

MADE IN THE U.S.A

Contained, with Style

Potted's owners left Hollywood careers to create a vibrant garden boutique for plants, accessories and their signature American-made containers.



Annette Gutierrez and **Mary Gray**, owners of **Potted** in Los Angeles's Atwater Village neighborhood, are the region's go-to container design experts and contemporary tastemakers for living with plants. Co-authors of *Potted: Make Your Own Stylish Garden Containers* (Timber Press, 2017), the women have a fan following not only in the City of Angels, but across the U.S. because their gardening aesthetic reflects architecture, landscape, climate and the region's enviable outdoor-indoor lifestyle.

As stylish as Potted is, it's wonderfully accessible for people of all gardening skills, and making a pilgrimage there is always on my list when I travel to Southern California. There, juxtaposed against the sameness one sees at lifestyle and home decor chains, Potted's handcrafted and artisanal products are always "next" and "new," while also being romantically retro.

Potted started with two friends in search of their next career chapter. Mary was a Hollywood set decorator and art director who mainly worked on commercials. Annette was a screenwriter for feature films who got the design bug while renovating and flipping homes. "We started making these cool concrete pavers with tiles — they were inspired by some vintage pieces we'd seen," Annette says. "We were thinking that maybe we could start a business with them."

In the fall of 2004, Annette stopped at **Los Feliz Pottery**, a 1940s-era store known for ceramics and plaster-casted items,

hoping to sell their pavers there. The owner told her the business was for sale and asked if she was interested in buying it. In spite of their blissful inexperience, "We signed the papers and it was ours by January 2005. The rent was great, we had a good sensibility and we knew what we wanted it to be," Mary explains.

Today, the shop and small outdoor plant nursery are filled with succulents, cacti, house plants and pottery galore, including Garden Steps, those one-of-a-kind tile-and-concrete pavers that Annette and Mary began making nearly 15 years ago (and they also make tile-topped accent tables and plant stands).

With the houseplant category "going ballistic," Potted was well ahead of the spike in demand for cool plants and hip containers to hold them. "From the beginning, we decided to fill a niche," Annette says. "Since we're 'Potted,' it was everything that worked in pots, indoors and outdoors. You could buy a *Dracaena* at Home Depot, but we're going to pair it with a Modernica pot and top-dress it and show you how to make it beautiful for now and tell you how take care of it and answer the phone when you call and say, 'Oh my god, my plant just dropped more leaves.' We offer a level of service and inspiration — and products — that you can't find everywhere else."

Both women are designers by nature and they attract and support other artisans and craftspeople who often introduce new collections through Potted. Mary and Annette also view in-house



product development as one important way to differentiate Potted from other retailers.

Their bestseller is the 12-inch "Circle Pot," designed by and only available at Potted. The iconic piece retails for \$95, comes in orange, white and chartreuse and was inspired by a 1960s hanging ashtray that Mary's sister found at a garage sale in Oklahoma.

"There weren't many good-looking hanging pots around and we decided to modify the ash tray and make a hanging planter," Mary says. Suspended from an 18-inch stainless steel cable, the Circle vessel is perfect for displaying succulents like burrow tails, string-of-pearls or an *Echeveria*.

Los Angeles has a long history as a center for ceramics manufacturing, but few pottery factories exist there today. Potted has worked with and, sadly, outlasted a number of local ceramics factories over the past decade. Today, the Circle Pot and Orbit, a midcentury-style bowl planter, are manufactured by Portland, Ore.-based **Mudshark Studios**.

Mary and Annette have been asked to wholesale their exclusive Potted ceramics line, as well as their wall-mounted, weathered steel City Planter, but because they are making these products domestically, the margins for wholesale aren't possible, they explain.

Yet, they encourage anyone in the floral arena, retail and studio-based designers alike, to borrow from Potted's experience. "In many ways, your product is your calling card," Annette says. "It's like a little signature. If you go into five flower or boutique plant shops that all look the same and one of them has a cool orb that only they make, well, you're going to remember that one."

Details: Potted, pottedstore.com; @pottedstore ■

(Opposite page) Two of Potted's exclusive hanging planters are designed in Los Angeles and manufactured in Portland, Ore. (This page, clockwise, from top left) A grouping of chartreuse Circle Pots with string-of-pearls succulents (*Senecio rowleyanus*); Mary Gray (left) and Annette Gutierrez (right) transitioned from Hollywood to start Potted, a plant-centric and outdoor living boutique; and a vignette inside Potted reflects the stylish plant lifestyle.

