

15 days and counting

Let's say it's June 1. And that makes sense, right? This is the June issue after all and it should have arrived in your mailbox at the beginning of the month. With that said, I have something else to tell you: You have 15 days left until the deadline for this year's Merchandiser of the Year competition. Fifteen days!

I hope you're picking up on my sense of urgency. That's because the winner of this year's competition will bring home our biggest pot of prizes to date — worth over \$3,000. In addition to the prestigious title of Merchandiser of the Year, the winner will receive a \$500 Wholesale Gift Credit and a 15-percent discount for Braun Horticulture's 2014 Catalog offering (1 time), one Dramm One Touch Display (MSRP \$2,200) and a \$500 credit for any MasterTag on Demand purchase.

There's no better time than now to dust off the ol' digital camera or even pull out your smartphone to capture that patio gardening vignette your visual merchandiser worked so hard on or the highly visible, highly informative composter display that actually moved a handful of units.

Turn to page 15 for all of the necessary details needed to get your garden center one step closer to becoming our 2014 Merchandiser of the Year.

good for business

You're not off the hook yet. I wanted to share a couple more reasons — and really seal the deal — on why it's important your garden center gets involved in a contest like this.

As of late, we've heard a lot about how receptive and vocal local media has become toward small, locally owned businesses.

Sheridan Nurseries knows this firsthand.

In "Did Somebody Say Party?" on page 14, we interviewed Sheridan Nurseries' President Karl Stensson about his company's efforts to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2013.

Leading up to the big year, Karl said Sheridan Nurseries intentionally entered more award competitions than usual — anything to help them maximize the visibility of the Sheridan brand during their yearlong celebration — and it worked, helping them end up in local newspapers, horticultural publications and even a Dutch trade magazine.

group training

Maybe the publicity doesn't do it for you. Maybe what you need is a project. For the 2012 Merchandiser of the Year winner, The Great Outdoors of Austin, Texas, entering the competition turned into an exercise in team building and employee trust.

Drawing inspiration from the classical elements, The Great Outdoors' staff produced four related displays — Earth, Air, Fire and Water — built over one week in June.

In a 2012 interview, General Manager Merrideth Jiles told us, "Brainstorming sessions are something we do quite often. Whether it's early in the day before the rush or after work and over a beer, I find this the best way to get everybody on board with all of their unique ideas."

Profit-driving prizes, a little positive publicity or a chance to build some camaraderie. There are only good reasons to enter the 2014 Merchandiser of the Year. Fifteen days and counting. So, what you waiting for? **L&GR**




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