

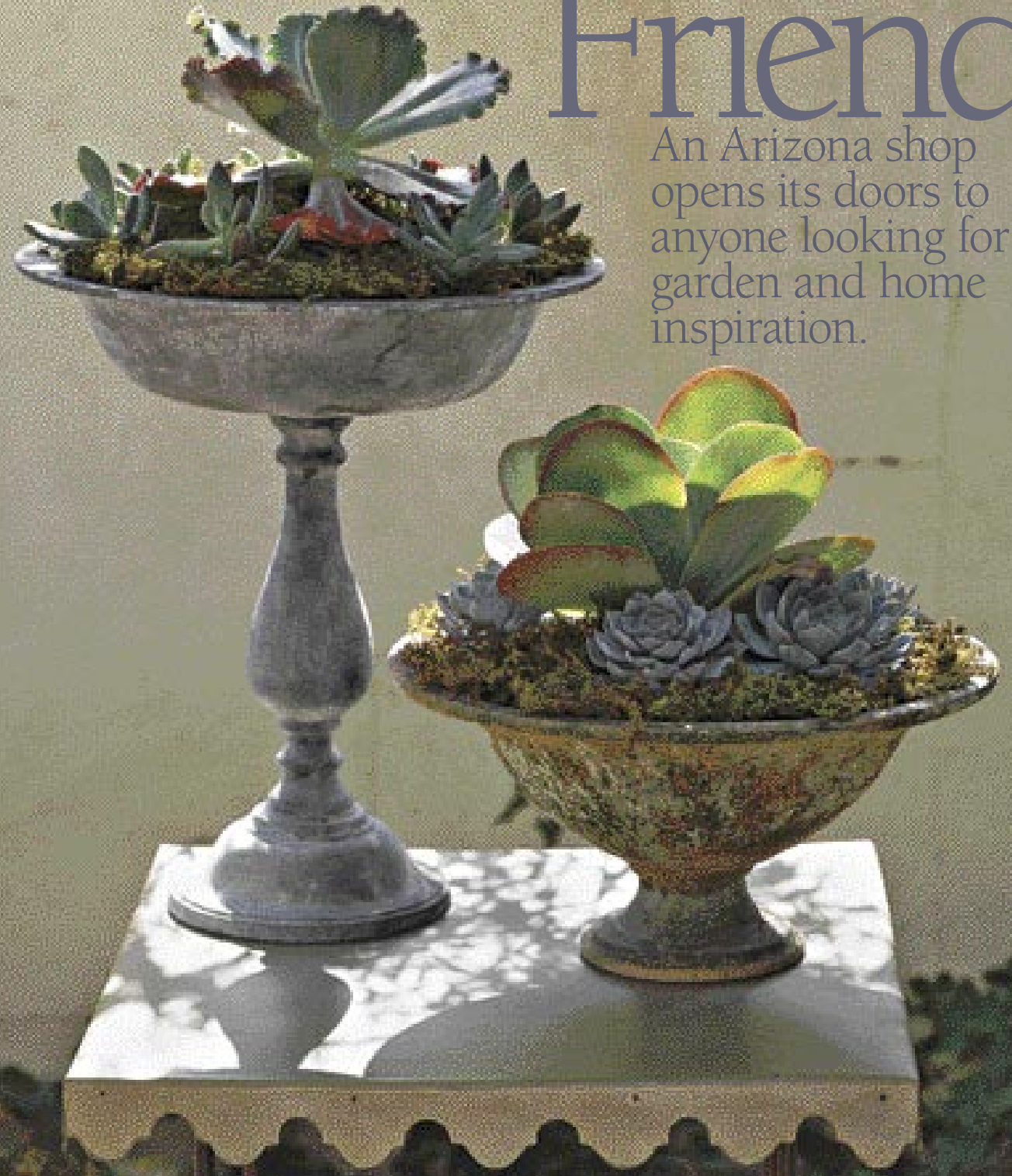


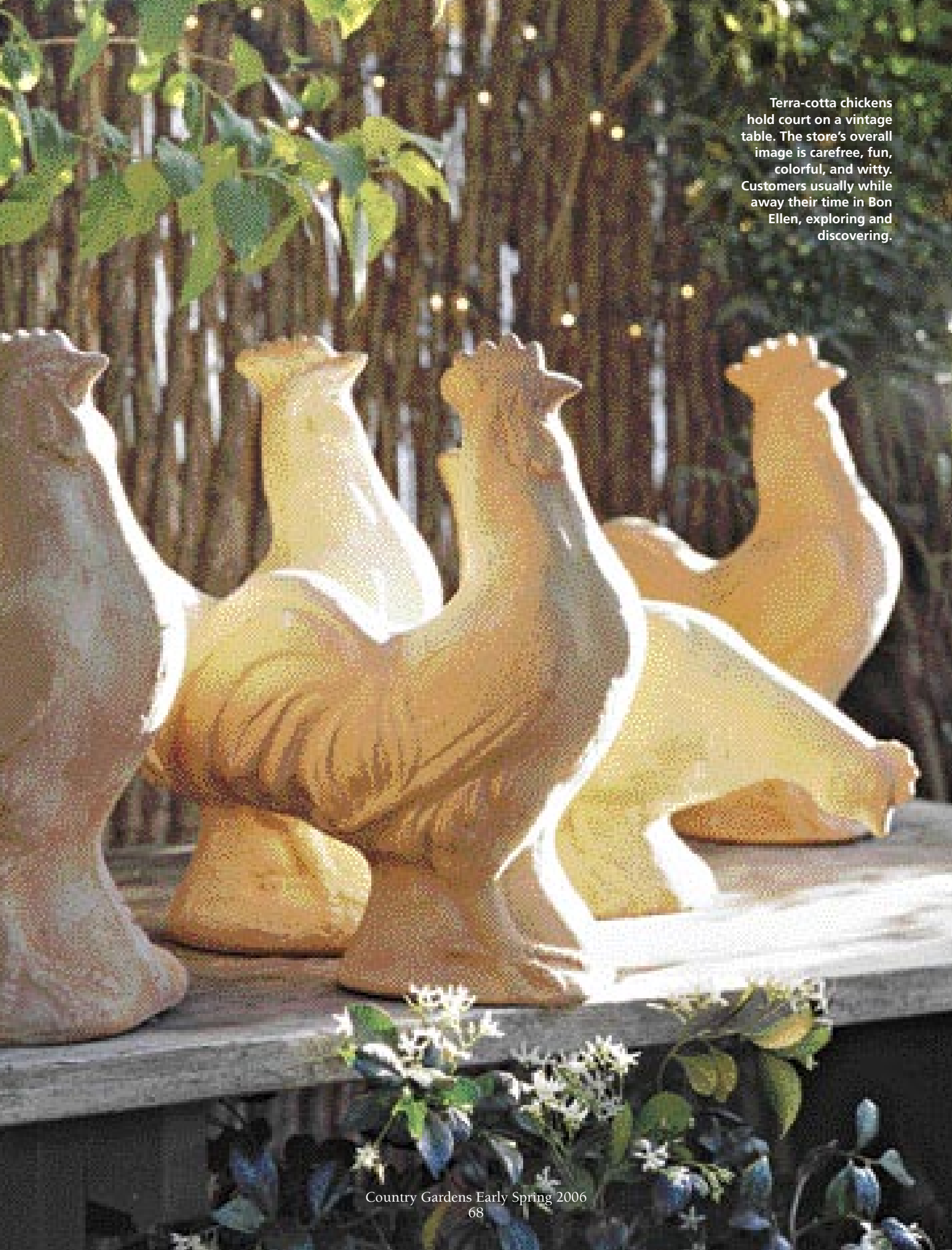
Bonnie Flynt with
her daughter
Crystal Flynt

by Kelly Roberson
photographer Amy Haskell
field editor Claudia Franklin Karafotas

Circle of Friends

An Arizona shop
opens its doors to
anyone looking for
garden and home
inspiration.





Terra-cotta chickens hold court on a vintage table. The store's overall image is carefree, fun, colorful, and witty. Customers usually while away their time in Bon Ellen, exploring and discovering.



From their fenced coop in the backyard of Bon Ellen, a home and garden shop, Henny and Penny, two black-and-white speckled Bard Plymouth Rock chickens, cluck happily. Co-owners and mother-and-daughter team Bonnie and Crystal Flynt have just collected the hens' morning eggs. Customers stroll by the coop and into the store, and then meander from room to room in the Spanish-style house.

