

THE FAB FIVE

While the judges are in deliberation to pick a winner, check out the finalists for our 2012 Merchandiser of the Year competition.

Feeling the Elements

The Great Outdoors, Austin, Texas



In the heart of Texas, the creative team at The Great Outdoors created a series — Earth, Air, Fire and Water — of displays around the garden center. Key merchandising people met and came up with the theme, then each chose an element they wanted to represent — coincidentally, the themes they chose matched their personalities perfectly.

The purpose of the displays is completely inspirational. They were built over the course of one week in June. The displays are intended to stand alone, with the hopes that some of the “sharper” customers will make the connection.

The *Earth* display features a terrarium and terrarium plants. It is located just inside the entrance to the store. It was created by Brandi Cherry with a touch of assistance from Merrideth Jiles.

Air (pictured) is located in the retailer’s gift shop where the structure was needed. The display features wind chimes, wind twirlers, and other wind powered gifts. It was created by Jill LaVigne and Jeremy French.

Fire is featured against the fireplace of its main structure. It is a very visible area, but it is also a show stopper. The display highlights cacti, succulents and native perennials — all perfect for frying in the Central Texas sun. It was created by Mariah-Rae Vincent with help from “the boys.”

Water was featured in a slightly out-of-the-way location beside our plant health shed. It is a cool location in the shade with natural blue tones from the tree shade. It features water features, statuary, and plants all reminiscent of what’s under the sea. Kelly Nalle created this display with help from Kyle Stoutenger.

Panel of Judges



Bill Calkins,
Ball Horticultural Co.



Stan Pohmer,
Pohmer Consulting Group



Amadeu Pacheco,
Braun Horticulture Group



Lloyd Traven,
Peace Tree Farm



Carmen Johnston,
Nectar & Co.

Unique Plants, Exploited

Bowood Farms, St. Louis, Missouri

New for 2012, Bowood Farms planned a dedicated succulent/sedum department. This St. Louis IGC grew 90 percent of the plants at its farm and wanted to create a department just for these unique plants. It featured a bench in which quart pots were set in and mixed up tapestry-style. The tapestry look let customers see how exciting sedums, succulents and companions can be.

The staff also created a quart sedum combo featuring sedum 'Angelina', blue spruce and tricolored sedum for customers who want to pick up and go. Bowood also featured planted birdhouses, picture frames, and coir troughs. Lastly, for 2012, the grower-retailer also featured tropical sedums and succulents, inside, in its store for those who garden indoors.

This fun staff project went over well with urban-dwelling customers who deal with hot balconies, alleys, and blistering sidewalk beds. This new department also took advantage of the ever trendy vertical gardening as well as the miniature and dish garden trends.



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MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

Awkward Space Seeks New Life

Platt Hill Nursery, Bloomingdale, Illinois



At this Illinois retailer's Bloomingdale location, an area — a covered deck that sits between a side entrance to the greenhouse and a side entrance to the store — that has always been a difficult spot to merchandise gets a new lease on life. This area was often overlooked because it has become a hodge-podge of greenhouse and store overflow.

In June, Joey Giometti-Marciniak and Chris Sieff decided to use the area for inspiration and creativity. Because of all the wood in the space, it was the perfect

location to feature Platt Hill's terra cotta clay pots and accessories.

Previously this section was rarely shopped, and interestingly enough, there were customers shopping in the area while it was being worked on. Even in the extreme heat, shoppers stopped to walk through the new nook.

Inspirational Planting Puns

Dean's Greens, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey



Designed by Leslie Boss, the display "We're a Shoe In For Your Next Planting" brings creativity and fun to the minds of customers while exploring the world of imagination. The intent of the display is to showcase the different ways that annuals, perennials and succulents can be harmoniously used together to make a creative planting.

The use of shoes is a fun way to display imagination and give customers ideas about being creative on their own as well by simply using items in their own homes. The display definitely puts a new twist on stepables and shows customers that

Dean's Greens likes to stay "a step ahead."

All of the shoes were purchased from a local Salvation Army family store. Holes were drilled in each shoe and filled with planting medium before a selection of perennials, annuals and succulents were added. This display is showcased in a newly built greenhouse on a main display table and customer responses to it have been fantastic.

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MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

Selling Eco-Concepts

Gardens of Babylon, Nashville, Tennessee



For years, Gardens Of Babylon's mission has been to educate its customers on how to incorporate sustainable practices into their environment. These practices are woven into the company's landscape displays to create ideas for customers to be inspired, then, weave new ideas into their own living spaces.

This March 2012 display was designed by co-owner Mark Kerske with pieces sculpted from previous years' past displays. It was featured locally at the Nashville Lawn & Garden Show and Bloomin Garden show, woven into one example of what a sustainable, toxin-free living space will look like.

Kerske and staff chose to accent vertical gardening, raised bed organic gardening and sustainable hardscape material all incorporated into a small display space, something customers can visualize in their own backyards.

Gardens of Babylon's landscape division installed the landscape material with soil created from premium topsoil, sand, and worm castings. During installation, bio-tone, liquid humates, fish and seaweed were incorporated to feed the soil. The cedar, which was used to construct the cabana, table, vertical garden support structure, and raised beds, was harvested and sawn within 60 miles of the site. Metal, that was used to surround the raised water trough and catch the flowing water from the table, is recycled barn roof.

The display is located among the IGC's retail offerings, which includes vegetable and herb starts, organic fertilizers, raised bed kits from its Personal Farmer division, tropical plants and support trellises and bamboo supports.

The Winner Receives

In addition to the prestigious title of Merchandiser of the Year, the winner will receive a \$500 Wholesale Gift Credit and a 15% discount toward Braun Horticulture's beautiful 2012 catalog offering. The winner will also be featured in the September issue of *Lawn & Garden Retailer*.

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