

INSPIRE WITH

# Garden Lifestyle

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INTEGRATING  
GARDENS,  
LIFESTYLES AND  
OUTDOOR ROOMS



## Illuminating the Look

*Globes (right) and swag lamps (above) are two hanging light fixtures that bring an instantly modern look to outdoor rooms.*



## The New Modern: What's Trending Now

COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION are returning their mid-century houses to the look and feel the builders intended. Magazines like *Atomic Ranch* specialize in helping younger homeowners better understand what to do with these houses, indoors and out. Your garden center can do the same with merchandising strongly dedicated to cutting-edge, modern outdoor design, which appeals not only to this group but to homeowners coast to coast.

As part of the new modern aesthetic, there is an appreciation for vintage items you couldn't give away 20

years ago. Forgotten treasures lying unwanted in thrift stores and flea markets are suddenly high style - but not in ways you may think. One designer who relishes the uncommon came to appreciate 1960s swag lamps that once hung by brass-colored chains over dining tables. Made with blown or molded glass, these vintage treasures were picked up for next to nothing and rewired to become unique outdoor lighting fixtures, hanging from arbors and tree branches.

Keep an eye out for repurposed materials and vintage finds for off-the-grid items that will make your

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store stand out beyond mass market uniformity. Some hot finds include large ceramic ash trays, candleholders, space-age metals, molded plastics, framed modern art prints, woven wall hangings, sleek-colored blown glass and smooth wood bowls and platters.

"Green" is also an element of this retro movement. The emphasis on recycled and repurposed materials has given rise to new, unorthodox decor that is both environmentally sound and modern. This doubles the opportunity for sales: the customer feels good about buying an eco-friendly repurposed item that looks great.

### Selling It Tastefully

Mass market modern accessories and decor can easily border on kitsch, tasteless copies of quality design. It's too easy to use items that may appear

modern but that customers will sense are a bit off in scale, color or material. Consider the following in determining what works in the modern milieu.

**Lighting.** Hanging overhead light fixtures are a vital part of outdoor living spaces. Globes and other geometric forms that hang like sculptures in space are most popular. Japanese globes can spice up your displays and help you sell volumes of paper lanterns. Don't forget those swag lamps, too!

**Furniture.** Many famous designers have contributed to the modern furniture movement. Their minimal, graphically appealing space-age chairs and tables are intensely appealing to customers with modern homes. One drawback is

that some designs sacrifice comfort for looks, so be sure to test the seating before adding them to the stock. Don't overlook lightweight plastic chairs and ottomans to create unbreakable, safe spots of color. They appeal to families who want the children's seating to be just as eye-catching as the adults'.

**One-of-a-Kind Pizazz** (Below) Panels with grids, patterns and textures create a custom look. (Left) Outdoor wall art is a focal point, giving unattractive walls a new look. Select simple, beautifully colored canvas art to show on display.



## In sculpture, local artists who work in steel or recycled metals can produce dramatic exterior accent pieces.

**Panels.** The use of panels is unique to the modern landscape, whether freestanding, part of a fence or used as a spatial partition to section off parts of the landscape. Metal, plastic, glass and fiberglass with grids, patterns and textures offer a different look.

**Canvas and carpets.** Weatherproof canvas wall art lends a modern look to outdoor living areas. Select simple, beautifully colored samples to show on display, coordinated with woven outdoor carpets to demonstrate how they can be visually linked in a space. Outdoor wall art is a focal point for urban gardens, courtyards and atria with no views, giving unattractive walls an instant new look.

**Pillows.** Perhaps the most widely

*Clean Lines* The simplicity of the modern landscape makes a perfect setting for sculpture.



used addition to outdoor furniture is accent throw pillows. When you offer them in UV- and weather-resistant fabrics such as Sunbrella, customers will buy them over the ordinary fabrics sold elsewhere. They are the perfect way to add color to existing outdoor living spaces or to link indoors to out with textiles. Affordability makes boldly designed fabrics an easy sale.

**Fire features.** The fire pit has graduated to an entirely new fire feature, where flames dance upon glass gravel without wood or smoke. These are an outstanding display item, with varying colors of replacement gravels for customers who want change. Fire and water together is popular for high-end projects, where these elements

are the only movement in an otherwise static landscape. Fire features are among the must-haves of the upscale modern crowd that enjoys entertaining and outdoor dining.

**Ceramics.** Ceramics are an important part of the modern milieu both indoors and out. Sleek urns and vases, bowls and boxes are all affordable decor options for outdoor living spaces. They can be filled with unique items, such as decor balls or dried plant material, or simply left as is.

**Tabletop.** There are always opportunities to sell outdoor



tabletop decor with modern design appeal. Placemats, dishes, centerpieces and fabric napkins are easy sales. Don't forget whimsical partyware in modern molded colored plastic for special get-togethers. The way you set your dining table will help you educate customers on how they can put things together to suit the style.

**Sculpture.** The simplicity of the modern landscape makes a perfect setting for sculpture, whether one of a kind, mass market or imported. African stone Mashona sculptures are some of the most outstanding modern design pieces on the market today. Local artists who work in steel or recycled metals can also produce dramatic exterior accent pieces. ■

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