After brewing a pot of coffee, Bonnie notices a blank spot atop a weathered white garden table. She deftly adds a few potted succulents and shifts a wooden tray over an inch or two. While eclectic, the decor—on the table and throughout the store—feels natural and

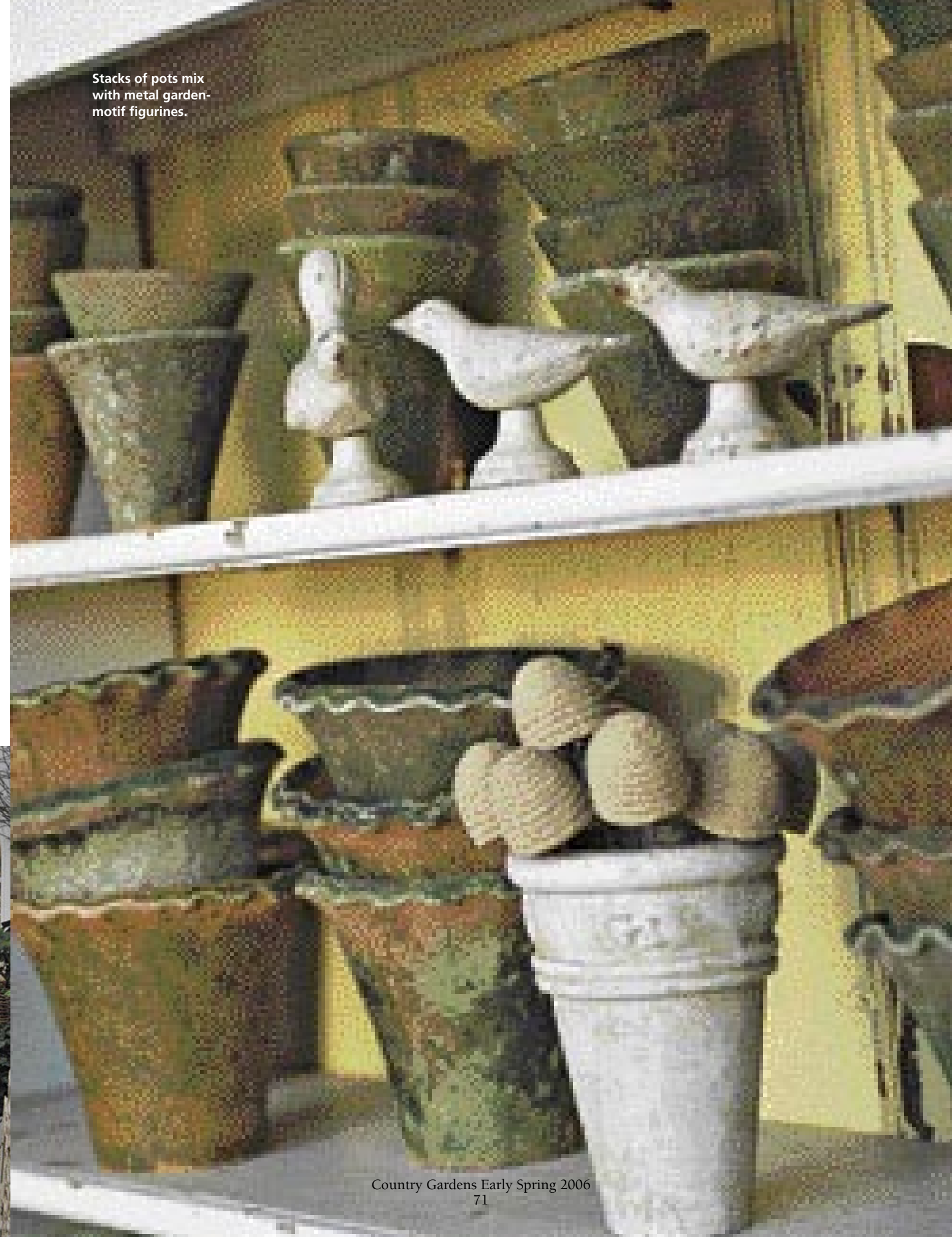
organic. “We like to mix vintage with new because it makes for a neat combination—one of individuality with character,” Bonnie says.

In temperate Arizona, the borders between inside and outside are fluid, and the same is true in the Bon Ellen store, patio, and garden areas. Gardening books and journals look at home with vintage gnomes and birdhouses, while a glass cloche rests behind a cast-iron bird and plants. “The shop is truly a creative outlet for us,” Bonnie says. “We are always growing and changing with it as we find new things and get new ideas of how to put things together.”

Bonnie's ability to mix and match styles began at

Above left Penny the hen is people-shy, Crystal says, unlike her companion, Henny. Above middle Simple accents set the scene—vintage garden tools in a wire basket rest on a rustic motel chair. Above right Diminutive birdhouses tuck neatly into a heavy wire basket. The interior of the store is always changing, always eclectic, based on Crystal and Bonnie's finds. Below left A trio of cottages makes a simple, elegant garden accent. Below right Vintage fabric pieced together into a quilt lends a glider a comforting touch.





