

## In store

With seasonal containers, a Virginia-based landscape firm finds work styling the exterior of a boutique.

**W**HEN A HIGH-END clothier showed interest in a new storefront plant display, it led to a new account for Kane Landscapes, a Potomac Falls, Va.-based landscape company. While it was the company's first seasonal color change-out job for a commercial client, the mostly residential company found enhancing storefronts is similar to performing container gardening services for homeowners.

The entire project came about when landscape designer Amanda Hamilton was attending a professional networking meeting and met a fellow attendee whose father owned a high-end boutique. He was looking for a way to make his storefront pop. While the upscale shopping center already had a landscape company handling plant change-outs in common areas, the shop owner was looking for something that would set it apart.

"When they came to us, they just wanted new urns and new plant material, but we talked to them about doing bimonthly change-outs that coordinated with the store's advertising or the changing seasons," Hamilton says. "They signed on for us to come back every other month. They give me some idea of what color they like, but I pretty much have free reign on the design, which has been fun for me."

Hamilton says it takes approximately an hour for her and another manager to do the actual plant change-out, so she accounted for that time plus design time when she priced the job. She also set a bimonthly budget of \$300 for the material itself.

Instead of discarding the old, brown urns that were previously used for the storefront, Hamilton says she cleaned them up and installed interior plant material. The urns now are on display inside the store. A store employee is responsible for watering both the indoor and outdoor containers.



Containers make this entryway shine. Kane Landscapes workers change out plants to reflect the season.



Adding this service didn't require much investment because Kane already handled residential container gardens and had the necessary tools.

The biggest difference for this job involves transporting the materials to the site.

"We got a little cart where we can wheel all the material to the storefront," Hamilton says. "This is a large outdoor shopping area and we have to walk down several corridors to get to the store. It was very important that we didn't make a mess on any of the walkways."

To contain dirt, Hamilton says, workers put out tarps when they perform the change-outs. "Handling a storefront as opposed to a residential property definitely required a little more caution in containing the mess," she says.

Because Hamilton's networking group meets only a few doors down from the storefront, she occasionally stops to check on the plants. "It's definitely not a display that requires a lot of upkeep," Hamilton says. "It's been fun to get creative in picking out the plant material and coordinating it with what the store has going on."

The store has been happy with its new storefront designs. In fact, it recently renewed its contract with Kane Landscapes.

"This is the first time we've done a storefront like this, but if more work came from it, it's certainly something we'd like to do," Hamilton says. "While we've been working, shoppers have stopped and asked what we're doing or commented that it looks nice, so it may bring future work."

Payton is a freelance writer with eight years of experience writing about the landscape industry.



Containers add color to an entry.

### >> SERVICE SNAPSHOT

**COMPANY:** Kane Landscapes.

**LOCATION:** Potomac Falls, Va.

**SERVICE:** Storefront seasonal containers

**PRICING:** Materials and time for design and installation.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE:** Mid-winter is a difficult time to do a container garden because there's limited plant material to choose from. Landscape designer Amanda Hamilton says evergreen grasses and colorful cabbage are one way to retain color.

**BEST TIP:** "When it comes to container gardening, I use the 'filler, thriller, spiller' rule," Hamilton says. "Thrillers are the main attraction, while the fillers complement it without overshadowing. The spiller would be a trailing plant that spills over the sides for added interest."