

CHORES

FINDS



NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

Maximize bedding flowers' impact by sculpting the bed into a mound that gently slopes to the perimeter.

The pros' secret to dramatic impatiens

By RICK ROSEN
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Like a tall centerpiece at a fancy wedding, a cascade of impatiens is not what it seems. A party planner will make a table centerpiece more imposing by placing it on a platform, then hiding the platform. Similarly, a cascade of colorful impatiens starts with what you don't see. Hidden under the closely spaced flowers is a mound, built from the soil itself. The mounding is carefully planned. Kevin Winner, vice president of TechScape landscaping, says his crews will "actually sculpt in a mound so it tapers down ... toward the sides."

Mr. Winner spaces the bedding plants 8 inches apart, measuring from the center of each plant, for quick impact. Though plants in the center of the bed will seem much taller than those on the edge, all the flowers are the same height. It is the shape of the sculpted bed that gives the illusion of different heights. Professionals plan the design of the impatiens bed long before the first spade of soil is turned. They then determine how many plants are needed to achieve the look they want. Massing like colors together creates more impact. For some color combinations that work well, take note of beds that catch your eye as you walk or drive down the street. For inspirational impatiens photos online, see mgonline.com/colorcombos.html.

Before planting an impatiens bed, add organic amendments to the soil so that the plants will thrive. Mr. Winner notes that tilling in organic material deeply gives the roots plenty of room to grow and also improves drainage. After planting, Mr. Winner's crew hand-waters the bed. Sprinkler systems can miss some plants. Impatiens are not drought-tolerant and need regular watering in summer. Add fertilizer as needed. Mr. Winner says his company feeds impatiens "when they look hungry." A slight yellowing of the leaves is one clue, but this is one area where professionals have the edge; yellowing also could mean the plants are getting too much water.

Attainable art

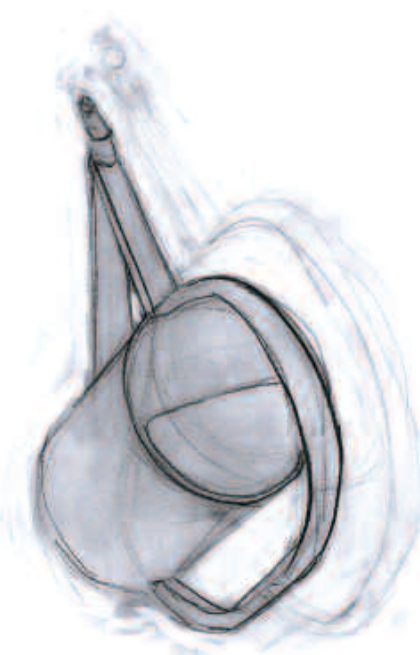
The beauty of everyday objects, even those you might not consider lovely, is the thrust behind an art collection that bridges the divide between wall decor — you know, those large pieces designed to fill a blank wall over a sofa — and fine art.

Maureen Nollette, a furniture designer known for spare furniture that combines natural materials with concrete and steel, has branched into works on paper, ranging from amaryllis bulbs and fly swatters to pasta spoons and stuffed bunnies.

Her artwork style, like her furniture design, is spare and uncluttered. Each piece begins with a conté crayon drawing on Italian drawing paper. Limited editions are then printed on fine art inkjet paper. The drawings are collaged with materials, including colored tissue paper, white acrylic paint and thread. Think sketches set a little off-kilter on a clean background.

The limited-edition prints are signed and numbered in editions of 75 and can be purchased framed or unframed ranging from \$225 to \$300. Original drawings cost \$700 to \$775. To purchase, see www.nollettestudio.com.

Laura H. Ehret



A furniture designer segues into art.

EARTH TO DALLAS

Unplugging for Mother Earth

Some alerts you hate: That alarm clock that wakes you to the sounds of a purple dinosaur. Or the calendar function on your cellphone that won't quit beeping even though it *knows* you can't get to it in the bottom of your purse right now because you're late and you're on Central. (Yes, I have issues.)

