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I-Plants™

CALSCAPE EDITION August 2010
Plants and Art Containers Differentiating

The On-line Magazine for Interior Plantscapers and Allied Associates

Published by Johnson Fediw Associates

Kathy Fediw, LEED AP, CLP, CLT, President

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From the Editor:



[Kathy Fediw, LEED AP, CLP, CLT, President](#)

I don't know about you, but I am SO excited about Calscape this year! A great line-up of classes, a terrific trade show and plenty of networking with old and new friends. Be sure to stop by the booths of our advertisers to say hello and to find out more about their products and services. Who knows? Perhaps you'll get an autograph or two! :-)

We're leading the pack by bringing you the first ever comparison of eco-friendly characteristics of decorative indoor plant containers. This comparison is non-biased and based on what the manufacturers told us about their products. You'll be able to choose for yourself the containers that will work best for each project and that will satisfy the environmental criteria that is important to you and your clients.

Speaking of clients, we've listened to your feedback about this e-magazine and we've made some improvements based on your comments. We've made the font size a little larger to make reading easier. Issues will now be available online for 6 months instead of 30 days. And if you prefer to read the PDF version they'll be available and archived on our website for a full year. You can access the archives through our home page or go to www.JfaConsultingBiz.com/training/emazine-archive/

So sit back, read on, **click on** and enjoy!

Kathy Fediw, LEED AP, CLP, CLT

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In this edition:

Plants and Art - photos for your inspiration.....pages 6-7

Differentiate Yourself Part Two with Barb Helfman, CLP.....pages 9-10

Eco-Friendly Plant Containerspages 13-15

Upcoming Teleseminars.....page 10

Green Earth—Green Plants®: Mimosa Interior Landscape.....page 15

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Plants and



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Chihuly artwork found in Franklin Park Conservatory (top 3 photos) and Phipps Conservatory (bottom 2 photos.)

Cover photo: Chihuly art at Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus, OH.

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Art



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For centuries we've using artwork in our indoor and outdoor gardens, but Chihuly art glass brings a whole new dimension to this practice. Chihuly is now prominently featured in many public conservatories across the nation, including Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh, PA and Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus, Ohio where these photos were taken.

Your customers may want to incorporate artwork into their plantscapes as well. Whether you use investment pieces such as Chihuly, less costly work from Allsop (a line of solar-powered lights made from glass and other materials) or works by local artists and craftsmen, this is yet another way to differentiate your work from the competition.

It's our hope that you'll enjoy these photos and gain inspiration from these unique pieces of American art!

-Kathy Fediw

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Differentiate Yourself.

Part Two

With Barb Helfman, CLP



In the last issue of I-Plants we spoke about the importance of differentiating your company from your competition. Truth is we all like to think that clients know the difference, but a lot of the time they do not. Why? Well, they see technicians in green shirts, carrying a green watering can, with a feather duster in their back pocket and maybe pushing a watering machine. Hmmm. If it looks like a duck, it must be a duck and so we are called “plant guys or gals” but the name of the company may be lost. That in spite of the logo on the back.

Now, the real question is, “Is it important that *everyone* know who is who, OR is it only important to the critical few, the decision-makers, the potential client?” If you said the latter, you are right. While it is nice to hear, “We see your people all over town” it is these others that are more significant.

So how do we differentiate ourselves at a higher level than by shirts alone? Think credibility. Think credentials. Think touch points.

CREDIBILITY

What comes out of our mouths is not worth a hill of beans. BUT, if someone else says so the statement is far more credible. That is why **testimonial letters and rec-**

ommendations from other clients are so valuable. Collect these letters like they are gold nuggets, for that is what they are. In the World of Testimonials, there are three different levels. *Good, Better, and Best.*

These are the *Good*: “Hey, Joe’s Plantscapes is great”. The *Better*: “Hey, I’ve worked with Joe’s Plantscapes for years and they are very good.” And the *Best*: “Hey, Joe’s Plantscapes has been our landscaper for over 12 years and they provide amazing service. Our plants always look fantastic and if I

have to call them for something, they respond immediately. We highly recommend Joe’s

Plantscapes”.

