

Getting Down and Dirty Continued from Page 25

Think of your garden as an outdoor room of your house, then the importance of accessorizing becomes clear.

Bending the stereotype of gay interior designers, the delightfully queer duo Danny Hills and Wayne Hughes are exuberantly creative exterior designers. Though they also do some garden design, their specialty is creating garden furniture and structures.

Together for 12 years, these two men have forged an incredible partnership and have made gardens their path in life. Though he went to art school, Danny Hills had abandoned his artistic dreams until he met Wayne Hughes at a gym. Soon he was showing Hughes his etchings and getting inspired to create again.

"My whole job has been to encourage him ever since, to put both palms to his ass and push," says Hughes, with characteristic humor.

Hills designs whimsical yet sturdy garden furniture, fences, trellises, arbors and so forth, while Hughes builds them in their workshop. Each winter they develop a new line of designs, then hold an open house in June. During the summer more than 5,000 people tour their city acre of imagination and leave orders for their designs. During the fall and winter they fill their orders and begin the cycle anew.

While Hills dreams up new ideas, Hughes is the master organizer, businessman and promoter. It's a perfectly symbiotic relationship that produces something far greater than the sum of its parts.

From the beginning, they've taken on the never-ending project of restoring their 1898 home and turning it into a gallery for their creations and the grounds into a garden showplace. They were so absorbed by their projects and each other that they admit to having been antisocial during their early years together. It was then Hughes and Hills decided to call their place Lonesomeville.

"The world still doesn't make a lot of sense to me," Hughes confesses. "I'm in it for the fun."

Hills states their common goal: "A creative, independent lifestyle seeking simple beauty. Life is a vacation, it's all fun—even when we're working, it's too enjoyable to be a job."

Now that they both work full-time for themselves, their life together has taken on an



The big payoff: seasons of spectacular color at Lonesomeville

organic quality that integrates work and play so well there is little difference between the two. Hills is able to take more time for his fine art—he is also a gifted painter and

ceramist—and they've hired other craftsmen to help fabricate their designs.

Hughes is quick to acknowledge their great fortune: "There is not a day that goes by that



The bluebirds of happiness have descended into Lonesomeville: Danny Hills (seated) and Wayne Hughes enjoy their rocking bluebird love seat

we aren't thankful that we get to do exactly what we want."

And for his part, Hills never forgets his partner's encouragement.

"I wouldn't be doing any of this if we hadn't met—not even kinda!" he says.

Both men left their rural hometowns in search of gay community in a city, and Hills believes so many queers are artists because "we think outside the box—it's easier to envision a different lifestyle."

He continues: "It's expanded my options and my horizons. Because I'm queer, I'm free. Society shunned me at an early age, but now I can do whatever I want."

His lover is quick to add, "I thank God every day I'm queer."

You'll thank heaven if you stop by their amazing oasis some fine day and see what the power of love, imagination and hard work can create.

Accessories also play a big role in the life of landscape designer Hollyann Hood, who augmented her degree in agriculture with

further studies in landscape design, then last fall opened Hollyhocks, a store overflowing with beautiful things for the garden.

While she still finds time to design, most of her time is filled with running her shop.

"My focus is on local artists and one-of-a-kind garden art," Hood explains. "I don't have anything you'd find at a big box store."

Indeed, her cozy space feels like the inside of a greenhouse and is the antithesis of shopping at Freddie's.

She also features lots of recycled garden art, refurbished furniture and new objects made from old, weathered wood. You'll also find framed botanical art, gardening tools, unique bent-copper trellises and arbors, and elegant decorative pots. Many of these pieces would work equally well indoors.

Hood is overjoyed at the positive response to her store.

"You couldn't do anything better than this—making people happy with their landscape," she says.

■ **ORIANA GREEN** learned to crawl and walk in her grandfather's greenhouse and comes by her love of gardening genetically. She is also the Entertainment Editor of *Just Out* and can be reached at oriana@justout.com

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