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## Mastering Outdoor Shows

with **TONI MCCARTHY**



Toni McCarthy stands in her booth at an outdoor show.



**Q:** How do you decide which shows you will do?

**A:** I select only shows that are juried and that accept only artists who handmake their art. I usually find new shows by word of mouth. Other artists have been very generous in sharing show information, either good or bad. I also check my local events listings.

**Q:** How many shows per month do you recommend?

**A:** It all depends on how fast you can produce new inventory and how quickly you recover from being away for two or three days. I like to sell at about two shows per month in late spring, summer, and fall. July and August are very busy since most outdoor shows are scheduled then, so I try to do three or four per month in midsummer. I come home between shows and use those midweek days to order new supplies, design and make new pieces to fill in for what was sold, and repack for the next show.

**Q:** What are your top tips for doing an outdoor show?

**A:** Have a checklist and use it! Include all the items you must have with you and be sure they get packed in the car or truck. Don't forget comfortable shoes, plenty of change, and snacks to nibble neatly. Also, be ready for someone to ask you for wholesale prices for a shop



### better booth basics

**RAISE YOUR TABLES!** Make it easy for your customers to shop without having to bend over to see what you have. It's easy to make your own table-leg risers out of PVC pipe, but be sure your table drapes go all the way to the ground. I drape all my tables in custom-fit floor-length cloths.

**CHOOSE A CONSISTENT COLOR THEME** for your tables to enhance your jewelry. Keep your tabletop furniture in basic colors, too—all black, all white, all gray.

**KEEP CUSTOMERS COOL AND DRY.** I have my own tent for outdoor shows. It is white with a domed top (it sheds rain perfectly—no puddles) and four zippered walls.

**PAY EXTRA FOR A CORNER OR AN ISLAND BOOTH.** This gives you versatility in table arrangements and can accommodate several people at your booth, which attracts more to come see what's happening there.

**BE ASSERTIVE.** If you were promised (and paid for) electricity or a corner booth and didn't get it, find the promoter and politely ask for what you contracted.

or gallery. Decide ahead of time if you want to sell this way and, if so, which items you will offer and for what prices. Finally, be confident in your jewelry. You made it because you love it. Express your passion in its creation with those who visit your booth.



Above: The consistent color theme of red and black in Toni McCarthy's display. Left: One of Toni McCarthy's eye-catching bracelet designs.