



Hello, Springtime

Boy with Wheelbarrow figurines.

Sacramone of Amscan sees it playing out slightly different. "Easter isn't about being Peter Cottontail; and people are wanting to share the holiday with rabbits in the garden theme," she said. "Retailers can sell [this type of bunny] before, during and after [Easter] because the garden bunny has staying power."

Regardless if your choice is Easter or garden-themed rabbits, you cannot dismiss the popularity of Easter bunnies and rabbits for spring.

What other types are rabbits are out there? Blossom Bucket offers several bunny figurines by Suzi Skoglund, including Ballerina Bunnies and the Bunny in Green pajamas. And Demdaco offers Cottonbury, a line of folk-art

the design team.

Jennifer Garcia, product development manager for Natural Life, noted that the presence of "from the heart" sentiments has remained constant in their products over the years.

"Recently, we have seen that "spirituality" has become more and more popular with our customers (and end consumers) —based on what is happening in our lives and in the U.S. When we debuted our larger wooden crosses in January of 2006, we didn't expect the overwhelming positive response from them.

"Since the large size did so well, this past summer we introduced a smaller version, that we call the wooden cross keepsake. This item, also, has done very well. It portrays a sense of spirituality while also



Galison Pretty File Totes features 8 interior dividers, elastic closure, diecut handle for easy portability and 16 label stickers. The coordinating Pretty Files Folders are designed to fit perfectly into the file tote and come with 20 labels. The Sticky Notes, shown on the file folder, come in assorted sizes with a total of 480 sticky notes; each pad contains 60 sticky notes and come packaged in a durable wallet portfolio. Suggested retail: file tote, \$19.50; file folders, \$8.00; sticky notes, \$9.00. From Galison Mudpuppy; (212) 354-8840.



Seasons of Cannon Falls' Spring-time Containers feature sweet creatures of the season, including a bunny, bluebird and chick with vintage flair and charm. Each is made of paper pulp and measures 3.75" x 3.75" x 4". Suggested retail price: \$15. From Midwest; 800/776-2075

inspired rabbits and chicks that feature the look of handcrafted papier maché, designed by Robin Kelso.

And of course, there are plush versions. One offering from The Bearington Collection is Meg & Egg. Dressed for spring in green and white with pink accents, Meg holds a hand-painted egg and has matching bows on her floppy ears.

Have Faith

Remember the familiar Easter and spring decorations? The design team at Manual Woodworkers & Weavers Inc. said more traditional holiday pieces are being requested.

"A lot [of inspiration] comes from the comfort of what customers are used to. People [retailers] are tending to buy items that have been proven sellers and not risk purchasing something that may not sell for them," said

The painted, carved wooden crosses from Natural Life (800/884-3856) make an ideal inspirational gift. The crosses can hang or sit. The small cross shown measures 4.5 x 5.75 x .75. A large size is also available. Suggested retail: small, \$11; large, \$15.



encompassing "from the heart" sentiments..." said Garcia.

Other items for Easter items feature various Bible verses. Gregg Gift Co.'s Basket of Blessings Collection feature the phrase "Rejoice in the Lord always...Philippians 4:4" on a leather-look tote.

Understated religious sentiments remain popular as well. The Faith Bracelet from StudioJewel appeals to

Spring Clean

Did you know, according to the National Association of Professional Organizers, that 80 percent of what we keep we never use? Or that time lost switching between tasks increases with the complexity of the tasks? Or that 23 percent of adults pay bills late because they lose them?

Clare Mantelman, a professional organizer with OrganizeNow 2002, offers these tips to organize and declutter your store:

- Go through left over display boxes and discard any that are damaged and ones for items that you no longer carry.
- Get new ribbon, tissue and bags. Everyone wants to look and feel spring like.
- Buy clear, plastic bins like the ones at Target. She said that these bins hold up well, stack easily and do not cave in. Buy a label machine as well and place loose-like items together and label.
- Go through your inventory, and make gift baskets with left over merchandise and items you need to move. Consider selling these at a special price to sell quickly.
- Go through your filing for 2007 now. Make sure your system is working properly and if not, fix it now! For more tips and information, visit www.organizenow2000.com.

While you are busy organizing, make spring your perfect excuse to clean as well. Here's how:

- Consider holding an old-fashioned work party after closing and deep clean the entire store. Start in one area and work your way towards a central meeting point, scrubbing all those hard to reach places in the process.
- Restock and organize your cleaning supplies. Make sure your employees have the means to maintain the store between deep cleanings.
- Remember the importance of first impressions, and take a step outside of the store to see what customers see approaching the store. And do not forget about cleaning both sides of your front windows.
- Turn off the phone and turn up the music—allowing yourself to concentrate on cleaning means you will spend less time and do a better job.
- Make sure you have a plan to keep on top of weekly and monthly cleanings as well.