

a customer's perception

I drove out to Rockford, Illinois, to visit my mom on Mother's Day this year, and I barely got through the door before she said she wanted to head to the garden center to get her plants for the year (I'm working on getting her to plant during other seasons, but I digress for now).

On the drive to the nearest IGC, she made a comment that surprised me. "I really don't like hanging baskets," she said.

Obviously I couldn't leave that statement alone and probed a little further. Her complaints were that "all the pots looked the same" and "every one had too similar of flowers."

This conversation came full circle in an opportune way when the very next week I was on the phone with Crystal Cady, owner of Sunflower Acres Farm & Garden in Salem, Oregon.

Crystal was talking about how they really excel at baskets, and customers are responding.

When they go to the farmers market, she says it's not uncommon that all of their baskets have been sold at the end of the day while many right down the way are still hanging even though they had a lower price tag.

Flip to page 12 to read about why this is the case.

On page 16, you'll find some of the latest introductions from this year's California Spring Trials. I don't want to give anything away, but some of these varieties would be great for livening up hanging baskets.

I'd like to think that as I wandered the garden center with my mom, I changed her mind a bit. And it was a good thing because

my brother walked in with a hanging basket for her Mother's Day gift later that day.

a reason to celebrate

This May I visited more than a dozen garden centers in Minnesota, which you can see highlights from on page 50. Two that I toured were celebrating big milestones: Dundee Nursery & Landscaping is celebrating 70 years, while Waldoch Farm Garden Center has been in business for a century.

Does your business have a big event coming up? Here are some ideas from them.

A local TV station came out and did a story on Dundee that didn't cost them a penny. The response was strong, and when customers came in after seeing the news, they were welcomed with banners and marketing reinforcing the celebration.

Waldoch Farm created a "100 Years and Growing" logo for its anniversary, which can be found on T-shirts, hats and social media. Sticking with the theme, the first 100 people in the door on an April weekend got one of the shirts for free.

The IGC Show Chicago is also celebrating an anniversary this year. Turn to page 26 to read about its 10 years of success and how to get in on the party this year.



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