

# Whimsy in the Woods

by Patricia Morrison Coate

Whimsical Woods' wares are a familiar site at the Gala Garden Show — Soroptimist Jan Chapman encouraged owners Val and Nancy Jackson to be a vendor in 2007 and they've returned every year. For the uninitiated, Val Jackson takes his whimsical imagination to fashion unique handcrafted garden creations. His hobby began with building and selling log birdhouses a dozen years ago and since moving to Sequim six years ago, it has expanded to more than a half dozen product categories with strong Internet sales.

The Jacksons' 14 acres of woodlands gives Val a wonderland of natural materials from which to build bird feeders, suet feeders, log birdhouses, gnome homes, illuminated fairy houses, stand-alone gnome home windows and doors, and toad homes. Val loves that he can be as creative as he wants to be and said that each piece has its own personality.

"A large majority of the materials comes right out of our woods, including logs, sticks, moss, pine cones and lichen. I also use old fence and barn wood," Val said. "We call it recycling Mother Nature. The birdhouses are fully functional and made of all natural materials." Even dried flowers from their garden adorn pieces.

Of all its products, Whimsical Woods is best known for its gnome homes. Gnome fever swept the country in 2004 when Travelocity introduced its roaming gnome and Val reasoned, "Why not a place for a gnome to come home to?"

"I started out with toad homes and then built fairy and hobbit houses. Due to the popularity of the Travelocity gnome, we conceived the idea of a home for gnomes," Val said. "It's surprising the number of people across the country who enjoy stories of gnomes, so there is a following. It's amazing the different stories we hear when we go to shows about collecting gnomes — there's just a lot of imagination and fun."

Some gnome homes sit on the ground, others can be mounted to a tree and they come in different sizes and degrees of decoration, from plain to fanciful. While Val is out in his shop, Nancy manages the company's thriving Internet site at [www.whimsicalwoods.net](http://www.whimsicalwoods.net).

Thanks to it and an article and photo in The Costco Connection in March 2012, they're as busy as can be, building and shipping gnome homes and birdhouses all over the country.

The Jacksons relish coming up with new product ideas and at this year's Gala Garden Show they'll introduce three new items: bluebird nesting boxes, nesting materials niches and collectors choice gnome homes. The niches, for lack of a better word, are mountable with a birdhouse-type roof and hold dryer lint or yarn that birds can gather to line their nests.

Also at the show will be Whimsical Woods' log birdhouses, suet feeders, large and small gnome homes, and stand-alone gnome home doors and windows.

"We really look forward to this spring show because it's the first of the season," Val said.

Nancy added, "The Soroptimist group puts on the best show — they are the most helpful and accommodating group of ladies. We go to a lot of shows and nobody does it like they do."

**Whimsical Woods also is a longtime fixture at the Sequim Open Aire Market from May-October. To visit their studio, call 452-7308.**

