

# MERCHANDISING MAVENS

Take a look at the five finalists for our 2015 Merchandiser of the Year competition.

**T**he 2015 Merchandiser of the Year competition is winding down with five retailers still in the running for the top honor. This year was the most competitive yet, with a record-setting number of entries.

The retailer who comes out on top will receive more than \$3,000 in prizes from the competition's sponsors: Braun Horticulture and Dramm.

Here's a closer look at the inspiring finalists.

## THE WINNER RECEIVES

As Merchandiser of the Year, the 2015 winner will receive a **\$500 Wholesale Gift Credit** and a **15 percent discount** for Braun Horticulture's 2015 Catalog offering (1 time) and one fully stocked Dramm **60410 Display** (MSRP \$2,869).

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Find out next month which garden center will win over our judges and take the top spot.

## MOLBAK'S GARDEN + HOME WOODINVILLE, WASHINGTON

Molbak's visual merchandising team took inspiration from local farmers markets as well as the famous Pike Place Market in Seattle to create an exciting backdrop to merchandise vegetables, herbs and complete solutions for edible gardening.

For spring 2015 Molbak's set up a new, front-and-center location for vegetables and herbs at the front entrance of the nursery. An existing 1,920 square-foot, covered wood structure, previously used for annual color, was converted to everything customers need to be successful at growing fresh produce at home.

Prior to this year, vegetables and herbs were merchandised on tables in a very basic A-Z library. Now, the focus is on capturing the essence of the "grow-your-own experience" through displays and presentation.

Fixtures, signage, props and cross merchandising all play a role. Employees used rustic spools with cedar vegetable market stands to display product. Eight vintage industrial market lights were added for an authentic feel, painted bright red for a pop of color. At the entrance to "Molbak's Market" was an original antique Massey Harris Tractor, a big attention grabber.

Two types of signage were incorporated. The first was a colorful chalkboard for the entrance sign, as well as beautifully executed vegetable chalk art. The second type of signage was set on top of wooden plant tables. The sign holders are a unique design made of galvanized pipe.

Sales increased 20 percent over last year. Cross merchandising soils, amendments, fertilizers, gardening supplies and accents have all played a role in these displays' success.





# MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR — FINALISTS

## SKY NURSERY SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

Sky Nursery's storewide "Garden Wild" campaign ran during peak season, May through mid-June. Five main display areas represented variations on the wildlife gardening theme and were united through unique, brand-focused signage and a rustic aesthetic.

At the entry to the store was a large "Garden Wild" display, utilizing attention-grabbing color combinations, textures, new and interesting plant material and hard goods. Sky Nursery featured plants from each department including trees, annuals and perennials, yet kept the palette simple to feel inviting and shoppable.

The "Bee Wild" display in the central area of the greenhouse highlighted the current trend of gardening for wildlife. This display featured plants to attract bees, hummingbirds and butterflies. Responding to customer concern, they featured plants in this area that were grown free of neonicotinoids, and included informational handouts with plant lists for customer reference.

The "Eat Wild" display highlighted unique and unusual vegetables and edible flowers.



The "Woodland Wild" display at the entry to the tree and shrub area was inspired by the wild aesthetic of the Pacific Northwest, with a mix of woodland, native and shade-loving plants along with basalt columns and other rugged-looking hard goods.

For a different take on West Coast Wild, the "Desert Wild" display inspired by the sleek architectural nature of Yuccas, Opuntia and

Agaves, contrasted with the rough, weathered Pacific Northwest look. This aesthetic appeals to a growing portion of Sky Nursery customers who have relocated from California. The display included more winter-hardy cultivars and succulent-specific soil and fertilizer for add-on sales.

This campaign contributed to a record-breaking May.

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## MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR — FINALISTS

### OAKLAND NURSERIES COLUMBUS, OHIO

This spring, Oakland Nursery gave its main walkway, visible to all who passed by, a pop of color. The purpose of this display was to feature seasonal gift shop merchandise and annual shade planters. Look a little closer, and you can see playful bunnies popping up from the calla lilies in the raised bed and hiding in the fern.

Michael J. Reineck, buyer and display coordinator for the gift shop department, designed and installed the display. He chose the color scheme to play off the carrots in the baskets of the bunnies. The orange patio trio set the tone with blues and greens as accent colors.



The watering bunny was created with a garden hose connected to a small fountain pump and positioned to recirculate the water like he was filling up the fountain.

Reineck says the display provoked many comments on how "cute" and "adorable" the bunnies were. It also made the customers look at the merchandise and flowers with a different vision, possibly, in their own gardens. The caladiums sold, the stately fountain sold that day, two Farmer D Organics raised beds sold that weekend, and all 12 of the crow fountains sold out.









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# MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR — FINALISTS

## EBERT'S GREENHOUSE VILLAGE IXONIA, WISCONSIN

Ebert's in southeastern Wisconsin is in the heart of a small farming community, which drives the retailer's combination of rustic charm with a playful modern twist.

This year, Ebert's created a barn display that reflected its beginnings as a vegetable farm in the 1970s. The feel continues with the current rural, farm-like atmosphere over 55 acres.

The farm shed was employee-built out of recycled barn wood, fence panels and old pallets. It was located at the entrance of Ebert's and set the tone for the rest of the visit.

Ebert's Greenhouse Village stays true to its roots with each vignette telling a story through color and texture.

Displays reflect the vision of a handful of employees working together to serve a variety of customers: from the farm display for the rustic-minded customers to the nautical display for customers on the surrounding lakes to the condo dweller.

Customers routinely shop from the displays in hopes of re-creating the idea in their own backyards. Ebert's employees say they are determined to inspire customers, to ignite the same passion they have for plants and other hardgoods alike.





**SPENCER’S LAWN AND GARDEN CENTER**  
**FOUNTAIN, COLORADO**

This Candyland-inspired display was featured at Spencer’s Lawn and Garden Center’s 2015 Garden Success Show, held annually at the Fountain, Colorado location in early March. It was featured in the greenhouse as the final piece before visitors left the garden show to give color inspiration and encourage customers to purchase from the floor.

The theme was a result of several people’s ideas from Hardy Boy Plants to reuse elements from previous years’ displays. A spinning turntable from a Christmas theme became a carousel for a carnival theme, which became a fun element for Candyland. Once the wooden structures were set up, they were surrounded with full color annuals and decorative garden art.

Pictures of the display featured in a monthly newsletter brought people back throughout the spring and summer, asking where the display was and how they could take a walk in Candyland. People enjoyed the color blocks of Hardy Boy Plants that were featured and purchased those, or similarly colored plants, for the same effect in their own gardens. **LGR**



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