

# 7 STEPS TO MAKE YOUR IGC POP

Riverview Nursery and Garden Center illustrates some great ideas for helping you grow your garden center and make it thrive.

By Pamela Danziger

You specialize in gardens and know that success in growing healthy plants depends on fertilizing the garden to provide nutrients and enrich the soil to maximize the garden's yield. So too, specialty garden centers and retailers need to fertilize their business with new ideas, innovative concepts and strategies to help their businesses grow.

That is what my new book, "Shops that POP! 7 Steps to Extraordinary Retail Success," does for specialty retail businesses. It's a book about and for specialty independent retailers, like you. Its core message:

Today success in retailing is less about WHAT you sell and more about HOW you sell it!

It is filled with advice, ideas and real-life examples to help you focus on the HOW — creating extraordinary shopping experiences for your customers.

## Meet a Garden Center that POPs!

Let me illustrate with inspiration from a garden center that POPs! Riverview Nursery and Garden Center, in Temple, Pennsylvania, outside of Reading, is everything that a garden center should be, offering 5,000 square feet of indoor retail space and 18 acres of nursery that sells all the "usual suspects" for a garden center, along with gifts, pond products, lawn care, landscaping and related services.

Plus it is so much more — owner Diane Salks and her staff are devoted to helping customers enhance their outdoor living experiences, and when the growing season is over, their indoor garden experiences as well.

"We have to give people a reason to stop here and buy from us," Salks says.

Part of that reason is that Riverview sells distinctive and different plants.

"We have a massive selection of trees and shrubs carrying over 400 varieties including specialization in unique conifer and Japanese maples, many of which we grow ourselves. We always want customers to find something new and exciting, so we go out of our way to carry products that you don't find in the chains, big boxes or even in most IGCs," Salks explains, as she points to a selection of tropical air plants, like tillandsias, bromeliads and orchids on offer.

## Workshops for All Ages

Yet even with its extensive and unique products, Riverview distinguishes itself by educating customers about how to best enjoy their plants and get them to thrive in their gardens.

"Our No. 1 marketing strategy is an extensive workshop program and special events we hold throughout the year. We give information to educate the do-it-yourselfer about planting and care, how to build a pond, how to grow houseplants and tropicals, and the value of having plants in the home," Salks says. Two workshops this fall focused on planting spring bulbs and designing creative fall planters.

But the workshops are not only organized to provide need-to-know information. Some are more whimsical in nature, such as a recent fairy garden workshop where participants got to flex their creativity by creating miniature container



gardens for their own garden "fairies." And others are organized to train the next generation of garden enthusiasts.

Riverview's focus on gardening for kids isn't a surprise, since this is a family-run business with Salks' own children and their families involved in the company, which evolved from the original

**Today success in retailing is less about **WHAT** you sell and more about **HOW** you sell it!**

Riverview Tree and Landscaping company founded by her father 43 years ago.

"We have Junior Gardening Club, complete with a kids garden on site where they dig and

get their hands and knees dirty," she chuckles.

Salks explains that the Junior Gardening Club is a year-long program that educates kids, 7 to 12 years of age, about the environment, horticulture and how to live sustainably.

The junior gardeners take part in cultivating an actual garden, from seeds and transplanting in the spring to harvesting in the summer and fall. Then during winter, they help plan for the following spring planting.



Three of the four annual special events are also kid-friendly, including the Easter Egg Hunt, Lady Bug Release Party and the Children's Fall Fest.

## Reaching Beyond Its Borders

Besides its focus on the gardening lifestyle, Riverview Nursery and Garden Center also reaches out into the community with philanthropic efforts to support the needs of the community.

For example, Riverview supports the Berks County Restoring Hope Foundation, which annually donates a home makeover to a local family in need, with Riverview providing the landscaping products and services.

Further, Riverview supports other local small businesses with a Women Helping Women annual event where eight or nine local women-owned businesses bring their stores into the garden center and set up "shop" the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Each business invites their own clientele to enjoy live music, wine and hors d'oeuvres, mini-massages, hand waxing, a Chinese raffle and other engaging experiences.

All guests are asked to bring a donation to Mary's Shelter, a local foundation that helps pregnant women in need. So the event directly supports Mary's Shelter along with helping these local entrepreneurs, plus it gets new potential customers into Riverview to experience its offerings.

While Riverview focuses much of its marketing and customer service strategies through personal interaction, it also has discovered how to use the selling potential of the internet.

It is a charter member of Bower and Branch, a virtual network of growers and independent garden centers devoted to helping homeowners select, plant and care for trees.

The customer uses the Bower and Branch online service to pair the right tree for the particular setting, then the tree selection is shipped in three days to the garden center ready for planting.

Salks explains, "It is basically an online tree selling service. We have seen sales of trees through this at all times of the day, evenings and holidays. It allows us to sell trees even when we aren't open."