Stacks of pots mix with metal garden-motif figurines.

age 8 when she started collecting pictures of horses while living on a California ranch. As a teenager, Bonnie prowled around garage sales. Eventually, in 1998, turning 50, and with her three children grown, she had the time to open her dream store; Crystal joined her after a stint on the visual team for retailer Anthropologie in New York City. Mother and daughter remain true to their roots—ranch style for Bonnie, eclectic and a bit more streamlined for Crystal—both incorporate a love of gardening into their personal style and the store’s aesthetic.

It’s a philosophy that spills over into the store, which provides a wealth of ideas that inspire customers.

Bonnie and Crystal often choose a theme—traveling, for example—and add relevant objects. They created a nautical vignette on a weathered table, starting with tall items off-center and adding shorter pieces at the fringes. Sailing ornaments and travel journals mix with whatever else catches Bonnie and Crystal’s attention, all to create an artful display. “It helps to look and learn how to mix styles,” Crystal says.

Their designs never feel contrived; instead, there’s a sense of discovery and a distinct lack of perfection that customers find comforting. “Bon Ellen has ideas tucked away,” Mary Kay Gropper, a frequent customer, says. “It’s different from walking into someone’s house

Above left A Mexican platter sets off a vintage concrete roadrunner. Crystal based the still life on the colors of the succulents. **Above middle** A distinct outdoor flavor comes from a trio of croquet mallets and old croquet balls. **Above right** An antique cast-iron urn holds garden-theme doorknockers. **Below left** A vintage motel chair rests beside an Italian pot filled with herbs and potted cacti. **Below right** Inside the shop’s front door, a weathered table displays a nautical vignette, with John Derian seashells, shell pieces, striped shoes, and tin stars.





Find more garden decor ideas at www.bhg.com/sipgardendecor



Succulent Style

Succulents thrive with full sun, well-draining soil, and good air circulation. The key to planting succulents in containers is to use a potting mix made for succulents or cacti—and to avoid overwatering. Always water succulents at their roots instead of overhead. Try these succulents for instant style.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 <i>Aloe striata</i> | 7 <i>Graptopetalum paraguayense</i> 'Ghost Plant' |
| 2 <i>Crassula</i> 'Octopus Plant' | 8 <i>Adromischus cristatus</i> 'Cinkle Leaf Plant' |
| 3 <i>Sedum morganianum</i> 'Burro's Tail' | 9 <i>Sedum</i> hybrid |
| 4 <i>Echeveria shaviana</i> | 10 <i>Kalanchoe beharensis</i> |
| 5 Watch chain (<i>Crassula lycopodioides</i>) | 11 <i>Crassula conjuncta</i> |
| 6 <i>Aloe zanzibarica</i> | 12 String of pearls (<i>Senecio rowleyanus</i>) |

Opposite The clochelike terrarium contains a still life of succulents and a butterfly; Bonnie uses similar displays to decorate buffet and dinner tables. Mossy pots denote table settings, but the plates vary from one setting to the next. **Above** A new wooden tray with a vintage feel overflows with succulents.

where you may not necessarily feel you can duplicate what you see. All you need to do is to add a little something—a bunch of flowers, an old stool—to what you already have.”

When not at the store, Bonnie and Crystal spend their days on the hunt for those “little somethings.” Road trips and visits to flea markets take them coast-to-coast as they hunt for clever, unique fragments. “We never have a set thing in mind because when you do that you miss all the other neat stuff,” Bonnie says. “We are never driven by what we think will sell; we only buy what we like. We couldn’t imagine doing it any other way.”

It is advice that a friend might give: Buy what you love, no matter the time period or style, and decorate and collect by continually testing and changing. “Don’t

sacrifice what you love,” Crystal says. By combining seemingly disparate elements, “you can create something that is much more interesting than a single style where everything seems to fit in its perfect place.”

As the day draws to a close, there is reworking to do inside the store. A customer has taken home some vintage pots and another has left with a few birdhouses. There’s always something new to add, a fresh concept to try. It’s what keeps customers such as Mary Kay coming back again and again, to share ideas, draw inspiration, and sip on yet another cup of good coffee. “I often find customers enjoying the ambience and friendship of Bon Ellen out on the patio,” she says. “They come for a single experience, and it turns into an extension of your friendship circle.” ■

For more information, see the Buyers’ Guide on page 101.