Others are good: The kitchen timer signaling the brownies are done. The smoke detector signaling the brownies are *done*. (This is a safety issue, not a good cooking issue.)

Cellphone maker Nokia has launched the first mobile phones that send alerts encouraging users to unplug the charger when the battery is full. These alerts are designed to save energy: Enough electricity to power 85,000 homes annually, according to the company.

The company plans to start with the Nokia 1200, 1208 and 1650 models and continue across other products.

The alerts are part of environmental initiatives that mobile manufacturers agreed to act upon this year.

Last year, the Environmental Protection Agency awarded the company's newest range of chargers the Energy Star for their energy efficiency. Nokia says by 2010 it aims to cut the amount of energy its chargers use in half while they are still plugged into the sockets but not the phones.

For more information, see www.nokia.com.

Laura H. Ehret

FINDS

Flea market fever

By NANCY MYERS
Special Contributor

"We call it our hobby gone crazy," says antiquer Valarie Jolly. "We have reinvented vintage decor." She's referring to Red Shed Antiques/French Country Flea Market, spinoff and sister company of Riverside Travel, which she co-owns with Michele McKechnie. It came about as the business partners' extensive work travels led to much antique collecting along the way, and after nearly two decades of scouring flea markets from New York to Paris, the two decided to capitalize on the overlap and began selling their found wares from the agency storefront, then in Arlington.

"We had been collectors for years, so we decided to turn the front part" of the travel agency "into a little antique shop, kind of a cross-marketing thing," says Ms. Jolly. The venture has grown by leaps and bounds. Two years ago they moved to Grapevine's Barton Arts District, purchasing and renovating an old historic house and its adjacent gardens. The cottage seemed ideal for the travel agency, and the red shed in the back, they decided, would house the growing amassment of antiques and treasures. A third partner on the antiques side is Michele Jones, a designer who sells her unique decor and found-object art under the label Me & Mr. Jones.

Every other month, the entrepreneurial outfit hosts the French Country Flea Market, creating a rambling European-style venue throughout the pond- and



Michael Patras

Saturday's bimonthly Parisian-style flea market at the Red Shed in Grapevine is an enticing jumble of vintage furnishings and finishing touches.

fountain-filled gardens, under the arbor, in the Red Shed, and even meandering into the travel agency. "Because we're travel-oriented, it all flows together. We move everything outside and create separate little areas," says Ms. Jolly. Different sections include yard furniture, art, antique beds, dressers, tables, a wall of antique silver items, ornamental iron and decor, plus clearance and do-it-yourself sections.

The partners unearth inventory everywhere, from flea markets to garage and estate sales, from Paris

jaunts to East Texas side-of-the-road scavenger hunts. The Red Shed's style is cottage chic, says Ms. Jolly, "not the heavy provincial style but lighter, a lot of painted furniture," with architectural salvage and one-of-a-kind furnishings.

Some of the more unusual creations include a dresser completely decouped with sheet music, furniture painted with a harlequin pattern and a hospital cart turned bar. And the most outlandish? That might be the hospital gurney converted into a lounge chair with flowery cushions.

Perfect for kicking back and watching *Grey's Anatomy* in style.

After every French Country Flea Market, things are deconstructed and redesigned for the next, sometimes with a seasonal theme. At Christmas, for example, the place was transformed into a white wonderland. "Once people find us, they get addicted," says Ms. Jolly.

Nancy Myers is a Dallas freelance writer.

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SEE FOR YOURSELF

The French Country Flea Market Sale is held the last Saturday of the month at 317 Church St., just off Main and Worth in Historic Downtown Grapevine.

THE NEXT BIG EVENT: Saturday. Go to www.redshedonline.com to see a preview.

HOURS: The Red Shed is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays only during French Country Flea Market Sales.

INFO: 817-310-6006

