

Accessories can give accent to gardens

By SHEILA GARRETT
Special to the Record-Eagle

April snow has not deterred area gardeners from thinking thoughts of spring. Truckloads of new merchandise and plants are beginning to arrive and customers are checking out new decorative items as well as plants.

Garden experts are full of

advice and observations about how people buy. There's the careful planner, who has a definite concept in mind and maybe a sketch or two, in quest of particular plants and decorations. And there's the experimenter, who likes to choose from things in the stores, and see how it all works out.

Whether you work best by experimentation or by following a plan, both approaches are

equally valid, experts say.

Jeanine Rubert, of Pine Hill Village Gardens, with locations in both Traverse City and Kewadin, agrees.

"The more people garden, the more adventurous they become," she said. "They begin to look for unusual things. Mistakes are easily fixed. If you don't like something, you can always move it."

Rubert has noticed that theme gardens, built around a central idea, are becoming more popular every year. In the past, she said, some people might choose to start English cottage gardens, or herb gardens. While these are still well-liked, recently her customers have become more ambitious, building gardens around an Asian concept, or concentrating on a particular type of plant, as in a conifer garden.

She has observed a trend toward peaceful, relaxed Japanese theme gardens. For something new, Pine Hill Village Gardens has imported stone lanterns, reflecting balls with a Japanese theme, and fountains "which are very important to a Japanese garden."

A country garden with an informal, rustic look is easily achieved with willow edging and suitable pottery pieces. For more formal gardens, she recommends classic pottery pieces and statuary.

Some buyers choose to concentrate on a color, or a group of warm or cool colors. Hand-blown



Record-Eagle/Elizabeth Conley

At Pine Hill Village Gardens, a sun "wiggler" offers movement to any garden with a summer breeze.

glass gazing balls can be chosen to enhance the colors of plants and flowers. Available in swirls of color in blue, green, yellow or red, there are no two alike, Rubert observed, because they are handmade.

"The colors are all subtly different," she said.

For gift items, Rubert said, many people choose basic things,

such as tools and gloves. Gazing balls and bird feeders are also frequently chosen. Another gift suggestion is to buy the committed gardener things they would not buy for themselves, such as an exceptionally good set of pruning shears. The American Horticultural Society Encyclopedia of Gardening, priced at about \$60 and which contains "everything

for gardening," according to Rubert, would be a great choice for a special occasion, such as Mothers Day.

Customers tend to be experimenters, said Liz Wildman, manager of Leapin' Lizard in Traverse City. They do not shop to any specific plan, but tend to buy what they see and like, "although if they have a pond, for example, they might want to buy a specific piece to go with it," she explained.

She expects hand blown glass gazing balls to be very popular this year because they can be used to enhance a large or small garden area.

"You don't have to have a huge space to install a fountain, either," Wildman said, as she carries fountains from 1' to 18" in diameter.

Popular outdoor decorative touches include iron art objects and a selection of statues, with cherubs being a favorite subject. Fanciful Flights garden stakes also have an angel motif. Copper garden torches are a frequent choice for lighting up lawns, she has found.

Wildman considered putting a chiminea, often used on patios for warmth and decorative effect, in her own garden at home, but rejected the idea in favor of installing an iron fire pit that she now has in stock. Chimineas are heavy to move, she pointed out, and tend to crack, like anything in clay, in the cold. For her home, she believes, an iron fire pit is a better solution.

"It's more lightweight than a chiminea, and it's more functional, because you can grill on it," she said. Iron fire pits are made in California and designed to look like the ones ranch hands once used, with cut-out designs along the sides. "It's a real grabber, both ornamental and useful," she



Record-Eagle/Elizabeth Conley

A cement statue also couples as a bird feeder at Pine Hill Village Gardens in Traverse City.

Offering the Look and Beauty of Custom Wood Doors...



...with a Broad Selection and Greater Energy Efficiency

After discovering the benefits of Therma-Tru fiberglass doors, many of the north's best builders have quit using wood and steel.

Take selection, for example. Our Classic-Craft, Fiber-Classic, and Smooth-Star doors come in hundreds of styles and popular sizes with many decorative

glass options.

With Therma-Tru, you get five times the insulation value of wood, plus you have two appearance options. You can have a door with the exquisite look and feel of rich wood grain with a stainable finish, or a smooth finish door that looks like painted wood.



(231) 947-1400

Blueridge Builders
(231) 275-3181

Coburn Construction
(231) 943-0330

Norris Construction
(231) 946-6848

Traverse Bay Log Homes
(231) 947-1881

THERMA TRU
DOORS

THE DOOR SYSTEM YOU CAN BELIEVE IN

Rag rugs
and runners
Quilts



Interior Decorating

STEWART-ZACKS
118 East Front
Downtown • P.C.