

SKY'S SECOND EFFORT

Amid a record number of entries, Sky Nursery created a "Homegrown Market" to successfully defend its crown as Merchandiser of the Year.



A little offseason trendspotting can do a world of good for your garden center displays. It might even make you Lawn & Garden Retailer's Merchandiser of the Year. Just ask the creative staff at Sky Nursery in Shoreline, Washington, who drew inspiration from consumer trends that capitalized on the handmade movement to create a display called the Homegrown Market.

Finding success with shoppers by putting a fresh spin on well-established categories, the execution of Sky's merchandising efforts also made quite an impression on our judges panel, earning this Pacific Northwest retailer the right to be named Merchandiser of the Year for the second year in a row.

"The thought process and campaign development for the Homegrown Market began at the beginning of January," says Joseph Abken, general manager at Sky Nursery. "That's when we were looking at Pinterest, researching trends, keeping track of what's popular with consumers."

Its Merchandiser of the Year submission noted Sky customers "are looking for interesting additions to their edible landscape, plants that add variety and intrigue to the food and drinks that they handcraft."

Promoting plants for brewing, infusing and fermenting purposes, the Homegrown Market gave ornamental plants "added value" and an "extra

dimension" in the garden.

Whether inside the store, through the greenhouse or into the nursery, Abken says another key to their success was delivering the Homegrown Market theme consistently in other departments, away from the central display.

"This is the first time I feel like we successfully reached into a lot of disparate areas and were able to maintain a cohesive look," Abken says. "All the necessities for edible gardening, plus enticing add-ons, were strategically positioned in each department."

As for becoming the first two-time winner of Lawn & Garden Retailer's Merchandiser of the Year, Abken says the positive news is a "shot in the arm," especially after a long, busy season. "We know what we're doing; we feel good about what we're doing; we're proud of what we have here," he says.

And while we want Sky Nursery to enjoy this win, we can't help but wonder if they have plans to three-peat. Abken says, "Bring it on!" **LGR**

FINAL JUDGMENT...

"This hits a major trend spot on. Ride the wave! There is a societal trend toward local, and food leads the way. As a trend this needs to be pushed hard to capitalize on the interest while it is high, bringing more people into gardening and into the independent garden center where they'll find the goods they want and the information and advice that they need. The display is executed very well with the whole product solution showing the consumer everything they need to be successful."

-Sid Raisch, CEO, Horticultural Advantage

"Their timeliness in capitalizing on the local food trend is a great example of progressive marketing. Its clean and understated use of color helps to modernize the display while keeping a hometown feel."

-Bridget Behe, Professor of Horticultural Marketing, Michigan State University

"The Homegrown Market looks easy to shop, aesthetically beautiful and full of inspiration. I liked how the products were used to create a visual impact, yet can be easily restocked and kept fresh. Very nice."

-Gerry Giorgio, Creative Director, MasterTag

"Although all the displays were visually appealing and thought-provoking, we feel Sky Nursery's Homegrown Market is the most relevant for current trends. It also appears to be the most comprehensive display impacting multiple product groups and emerging customer interests today. We particularly like focusing on not only the aesthetic appeal but also the added value of ornamental plants. Key terms for the consumer included: homegrown, handmade, brewing, infusing, fermenting, etc ... clever and multiple ways to appeal to new interests today."

-Danny Summers, Managing Director, The Garden Center Group

Sky Nursery will receive...

As this year's Merchandiser of the Year, Sky Nursery wins one fully stocked Dramm One Touch Display, \$500 Wholesale Gift Credit and a 15-percent discount for Braun Horticulture's 2014 Catalog offering, and a \$500 credit for any MasterTag On Demand purchase.



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