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GARDEN

Plant adaptations

Exotic Plants keeps up with customers, now from new location



BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON



Kifumi Keppler poses in the new Exotic Plants on Fulton Avenue.

started using us for live plants and that made a big difference. We did lots and lots of model homes. Then the economy crashed; that all changed.”

Then Exotic Plants found a new niche: Houseplants for offices. (It provides plants for SN&R’s offices.)

“People became more aware of environmental issues,” Keppler said. “Plants clean the air; they produce oxygen. But they also promote improved working conditions. They act as a sound barrier; offices can be noisy and plants help really well. But most of all, people like working—and living—with living plants. They enjoy the growth.”

Exotic Plants still has a healthy rental business, particularly for special events.

“We do a lot of parties, weddings, conventions,” said Keppler. Among her major clients are Golden 1 Center, UC Davis and CSU Sacramento.

“We also do a lot of moss walls and vertical [planter] walls,” she added. “They’re very popular right now.”

Keppler has seen an influx of younger customers as houseplants have become a favorite decorating accessory for millennials. “Anything on Etsy or Instagram, people look for it!” she said. “Succulents are booming. Big fiddleleaf figs, they fly out the door ... Carnivorous plants—pitcher plants, Venus fly traps, cobra lilies—are very popular right now.”

Now 75, Keppler plans to keep on growing her Exotic Plants. “People say, ‘What are doing, opening a new store? You should be retiring,’” she said. “When people retire, they just sit and decay or they can do something they really enjoy. And that’s what I’m doing—something I really enjoy.”

Exotic Plants grand opening: 3-7 p.m., Sunday, May 5, 1525 Fulton Ave. Workshops, raffles, music, refreshments from Mikuni Sushi and Cultured Kitchen. Free entry, (916) 922-4769; exoticplantsltd.com.

A half century after hanging ferns and grape ivy seemed to decorate every California kitchen, houseplants are enjoying another moment in the sun.

“There’s more interest again; it’s like a renaissance for me,” Kifumi Keppler said. “It’s coming back.”

Keppler owns Exotic Plants, Sacramento’s go-to source for indoor gardening since 1972. On Sunday, May 5, Exotic Plants will host a grand opening at a new location, packed with thousands of growing things adapted to indoor spaces.

No longer tucked into a strip mall on Howe Avenue, the new Exotic Plants sits on a one-acre Fulton Avenue site as a standalone store with a big bright patio and plenty of parking.

Keppler already has filled the new store with enticing plants. A forest of ficus stands next to tables packed with colorful bromeliads and orchids. Peace lilies and staghorn ferns vie for space with truckloads of succulents.

“People ask me, ‘What’s your favorite plant?’ I love all kinds,” Keppler said. “I love orchids, succulents, ferns; it’s so hard to choose! All have different personalities, different vibes.”

Over 47 years, Keppler and Exotic Plants have rolled with the changes in the nursery industry and customers’ plant preferences.

“We’re the pioneer of indoor plant rental,” she said. “When we started, model homes in subdivisions were using plastic plants. They

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