That is one type of credibility. However, in this skeptical world, people need more than just a few kind words, plus I guarantee you that your competitors get testimonials as well.

CERTIFICATION AND CREDENTIALS

Another way to be credible to clients is to be certified by some impartial association or group. Techs that are certified by PLANET as Landscape Industry Certified Tech-

nicians (or CLT’s) and owners and managers who are Landscape Industry Certified Professionals (or CLP’s) are one way. Looks good on the bid package. To find out more go to

www.landcarenetwork.org

Our very own Kathy Fediw has another type of Certification available. Seeing the need and the opportunity to fulfill an industry need, she created the Green Earth-Green Plants® Certification Program. She realized that we all have clients that want to deal with green certified businesses, products and services.

This program is not just a bunch of mumbo-jumbo or, as it is sometimes referred to, “greenwashing”, but instead a non-partisan, independent third party who qualifies interiorscape companies and products as having met national certification standards and eco-friendly horticultural practices.

and eco-friendly horticultural practices.

An interiorscape company wish-

ing to stand out from the rest in this Green Sensitive World should definitely consider becoming Green Earth-Green Plants® certified. For more information go to

www.GreenEarthGreenPlants.com

Another way to differentiate is to become a Registered Trainer by



cont'd from page 7
Green Plants for Green Buildings®. This non-profit industry association has seminars where landscapers can become trainers for architects, interior designers, building owners and managers and LEED AP's wishing to fulfill their continuing education requirements.

At the same time, it puts you and your company in the position of not being just a vendor but a peer with significant knowledge. A very desirable place to be. In fact, there's a training session scheduled at Calscape on September 1 and you can find out more by visiting www.GPGB.org. You must register separately for this event and the deadline is August 23.

TOUCHPOINTS

One important way to differentiate your company and increase client

retention is to *get out there on the firing line*. By periodically visiting clients and decision-makers, you keep those all-important relationships going. Remember: out of sight, out of mind and you definitely don't want that.

Personally visiting every client several times a year is not always possible. These are busy people. Still, a personal call can produce add on sales and develop a relationship that is much needed. So, get out of the office and make some one-on-one calls.

A company newsletter is an effective way to touch your clients and you don't even have to leave your office. The newsletter should be aimed at your client's needs and not overtly "selling." It should be delivered

via email, at least 9 times per year. It should include interesting information and a logo, and can be very cost effective. Intrigued? Call me at 513-205-8195. Or email me at barbhelfman@aol.com to receive a sample Newsletter.

Differentiation? These are some of the avenues to consider. And remember, it's a whole new game and it's time you step up to the plate. Now, go out there and hit a Home Run.

Barb Helfman, CLP, is a well-known icon of the interiorscape industry, the inventor of Topsiders planters and the sole distributor for Joey Pouches and Freedom Squares. She can be reached at www.Topsiders.com

And be sure to stop by her booth at Calscape to say hello!



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September 28: Business Diversification

with Tom Horowitz, Plantscape, Inc.

October 12: GPGB LEED Update with president Mike Lewis

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Eco-Friendly Plant Containers

First Industry-wide Comparison

by Kathy Fediw, LEED AP, CLP, CLT

The Story Behind Eco-Friendly Containers

This month we are presenting you with a comparison of eco-friendly, decorative free-standing plant containers. We contacted over 40 manufacturers and found that only a few can really say that they are eco-friendly.

We compared containers based on the following criteria:

Made from recycled materials: these containers may help a building that is applying for LEED Certified Green Building status. The recycled content of planters may be included in the calculations for recycled materials. Using recycled materials may also reduce emissions during the manufacturing process. Out of these, two stand out.

Greentech Innovations, Inc.(GTI) has a new set of containers, OSO Polar Planters, that are made from 100% recycled aluminum (post-consumer and post-industrial materials.) And Architectural Supplements, Inc. (ASI) has the Phoenix line of containers, made from at least 80% post-consumer materials including metals, plastics, etc.

