



# INSIDE DESIGN



How garden centers can take advantage of regional indoor décor trends By Brooke N. Bates

The latest trends in indoor décor include wallpaper, furniture fabric and rugs with big, bold statement patterns.

Across the country, regional climates and local lifestyles influence how people design their surroundings. By understanding the latest décor trends – and how plants and garden accessories play an interior role – garden centers can adjust indoor product mixes to stay relevant, inside and out.

“People are still spending money on their homes, because that’s their retreat,” says Joni Spear, principal of Joni Spear Interior Design in St. Louis, Mo. “People want their homes to be their escape.”

TOP LEFT, BOTTOM RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT PHOTOS: BRIAN KELLOGG PHOTOGRAPHY; DESIGN: KERRIE KELLY DESIGN LAB / TOP RIGHT PHOTO: ANNE MATHEIS DESIGN; JONI SPEAR

## Industry Trends

As a result, décor coast-to-coast is paring down from ornate decorations to sleeker modern pieces. “Less is more, but bigger is better,” Spear says, explaining that a few strong statement pieces are replacing the clutter of knickknacks — making it easier for garden centers to offer indoor décor without adding much inventory.

### Blending old and new

The latest indoor décor trends blend traditional elements with modern tweaks. The Northeast and the South, which lean toward traditional styles, are updating classic décor with fresh colors and sustainable materials. In these regions, décor is moving away from overly carved, ornate details toward clean, simple lines.

“The South tends to hold onto traditional form, but now we’re seeing an



Antique furniture and modern art create a sleek, homey dining room.

updated classic style,” says Stephanie Tallevast, who owns S. Tallevast Interiors in Savannah, Ga. “An example of that for a garden center would be a pared-down neoclassic planter rather than a fancy, complicated Victorian one.”

Instead of decorative urns, straight-edged planters that resemble blocks of stone or metal offer a “not-too-fussy” contrast to traditional styles, says Kurt Hakansson, a principal of the full-service

interior design firm Haddad Hakansson in Belmont, Mass. By marrying classic and contemporary styles, his partner Mark Haddad says modern décor keeps New England’s formal style from becoming too stuffy.

On the West Coast, décor is similarly sleek and minimal. “It’s uncluttered and organized,” says Sacramento-based designer Kerrie L. Kelly of Kerrie Kelly Design Lab. Instead of frivolous knickknacks adorning every surface, modern décor focuses on large statement artwork and architectural mirrors — making bold frames and shadowboxes popular as décor products.

### Pattern and color

Adding a graphic pattern or a coat of bright paint is the easiest way to update traditional décor across the country. From turquoise to indigo to cobalt, blue is in

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vogue right now, Tallevast says, as are pops of orange and coral.

“People really want that pop of color,” Tallevast says, whether it’s on an old side table, a dated dresser or an antique brass chandelier. “Painted furniture is a huge trend, and I really can see that being incorporated into a garden center. It would provide a display opportunity to bring an outdoor piece in an indoor setting, or translate those pops of color into enameled metal pieces.”

Spear says that garden centers don’t have to carry bulky indoor furniture to take advantage of this trend; they could simply supply the paint. She suggests milk paint and Annie Sloan Chalk Paint for accent furniture and fixtures.

### Bringing the outdoors in

Another overriding décor trend across the

country stems from bringing outdoor elements inside — whether to capture year-round warm weather or to prolong summer inside during colder seasons across the Midwest.

In the temperate climates of the West Coast and southern states, indoor and outdoor entertainment areas blend seamlessly. Tallevast moves outdoor furniture and accessories — such as porcelain garden stools, bamboo patio chairs and garden-themed lamps — inside to achieve a versatile style.

Simply adding handles or wheels to a piece of furniture can prepare it for traversing easily from the patio to the kitchen. Weather-resistant indoor/outdoor fabric can also make seating more versatile, as formal dining areas give way to casual, cozy bench seating.

“Indoor/outdoor fabric comes in such great patterns and colors right now,” Kelly

says, adding that stripes are always popular on this material. “Graphic patterns have really taken front and center for fabric and wall coverings throughout the house in bold, bright patterns.”

Additionally, introducing organic and natural materials such as reclaimed wood, stone, bamboo, shells, seagrass and sisal bring nature indoors through earthy colors and textures.

### Garden center basics

Even typical garden center products play into indoor décor. Tallevast and Kelly both finish off rooms with low-maintenance houseplants that act as three-dimensional living art. Plants themselves become decorative elements indoors, keeping with the trend of bringing outdoors in.

“Plants bring organic life to a space,” Kelly says. “It can add that final touch into

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your interior décor that not all hard-edged materials can bring.”

The shape of the foliage, along with low maintenance requirements, determine which plants become the best decorative elements indoors. Structural plants like cacti, succulents, foxtail ferns, orchids and snake plants add form and presence to a room without requiring much care.

Indoor décor shouldn't require a green-thumb, so offer houseplants in a variety of decorative planters with sleek, unadorned styles and metallic finishes. In the Midwest, where the outdoor gardening season is limited, Spear sees smaller indoor gardens popping up in terrariums, glass cloches and other tabletop displays.

“A lot of people don't have the vision to see the finished planter, but if they can grab it already planted, then they'll buy it,” says Tallevast, who suggests loading up indoor

furniture with plants in brightly colored planters to spark decorating imagination.

But by promoting the versatility of pots and other garden accessories for indoor purposes beyond obvious uses, garden centers can expand the appeal of existing products to a wider décor-minded consumer base.

Kelly uses planters as ice buckets and wine chillers, and repurposes a rustic potting bench as a bar for parties.

“Look at furnishings in a different way,” she says. “Just because we normally pot plants here doesn't mean we can't have another use for it, so don't let the main designation lock you into its actual use. There's some charm that comes through the creativity of versatile pieces.”

Tallevast thinks beyond planters altogether, and installs plants in huge clamshells or glass hurricane vases that can later



Simple, traditional pieces are brought to life with patterned accents.

be repurposed for candles. “Think outside the box of what could be used as a planter,” she says. “It increases the variety of items you can sell.” ☞

Brooke is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to *Garden Center* magazine based in Cleveland, Ohio.

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