## Seven Ways the Garden Center POPs!

Riverview Nursery and Garden Center is a shop that POP! because it exemplifies the seven essential qualities that transform a store from ordinary to an extraordinary customer experience.

- **Encourages high levels of customer involvement and interaction.** Shops that POP! deliver a shopping environment that fully involves the shopper and engages them interactively in the shopping experience. Riverview encourages customers to touch, feel, taste and participate in the store in a highly personal way. Plus its workshops and special events are truly hands-on experiences.
- **Evokes shopper curiosity.** Shops that POP! excite consumer curiosity to explore and experience the garden center fully. Gardeners are by nature curious about plants, how to grow them and how to bring them together for the maximum effect. Riverview satisfies customer curiosity with educational experiences that help them make the most of their time in the garden center and back in their home gardens.
- **Sparks a contagious, electric quality.** Shops that POP! exude energy and excitement that is contagious. It is this quality that makes a shop a dynamic place, exciting to visit and a thrill to be in. Salks and her staff are energized by being in the garden center and that excitement is transmitted to the customers when they visit. Salks says, "Amazing customer service is our goal. We train our staff to be knowledgeable, friendly and helpful to everyone. We want everyone who walks in our doors to be treated as if they are our friends and we have invited them into our home."
- **Creates convergence among atmosphere, store design and merchandise.** Shops that POP! present a cohesive vision that combines all the tangible and intangible elements of the garden center into a unified whole. They present a distinctive point of view that holistically ties together all the disparate

elements of the store into one authentic experience. Since Riverview is a garden center, staff works diligently to make the center feel like one's own garden, only better. Careful attention to displays and the overall environment is carried throughout the shop, outside and along the walks and plantings.

**Shops that POP!** deliver a shopping environment that fully involves the shopper and engages them interactively in the shopping experience.

- **Expresses an authentic concept.** Shops that POP! are more than stores selling stuff — they are conceptually driven and reflect a visionary's values. The center transcends being just a store into a place for a new experience. Riverview is the "real deal" and consistently carries it throughout the center, on the website and its Facebook page. It is dedicated to making their customers' gardens a thriving, happy place.
- **Priced for value.** Shops that POP! have a carefully constructed pricing strategy based upon offering fair value for a reasonable price. Pricing is not about how low can you go, but how much value can you offer. Pricing, therefore, hinges upon the value for the shopper, not the price tag. Regarding Riverview's gifting offerings, which take center stage during the annual Christmas Shop, Salks says, "Our gifts are unusual, with many made in America. They are upscale, without being too pricey."
- **Be accessible, non-exclusive and free from pretensions.** Shops that POP! have



all the six preceding qualities, plus another essential feature — they are immediately accessible to everyone, free from pretensions or snobbishness.

What could be a better testament to Riverview Nursery and Garden Center accessibility than their efforts devoted to kids and raising up the next generation of enthusiastic gardeners? **LGR**

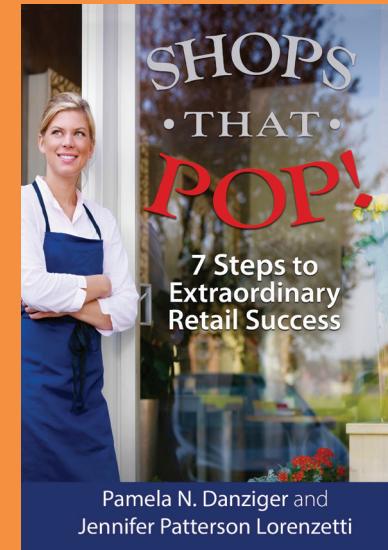


Pamela Danziger is a speaker, author and market researcher whose newest book is entitled "Shops that POP! 7 Steps to Extraordinary Retail Success." She can be reached at pdanzig@ptd.net.

Pamela Danziger's book, "Shops that POP!" reveals specific, actionable strategies to transform a store from ordinary to extraordinary to make the store irresistible to customers. The book leads with an in-depth analysis of today's evolving and demanding customers and emerging trends in retail.

Combined with engaging stories about retailers that have made their shops POP!, "Shops that POP!" shows how to craft a retailing experience that is irresistible to shoppers.

Find out more information about Danziger and "Shops that POP!" at [www.unitymarketingonline.com](http://www.unitymarketingonline.com).



25370 ZEMEL RD  
PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950  
941-505-8400

# We've got the Blues

A **COPA CHAMPAGNE**  
#1904  
(1 Gal container)

B **MICHOACANA**  
#1937  
(3-5 gal container)

C **COPA FRANCESA**  
#1866  
(1 gal container)

D **VIOLET POT**  
#2096  
(6"-1qt container)

E **WELCOME POT**  
#1878  
(4.5" container)

**POTTERY EXPRESS**

[www.potteryexpress.com](http://www.potteryexpress.com)

Write in 807