

Tips for Picking and Collecting

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Bow and Sharon Williams started as collectors of rare, unique and vintage items. They spent their time scavenging in attics and on farms, braving the dust and dirt to find just the right thing. Now they travel to shows in different states to sell the creations they've found and rehabilitated. They sell at shows around the Valley like at The Big Heap, a picking event returning to the Valley in November. Here are their best tips for getting started.

Look for something unique

"We look for things that have the design and craftsmanship of architecture," Sharon says. "We really hunt for things that are folk art...one of a kind and primitive." If you're starting a business, Bow says it's crucial to "stick with the things that sell." Your business model and your brand are what make you unique.

Don't be afraid to get dirty

"For me, someone who's a picker is someone who's digging in the dirt...pulling stuff that's been put away for years and years," Sharon says. "We get on farms and we're pulling stuff off of stuff and layers upon layers of dust and dirt and hay will come down." Bow adds that everyone supplies their business in a different way, but this method has been effective for them.

Learn what to avoid

"Something that Bow and I avoid would be glass because glass is hard to transport, a lot of times it will break. It takes a lot of time to pack," Sharon says. Bow adds, "By no means are we taking a shot at anyone who sells glass, but when we're at a show you can just hear peoples' investments shattering."

Make the time

"It takes a lot of time," Bow says. "If you're a hobbyist, you'll naturally fill your schedule with that time. You're driven to the stores to look for those things." Sharon says the organic process of finding great items takes a lot of time in just driving from place to place. "We'll knock on peoples' doors and talk and see if they can send us to someone else," she says.

Make connections

"My ultimate advice to pickers would be to get up, get out there and don't be afraid to meet people and have fun!" Bow says. Sharon and Bow maintain their social media accounts so that customers can see, from start to finish, how their items are made. "A lot of times after the customer buys it we'll have the customer send us a picture to show us where this piece is in its new home," Bow says. "It gets people excited and adds value." Shows are an important part of the picking culture, and Bow and Sharon say that The Big Heap is filling a need for the Valley area. Shows are a great way to make connections, get inspiration and make some money.

The Big Heap will be taking place on Nov. 18, 19 and 20 at Cave Creek Urban BOHO Relics. Tickets are \$7 at the gate. Kids 12 and under free.