Some containers, especially those manufactured for outdoor use, cannot be made from recycled materials without effecting their

strength and longevity. Chris Lyon of Tournesol Siteworks says “we've had a difficult time integrating recycled materials into our GFRC - the main components of which are sand, cement, and alkaline-resistant glass fiber. Trying to get recycled concrete ground to the uniform grain size needed for GFRC just isn't practical (at least right now). The elements in the manufactured mix are critical to the overall performance of the product.”

Made from sustainable materials: only one line of containers, ASI's Solid Bamboo line, qualified. This model is made from bamboo, which grows very quickly and is one of the most commonly-used sustainable products in offices today. Steve Decker, president of ASI, says ““To the best of our knowledge, no other manufacturer offers a product with post-consumer content as high as Phoenix. Additionally, by providing recycled content in our Aluminum and Steel, as well as a rapidly renewable option in our Bamboo, we feel we are providing more eco-friendly choices than others.”

Made from compostable materials: none of the models surveyed qualified for this criteria and it was eliminated from the comparison chart. Some smaller pots available through garden centers



for home owners are now being made from plastics derived from corn. These materials break down in the landfill but hold up well while in use. Not yet available in larger sizes, keep an eye on the market for these products to become available in the future.

Can be recycled: many of the containers surveyed are recyclable, made from plastics and metals. Check with your local community to see what materials are accepted for recycling. You may also be able to re-use containers as liners, or you may donate them to a school, assisted living center or other charity. Charities may also choose to auction containers to help raise funds. Recycling, re-using and “re-gifting” helps minimize what goes into our landfills.

Can be refurbished/repainted: many of the containers surveyed can be refurbished or repainted. Refurbished/repainted containers can contribute to LEED points for a green certified building, so get them out of storage, repaint them and sell them to a green building manager! Some containers did not qualify for this criteria because the materials cannot be repainted.

DECORATIVE PLANT CONTAINERS:		Comparison of Eco-Friendly Characteristics					
Manufacturer:	Model:	Recycled Materials:	Sustainable Materials	Can be recycled:	Can be refurbished	Low VOC finish?	Where is this manufactured?
ASI	Phoenix	>80% Post-Consumer	none	yes	yes	yes	China/USA
ASI	Solid Bamboo	none	95%	no	yes	yes	China
ASI	Aluminum	>50%	none	yes	yes	yes	USA
ASI	Metal Stands	>80%	none	yes	yes	NA	China/USA
Greentec Innovations, Inc.	Oso Polar PLT-4 and PLT-8 Cone	100% recycled aluminum		yes	yes	yes	USA & Asia
Greentec Innovations, Inc.	Oso Polar PLT-4 and PLT-8 Vase	100% recycled aluminum		yes	yes	yes	USA & Asia
Greentec Innovations, Inc.	Oso Polar PLT-4 and PLT-8 Bullet	100% recycled aluminum					
		(from post consumer and post industrial sources)					
IAP	Fusion	50% in finish	none	no	yes	yes	Asia
Lachuza	Lachuza	est. 10%	none	yes	yes	Almost VOC free	Germany
TOPsiders, Inc.	All TOPsider rectangles	est. 5-10%	none	yes/no	Yes	N/A	Kentucky
TOPsiders, Inc.	Roundz	yes, from 5-10%	none	yes/no	No	N/A	Georgia, USA
Tournesol Siteworks	SeaCrest Series	no	none	yes	no	no finish	California
Tournesol Siteworks	Basix Collection	no	none	yes	no	no finish	California
Tournesol Siteworks	FRP (fiberglass) base & Metal-matched paint finishes	no	none	no	yes	yes	California, Ohio, Chir
Tournesol Siteworks	FRP (fiberglass) metal-infused finishes	no	none	no	yes	yes	California, Ohio, Chir
Tournesol Siteworks	Glass-fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC)	none	none	yes	yes	yes	California
Tournesol Siteworks	Flower Framer Window Boxes	no	none	no	yes	yes	Ohio

Low VOC finish: about half of the containers surveyed qualified for this criteria which includes the use of powder-coated finishes. Two of Tournesol's models and well as most metal containers do not use a finish at all. If plants are being used to eliminate VOC's in the indoor environment, it makes sense to use low VOC containers.

