

# the best conversation all day

**A**lthough shopping has never been my favorite pastime, sometimes you leave a store feeling great. For me it's when I find exactly what I am looking for, pick up something unexpected, spot a deal or have a good conversation with one of the employees.

I've gone shopping for running shoes a million times before, so on a recent trip I intended to beeline it straight to the back of my local running store, pick up what I wanted and take off.

Employee Scott, however, got talking to me. With his help, I tried out numerous different shoes, made a purchase and even went back for the store's Monday night running group he had talked up.

This great display of customer service came shortly after two disappointing store visits — unfortunately to different garden centers.

The first was the day before Easter, and I wanted a plant to take as a hostess gift. I quickly found a bromeliad in a wonderful spring-colored pot and took it right to the register, where I found no one. I hunted for an employee who said someone else would be there shortly to ring me up. After waiting five more minutes, I placed the item back and went to another IGC down the street.

The second garden center trip, I had more of a work focus. I was there for about a half hour walking around and snapping photos because they were doing a lot of things really well. Not a single employee, however, even said, "Hello."

I know what you're thinking: "This would never happen at my store." And hopefully it wouldn't!

I have one final anecdote that came from a recent first date (because isn't that where all

good stories come from?). This man said people always try to talk to him on his train commutes home from the airport because he's in his pilot's uniform.

Instead of getting annoyed, he entertains the conversation because "it could be the only good conversation the person has all day." That's the guy's attitude even when he's off the job! Now if that could be every employee's attitude while at work, I'm sure customers would leave feeling better about the shopping experience.

## being engaging

In the following pages of this issue, you'll find numerous articles focused on ways to engage all customers who walk through your doors.

Lindsay Chrissp from Tagawa Gardens will give you an inside look at what works for the Colorado garden center when it comes to events and community outreach (on page 10).

On page 14, Mason Day will take you through some of the assumptions garden centers make about consumers that really could be detrimental.

Then, gather some great ideas from California Spring Trials displays that can make a strong impact at retail.

Learn how to serve those customers who are stuck on doing the same thing every year as well as those who want to be more adventurous in the garden on page 34.

Lastly, if you're reading this issue before June 16, make sure to apply to become Lawn & Garden Retailer's 2017 Merchandiser of the Year if you haven't already! You can find out all the details at [www.lgrmag.com/merchandiser-of-the-year](http://www.lgrmag.com/merchandiser-of-the-year).




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Abby Kleckler, managing editor

Phone: 616.520.2163 | E-mail: [akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com)

Tim Hodson

Editorial Director  
[thodson@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:thodson@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2161

Abby Kleckler

Managing Editor  
[akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2163

Jasmina Dolce

Green Goods Editor  
[jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2162

Ana Olvera

Assistant Editor  
[aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2171

Allison McKenzie

Multimedia Designer  
[amckenzie@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:amckenzie@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2142

Samantha Orsi

Production Assistant  
[sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2148

Kristina Howell

Creative Director  
[khowell@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:khowell@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2168

## ADVERTISING

Bob Bellew

Vice President, Group Publisher  
[bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2164

Amanda McAdam Brown

Integrated Media Consultant  
[amcadam@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:amcadam@greatamericanpublish.com)  
708.560.4046

Kim Sammartino

Integrated Media Consultant  
[ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com)  
630.901.4735

Felix Schilling

Integrated Media Consultant  
[felixschilling@sbcglobal.net](mailto:felixschilling@sbcglobal.net)  
817.731.9352

Kim Meyers

Classified Ads  
[kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2137

## STAFF

Melissa Gray

Group Marketing Director  
[mgray@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:mgray@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2153

Becky Stovall

Audience Development  
[bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2138

Courtney Coon

Custom Media Editor  
[cculey@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:cculey@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2141

Sally Ostman

Accounts/Billing  
[sostman@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:sostman@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2136

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Bob Wasson

Wasson Nursery

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## CORPORATE

Kimberly Baker

COO  
[kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2135

Matt McCallum

CEO  
[mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com)  
616.520.2133



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