



# The Greatest Outdoors

## The Casual Furniture Market Comes to Chi-town

Above left: Agio's flagship collection for 2010, Marco Isle Deep Seating group, includes a unique combination of all-weather wicker weaves and frames with an exposed wood finish.

Above right: The Pride Family Brands' offerings take on an Old World flavor with the elegant European styling of the Madrid Collection.

**OUTDOOR FURNITURE WILL BE TAKEN TO A NEW LEVEL** at Chicago's Merchandise Mart at the annual International Casual Furniture & Accessories Market this month.

The trade show, running from Sept. 21-24, provides retailers with an outlet to find all things related to outdoor and casual living. Featuring the latest products and trends in the industry, the Casual Market boasts approximately 300 temporary exhibitors and more than 40 permanent showrooms taking up approximately 350,000 square feet of overall exhibit space on floors 7, 8, 15, 16 and 17 of The Merchandise Mart.

The annual trade show is expected to attract thousands of retailers including mass merchants, specialty retailers, department stores, hardware stores and more. Exhibitors of items including outdoor furniture, umbrellas, hammocks, outdoor lighting, outdoor carpeting and rugs, tabletop, garden accessories, and barbecues, will show their latest offerings.

"Buyers know that the Casual Market is the destination for the newest products and latest trends," said Jaclyn Kotzum, director of marketing, casual furnishings industry, MMPI. "[They also] know that despite the current economic conditions, they need to shop this market in order to stock their stores for next season with the best outdoor living products that their customers want and need."

New for this year's show is the Garden Accessories Courtyard, a 10,000-square-foot area that will be home to exhibitors showcasing outdoor accessories. This dedicated area will be located on the Northwest side of the 8th Floor Market Suites during Market.

"The Garden Accessories Courtyard is a continuation of MMPI's pursuit of 'Redefining Life Outdoors,'" said Whitney

Gillespie, vice president, MMPI. "Accessories are an important component of the outdoor room and the Courtyard will offer buyers a central location where they can find exhibitors with all the accessories to complete their merchandising needs and customers' demands."

Elaine Smith, president of Elaine Smith Pillows, said that her company is looking forward to exhibiting in the accessory-specific section. "This new destination area is dedicated to finding all the finishing touches for retailers and designers," she said. "It makes perfect sense for effective merchandising. In this economy, new accessories are a vital key to add color and style to make existing furniture and showrooms look new again."

Attendees can take in numerous additional educational seminars and networking opportunities throughout the market. A highlight will be Trends in Design-Beyond 2009, scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 24, at 1 p.m. Showgoers can discover what's hot in the home—both indoors and out—during this panel discussion. Top experts in the industry will speak on the latest in furniture designs and styles, fabric trends, popular paint colors and finishes, plant and floral pairings. Also learn how the green movement is affecting homeowners' choices.

Meanwhile, attendees can find all of the new resources available at the market at its New Exhibitor Showcase on the 8th Floor of Market Suites. Also, "New Exhibitor" signage will highlight manufacturers that are new to the market.

A New Product Gallery returns to present a comprehensive overview of the newest casual furniture and outdoor accessories for the 2010 season. View the latest in furniture designs, color and fabric trends on the first floor of The Merchandise Mart. ■