

April



Nouveau Niche

Consumers are **more individualized than ever, expecting every good, service and experience to address their unique and oh-so important selves.** It's now all about "me" (for better or worse) - where being special will lend to consumers' status, to be "mass" is every consumer's nightmare. Even the few mass objects of desire that still manage to unite large groups of consumers - iPods, Nokia handsets and the Mini Cooper - are likely to be **customized and personalized.**

you can
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BE GARDEN CHIC

Plants As Gifts

Consumers opted for plants as their No. 1 garden-related gift. According to research conducted by the Garden Writers Association, **nearly one in four will buy green goods.** Next popular is the ever-trusty gift certificate. Overall, the least popular items gardeners give are: books and magazines at 12%; garden tools at 8%; and, bringing up the end of the parade, seeds and bulbs at 7%. **Surprise, men are more likely to give garden tools.**

\$10,000 Teak Premiers

The sky may be the limit for high-end garden lifestyle consumers: brand leader Smith & Hawken is banking on it. At their recent line preview at the Intrepid museum in New York Harbor on a retired aircraft carrier, a wallet-busting **\$10,000 teak patio dining table set** was unveiled to the "oohs" and "ahhs" of the VIP audience. Extremely-thick-armed chairs top off the set. Obviously not for everyone, but this vendor is confident it will be a hit with the well-heeled.

What's Selling

What's hot and what's working across the country? This update comes from the Southwest, via Tim Businda, V.P. of SummerWinds' Arizona ops. He says Mexican pottery sales are down in their California stores but up in Arizona. Candles are big, and birding is always a winner. Aqua is a hot color right now. The Sloggers line has done very well, especially for the holidays and gift-giving. Also extremely successful ... their children's play area.

Grilling & Chilling

U.S. demand for **outdoor furniture and grills is expected to climb more than six percent per annum through 2008 and surpass \$6.7 billion.** A generally healthy economy, favorable demographic trends, increases in landscaping and outdoor decorating activities, technological developments and new product designs will continue to benefit the industry. In particular, experts say consumers will dump their cheaper low-end grills for more expensive and upscale models, fueling these hefty gains.

Euro Muted Colors

The rage of European women's clothing is currently a **splash of very subdued hues.** Muted is the current hot look in Frankfurt's high-end stores. It remains to be seen if this washed-out look will find its way to home decor and across the pond, but trends often do. Supposedly, the washed-out colors provide a **calming, comforting feel in a time of terrorism and shaky world economics.** As for the men, they are still wearing bright pink and lime!