Location of manufacturing: half the container models were manufactured in the US and half were manufactured in China. One of the LEED criteria is to use locally-manufactured products, and sorry

to say this may be nearly impossible for landscapers to do. California, Ohio, Georgia and Kentucky are manufacturing locations for the containers surveyed.

Other considerations:

In addition to these characteristics, you may want to consider other features.

Chris Collard of IAP added: "To reduce the carbon footprint in manufacturing our products, I looked at three factors: raw materials, production process and natural resources needed. The first element was raw materials. By utilizing low gas resins and recycled metals we were able to reduce emissions. Second, in production we have completely

eliminated the spraying of resins... By eliminating the spraying process in manufacturing, we are greatly reducing the amount of total emissions. Lastly, reducing the use of resources. Throughout our entire production process, everything is done by hand. Electricity is only used in the polishing process; therefore, drawing on the bare minimum of resources."

Plant containers can help a green building earn LEED credits if they contain recycled materials, sustainable materials, or if they are manufactured locally.

Chris Lyon of Tournesol Site-works had this to add: "It is difficult as a small manufacturer to affect the developments of material giants around the world (i.e., it's

been tough to find ways to improve fiberglass). And until we (the industry) can do a more sophisticated analysis of true "carbon costing", it will be very hard to determine the real greenness of a product. For example, is it better to create a product in the U.S., from non-recycled materials (lower energy inputs, more efficient labor, lower shipping inputs), than a recycled product shipped from China (more polluting energy, less efficient labor, higher shipping inputs)? We wrestle with this all the time."

Look for more eco-friendly containers to hit the market in the coming years.

-Kathy Fediw, LEED AP, CLP, CLT

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Congratulations to our Green Earth—Green Plants® Certified Businesses!



Featured Business: Mimosa Interior Landscape



Owners David Biggus, CLP and Paul Zaccarine with Green Earth—Green Plants founder Kathy Fediw after their on-site assessment.

The Green Earth—Green Plants® program announced today that Mimosa Interior Landscape, an interior plantscape business in Elk Grove Village, Illinois has become the twenty-fourth business to become a Green Earth—Green Plants® certified business. “Mimosa Interior Landscape has proven that they are an environmentally-responsible business and operate in an ecologically-friendly manner, says Kathy Fediw, LEED AP, CLP, CLT, president of Johnson Fediw Associates and founder of the certification program. Mimosa Interior Landscape takes care of indoor plants

and holiday decorating in the Chicago area for office buildings, hotels and public spaces. “We know that plants help improve indoor air quality, and caring for them in an environmentally-safe manner is crucially important” says Fediw.

Paul Zaccarine and David Biggus, CLP, owners of Mimosa Interior Landscape passed a rigorous 17 page assessment and onsite audit of their operations. The assessment rates a business on their indoor and outdoor facilities, vehicle usage, recycling program, horticultural practices, staff education and giving back to the community.

Mimosa re-used carpet tiles and ceiling tiles when they recently renovated their offices, saving them from ending up in the landfill. They had their warehouse refitted into energy-efficient T-8 fluorescent light bulbs and use FSC-certified recycled paper. Plant debris is composted on-site, then planted with sunflowers to attract birds and wildlife. Pruned branches are re-used in floral arrangements, then rooted and planted outdoors where they grow into new trees.

In addition, Mimosa practices social responsibility and works with their local Catholic charities organization to provide on-the-job training and English language skills to two employees. When their internships are completed they will have the opportunity to interview for a full-time position with the business if they choose. They give to other local charities such as senior centers, museums and BOMA-sponsored charities.

“We are proud to recognize their achievements and their commitment to “going green” and know they will set an example to other businesses in the Chicago area to operate in a more earth-friendly manner,” says Fediw.

Johnson Fediw Associates is a third-party consulting firm providing green certification programs to horticulture businesses. For more information on the Green Earth—Green Plants® program, go to www.greenearthgreenplants.com. For more information on how Mimosa Interior Landscape can improve the health and indoor air quality of your office or workspace, go to www.mimosachicago.com or call 847-545-1800.



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-Dave Biggus, Mimosa Interior Landscape

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