

# Brewing Garden Center Success

*The Windsor Gardener in Colorado opened High Hops Brewery to create one dynamite business.*

By Abby Kleckler

**H**usband-and-wife team Amanda and Pat Weakland started their first horticulture adventure together with the opening of a mobile greenhouse in 1991. Their history in the industry, however, dates back before then.

Pat is a third-generation grower, and his parents operate The Flower Bin, a garden center staple in the Longmont, Colorado, community for more than 40 years.

Pat and Amanda sold some of the family product in their Windsor, Colorado, mobile greenhouse for 10 years until they decided the town had reached a point where it was big enough to support a garden center. The Windsor Gardener, a permanent structure, opened in 2001, and the Weaklands started growing at their own location.

Fast forward another decade, and Amanda and Pat have added a very unique component to the business: a brewery.

"You can kind of get in a rut in the garden center business, and it's hard to keep things new and exciting," Amanda says. "The brewery really does this for us."

Lawn & Garden Retailer caught up with Amanda to talk about how the businesses are integrated, and how the brewery has given new life to the garden center and vice versa.



Bikes 15 miles to work daily.

Currently restoring his 1925 Victorian. By hand.

Regularly wins every local Poetry Slam.

Real claim to fame? Growing the tastiest tomatoes on Marcy Avenue.



**LGR:** How did the idea of starting a brewery at the garden center come about?

**Weakland:** My husband has always been an avid homebrewer and he had trouble getting hops in 2007, so we figured we had a garden center and we may as well just grow our own hops.

We have 16 acres just on the edge of town, so we started growing our own hops and all the homebrewers wanted to grow their own too, so we started selling hop plants. We have about 50 varieties of brewing hops that we sell to homebrewers through the garden center and over the internet.

We sold the hop plants, and they're all females, so they're all good, specific homebrewing plants that aren't cross-pollinated.

Everybody loved that, so we put in a homebrew shop in the greenhouse because we needed some fall sales and homebrewing really picks up during the fall because the weather gets cool enough.

With that we were giving classes and were giving samples of the beer that we made, and everybody loved it, so we were like, "Well, let's put a brewery in."

So we put a brewery in and we started with a little 400-square-foot tasting room. We thought that would be fine, it would be a little brewery, and we'd just have fun, but it has exploded from there.

We have an outdoor patio and in the winter we convert one of our greenhouses into an indoor beer garden. Our community has really embraced us and supported us, and it's been a great melding of two businesses.

Our tasting room is in the greenhouse, and you can't walk around with your beer, but we have kind of a false wall between them with big open windows with no glass, so you can sit there and drink beer and look at the items that we have for sale in the greenhouse, which promotes sales on the garden center side.

A lot of husband/wife teams will come, and the husband will have a beer when the wife shops. Although, recently, we have a lot more women drinkers too, so we're kind of getting known for that.

It's a great mixing of businesses, and in the research we did when we put the homebrew shop in, we found that 80 to 85 percent of gardeners drink beer, so it's a no-brainer.

## Fast Fact

The name High Hops Brewery stands for high-altitude hops and came about before marijuana was legalized in Colorado. "Everyone asks, 'Do you have pot in your beer,'" jokes owner Amanda Weakland. "That's not really legal, but we get a lot of questions."

**LGR:** With the added brewing business, are you seeing different demographics of people?

**Weakland:** Oh yes, definitely! A lot of the 25 to 35 year olds we're seeing a huge increase in the greenhouse especially. They're the ones who go to the breweries anyway, so we're seeing that crossover into the greenhouse, which is awesome. They're all getting into gardening and vegetable gardening, so we can help them.

Our demographic has changed. It was getting to be the older patrons, and so we brought in those younger people.

We have a Hop Harvest event that brings in gardeners and beer drinkers. We cut down our hops and have contests. We harvest the hops by pulling the flower off because we're so small, so we don't have machines.

We have a lot of things like, "buy a 12-inch basket or bigger and get a free pint" or "buy a Christmas tree, get a free pint."

Any classes we have it's nice because it's fun to drink a beer while you're gardening. The cost includes a beer (or root beer if you're not a drinker).

We do a lot of cross marketing. We also have live music on Friday and Saturday nights the whole year-round, which doesn't really cross

between the two businesses, but we get a lot of people in.

The brewery absolutely provides a reason to heat that big greenhouse, which in our position it's really difficult to keep money coming in during the winter.

We also grow things in the greenhouse that we use in our beers. Lemon verbena goes into The Golden One, and we cross the businesses that way. We try to utilize farm-to-table ideas.

All the habaneros in our Habanero Honey that we recently released were grown on site. My dad actually grew them.

**LGR:** I noticed on your social media channels that you have a lot of engagement on the High Hops page. Have you combined your marketing efforts as well?

**Weakland:** Our High Hops and Windsor Gardener pages were integrated, so that's how we have so many followers on the High Hops page. Brewery people are totally Facebook/social media nerds. They are on social media constantly, so



GROW YOUR OWN ADVENTURE.™

Savor is the freshest new line of vegetables and herbs, exclusively from Pleasant View Gardens. To add Savor to your garden center, call 603-435-8361 or visit [growyourownadventure.com](http://growyourownadventure.com).

  
**savor**  
EDIBLES & FRAGRANTS

# MERCHANDISING

that really bumps up the likes and communication for that; whereas I find that the gardeners aren't so much.

That's that demographic difference too, so we actually utilize our garden center Facebook through the High Hops page, and we get tons of feedback on that. That's another way we integrate both.

We have a huge email base from our loyalty system through our greenhouse, and they usually give us their email, so we have a biweekly email for the garden center in the off seasons (it's weekly during season), and we have a weekly email through the brewery.

yard, and we've gotten a great response on that. That's our most successful. It really is.

It's a big family affair. My son is our head brewer. My husband and I have been in the business for forever. My daughter is a teacher but works in the greenhouse in the summer. My daughter-in-law works in the tasting room, which we call the Hop Hut because we're High Hops.

Our businesses are also really closely integrated in that many of our employees work in both places, so we help out each other. They are very integrated, literally in the same space. **LGR**



## Fast Fact

Amanda Weakland, owner of The Windsor Gardener ([www.thewindsorgardener.com](http://www.thewindsorgardener.com)) and High Hops Brewery ([www.highhopsbrewery.com](http://www.highhopsbrewery.com)), says that edibles (particularly strawberries and raspberries) and beer-related gift items have been the business' two biggest categories for increased sales.

I think we have about 9,000 emails, so that's a huge marketing tool that we have which actually started with the greenhouse. That's been huge for us. We try to keep our emails short and to the point. You get tons of emails so we do what's happening or what you should do now in your



**SIMPLE. SUCCESSFUL. SUSTAINABLE.**

*Good Dirt*

*The official soil of P. Allen Smith Garden Home*

Our company was founded on the idea that gardening products should be effective, easy to use and ecologically responsible. We create ALL NATURAL products that are safe for children to handle and sustainably produced so as to prevent harm to the planet we'll one day pass on to them.

[www.good-dirt.com](http://www.good-dirt.com)

Circle 107

**GARDENWARE®**

**Use your laser printer to Create Your Own Silent Sales Force**

- \* Always on duty
- \* Information rich
- \* Consistent
- \* Professional
- \* Cost effective

Labeling software  
Waterproof signs, tags and labels for the nursery industry  
For over 20 years

Call or click for more information:  
(503) 717-9295  
[www.gardenware.com](http://www.gardenware.com)  
[info@gardenware.com](mailto:info@gardenware.com)

Circle 108