

House & Home

Q&A with Seasonal Concepts owner MARC ACORD, OVERLAND PARK

JOB DESCRIPTION: *Owner of Seasonal Concepts stores including 10430 Metcalf Ave., 913-642-4999, www.seasonalconceptsonline.com*

You're the classic working-from-the-ground-up success story. Tell us about that.

I started as a stock guy at a Seasonal Concepts in the Kansas City area. I became a store manager and then the vice president of operations for the corporation. Last year I bought the company, after working there 21 years. There are stores in Kansas City, St. Louis and Tulsa.

You've seen thousands of artificial Christmas trees over the years. How have they changed?

For starters, people have gone away from having one big massive tree. Now they have smaller trees in maybe three or four rooms. They're not necessarily whimsical. People are interested in more elegant looks with beautiful ribbons and ornaments.

What types of ornaments are you seeing?

Toned-down versions of white, silver and gold. Think ivory, platinum and champagne instead.

You sell colorful trees beyond the traditional green ones. What colors are popular?

Definitely not the red-and-yellow Chiefs' tree this year. The colorful trees are called cashmere trees. Their needles are distressed and soft. Lime green, royal blue and chocolate brown are currently popular colors.

How should people store artificial trees?

Throw the box away. They become tattered and torn and too hard to lug around. The most useful type of storage is similar to a golf bag with wheels on it.

Any tips for putting up the tree?

Allow yourself at least two hours to properly shape it by fanning the branches out.

Looking forward to warmer weather, what's been popular in outdoor living?

Any type of outdoor fireplace that can extend outdoor entertaining for a few months beyond the typical Memorial Day through Labor Day. You're starting to see coffee tables that have fire pits integrated in the middle. Some have glass crystals instead of logs.

Any tricks to keeping outdoor furniture safe from the winter weather?

There are furniture covers, but sometimes people don't like the looks of them. And you can lug furniture into the basement or garage. This year we just started a new program that lets people store their furniture with us, whether or not they bought the furniture at Seasonal Concepts (\$299 for up to seven pieces, includes cleaning, shrink wrap and delivery to and from home).

Anything new in outdoor furniture?

More clean, contemporary looks, even in wicker. The colors that were popular when I started this job in 1986 are coming back: mocha, aqua, gray, yellow and blue.