



GOING TO MARKET

Congratulations to Molbak's Garden + Home, who wowed our judges with its on-trend edibles displays to become Lawn & Garden Retailer's 2015 Merchandiser of the Year.

By Abby Kleckler

The decision of what to put front and center in the store is a difficult one. But for Molbak's Garden + Home in Woodinville, Washington, it made sense to reserve that prime retail space for what's hot right now: veggies.

Debi Colton, visual merchandising manager, and her team transformed nearly 2,000 square feet of former annuals space into Molbak's Market, a one-stop shop for everything customers needed to be successful at growing their own produce.

Here we catch up with Colton who shares what went into crafting the award-winning displays.

LGR: Why did Molbak's Garden + Home turn to farmers markets as inspiration in the garden center?

Colton: The local trend is a trend that's been going on for a long time, but it's becoming more and more important. We live near Seattle with Pike Place Market, which has the best feel and energy, and we like to feed off that.

We wanted to have a destination for our veggies and herbs rather than just have them on tables. We wanted to create an experience.

With that being said, it was natural to feature veggies and herbs up front and center. We've never had them in that location before, and

we wanted it to be welcoming to the folks coming into the nursery.

It was right up front, very welcoming, very current and giving a different vibe to how we looked in years past.

LGR: Was there any trepidation with changing the space so drastically?

Colton: Yes! It was really kind of scary to put a bunch of veggies and herbs up in an area where we typically had annuals.

The whole idea with that is people come into the nursery, and they just see this vibrant burst of color.

This year departing from that and putting a bunch of green up there, we had to ask, "How are we going to get that to pop?"

The bright signage, our big market lighting fixtures and of course our antique tractor helped create a focal point, so it just drew people in. It was important to be able to get that pop with those eye-catching props to help offset the total green of the veggies.

LGR: In the Molbak's submission you mentioned vegetable sales increased 20 percent over last year. Beyond buying, what were some customers' responses?

Colton: The energy was great up near the veggies! Customers had more attention paid to them. They had people answering questions, and it felt like a little vegetable shop within the nursery, instead of it just being on tables, floating out there without its own area.

It was a totally different feeling, and the customers liked that. It seemed like it was full all the time, and it kind of felt like a family affair.

High Praise ...

With a record-setting number of entries, the competition was fierce. Here are a few comments about Molbak's Garden + Home from some of our judges.



"Looking to farm markets for inspiration is brilliant because they are so trendy and appeal to younger demographics. Kudos to Molbak's for bringing the experience to lawn and garden sales!"

Bill Calkins, retail business manager, Ball Horticultural Co.



"The bold blocks of primary colors (red tractor, yellow wheels, blue containers) grabbed my attention. The chalkboard sign helped me realize why the tractor was there – to grow food – and the angle of the display helped visually direct me into the space. Additional displays were oriented to the farm theme and continued the use of primary colors. Displays were full but not cluttered, and there was ample space around which to walk. The use of humor (Picka Pecka Peppers) was fun."

Bridget Behe, professor of Horticultural Marketing, Michigan State University



"Dedicating a large space to the veggie and herb category with a farmer's market theme and creative displays supported with simple chalkboard and vintage signage definitely made a statement to the consumer that Molbak's believed in this category. I also liked the project merchandising on the displays, presenting all of the various products – plants and hardlines – together to help make the consumer successful."

Stan Pohmer, business consultant, Pohmer Consulting Group



"The farmers market is right on trend and Molbak's exploded and capitalized on it by placing their herbs and veggies front and center in an expanded space – high interest, turns, margins and profit!"

Sid Raisch, CEO, Horticultural Advantage

LGR: You mentioned the Molbak's Market display ran through July. What has taken its place? Will it return?

Colton: This 1900-square-foot wood structure is a great showplace area. Right now we have patio tropicals in there for the end of summer.

We're definitely going to build on Molbak's Market, and I think one thing we've learned is the whole "shop within a shop" works.

We were able to cross merchandise other things

such as soils, amendments and all of the supplies, where we could only do so much before because it was located within a whole other category adjacent to annuals.

We need to look at how we can do something similar next year, not only in the Molbak's Market but also in another area.

We are figuring out how we can pull it off and create that boutique feel in other areas to offer a complete solution. **LGR**

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A Word From Our Sponsors:

As Merchandiser of the Year, Molbak's Garden + Home will receive a \$500 Wholesale Gift Credit and a 15 percent discount for Braun Horticulture's 2015 Catalog offering (one time) and one fully stocked Dramm 60410 Display (MSRP \$2,869).

"For the cross merchandising style, it was well thought out with a great use of the color palette. We also felt using a 360-degree merchandiser display captured all angles when selling in such a wide-open concept," says Robert Burton, Braun Horticulture.

"They have created a very clean and open area. Very easy to shop. That tractor is very eye-catching! They did a fantastic job of cross merchandising," says Jessica Reinhardt, Dramm.