



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



Steve Gainey

2005 Plantscape Professional



How many adults get to play with clay for a living and love it. Well Steve Gainey does, and he is also tonight's Allied Trade Professional inductee into the Interiorscape Hall of Fame for 2005.

Steve, the owner of Gainey Ceramics, is responsible for introducing numerous new innovative shapes, colors and glazes to the market place, placing Gainey Ceramics in the position of being an industry leader, and one of a few ceramic manufactures still remaining in California that have not fled to Mexico or other Asian countries. It all began back in 1949 when Steve's grandfather, a plant supervisor for Pacific Clay Products, and his father began producing crockery, pet feeders and ollas (ceramic water jars) in their backyard. When Pacific Clay Products made the decision to discontinue its Los Angeles operation, the Gainey's purchased much of that company's equipment and customer base, and Gainey Ceramics was born.

Early in the 1950 Gainey began acting as a job shop for Architectural Pottery, who at that time was an industry leader in the manufacturer of ceramic containers. As their involvement with Architectural Pottery expanded, Gainey began marketing its own line of ceramic containers to the retail garden market in Southern California. While Architectural Pottery was producing innovative designs, in many cases the shapes created were not functional for growing containers. In the 1960's, as the interior plant industry began to grow Gainey set about designing a line of planters that would be aesthetically pleasing yet work well with living plants and the growing containers.

With the explosion of the plant craze throughout the 1970's and 80's Gainey continued to expand its color pallet and introduced many new shapes and sizes of ceramic containers, and faced a strong and expanding market as the 1980's drew to a close.

In 1986, Steve Gainey, purchased Gainey Ceramics from his father, John Gainey, Jr. Steve, having worked in every phase of the manufacturing process since his childhood and trained under his father and grandfather was prepared to assume responsibility of the company. But it soon became clear to him that Gainey Ceramics was about to face some daunting challenges.

In the early 1990's the company faced a precipitous economic downturn unprecedented in its speed and severity. That along with increased government regulations and labor related problems caused many manufacturers to either leave California, or just close their doors.

While sales and profits plummeted, Gainey was unwilling to concede its rich Southern California heritage and was faced with re-inventing itself.

Steve's true love was with the design and manufacturing process and with the machinery and processes that produce the Gainey line. Accordingly Steve decided to turn over the daily operational responsibilities to a new president, Mark Cameron, who brought more than 30 years of sales and administrative experience in the ceramic industry. Together they established a senior management team that implemented a radically new distribution strategy combining sales on a direct basis with local distributors. This followed with an unprecedented level of new product introductions, which in turn, over the years produced historic sales and profits. Steve attributes this to listening to the industry and returning to its strengths.

The company's marketing strategy: Make the most creative, best quality container on the market....make it a good value....and make it easy to purchase.

Gainey Ceramics, instead of moving offshore or to Mexico in difficult times remained in Southern California and today can claim to be the cleanest and most modern ceramic manufacturing facility in the United States. And who can take credit for these achievements.....the kid and now adult who just loves to play with clay and the machinery that produces his extensive line of ceramic containers, tonight's inductee, Steve Gainey.

