curb Appeal" |
| Sat., June 4 | Linda Vater | "Vertical Gardening" |
| Fri., July 8 | Linda Vater | "Shade Gardening" |
| Sat., Aug. 27 | Linda Vater | "How to keep Your Garden Looking Good" |
| Fri., Sep. 16 | Linda Vater | "Container Gardening" |
| Sat., Oct. 15 | Linda Vater | "Bulbs" |

EXTERIOR DECORATING

This year give yourself a garden retreat, or refresh the one you have. In response to repeated requests, Wilshire Garden Market now provides an exterior decorating consultation service. By appointment and for a nominal fee, we will make a consultation visit followed by written suggestions to make your garden retreat more charming, cohesive, and useful. We also plant pots or window boxes. Call the store for more details or to set up an appointment.



Let us help you create your outdoor living room!

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M A R K E T



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

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