

# handcrafted buzzwords

Today, there are more than 1.7 million active sellers on Etsy, an e-commerce website geared toward creative entrepreneurs. The products are often described as unique, handmade, one of a kind and artisan.

People are hooked. There are more than 27 million active buyers on the site, and I must admit that I'm one of them.

Where else could I have found six different customized wine glasses with the city and states illustrating my friend and her husband's military relationship for a housewarming gift?

How could I have passed up a cute mug with "there, they're and their" for a fellow grammar stickler? What about a clock made of a computer hard drive and circuit board for a self-proclaimed tech nerd?

I have happily spent quite a bit of money at Etsy shops. I even have to say I have sent one of the thousands of air plant creations they have to a friend across the country.

My motivation for shopping on the website is that each of the gifts seems to tell a story. This quality, however, can be true in your garden center as well.

When on the phone with Jared Hughes, owner of Groovy Plants Ranch in Ohio, he said he's found a lot of people his age are shopping on Etsy for the same reasons I am — and yes, I do fit into the same late 20s age group.

What got me excited, though, were some of the ways he is responding to this interest in unique items.

He's been playing with plant breeding and has rolled out some of his F1 hybrids as exclusives to his garden center. He's also marketing his plants as "craft grown" because almost everything at retail has been hand-planted by Jared himself.

Turn to page 26 to read about more of his ideas. In the same article, "Open for Business," you'll find the story of Chris Williamson who recently purchased Piedmont Feed and Garden Center in North Carolina and has discovered some great ways to get new customers in the door.

### make it better

From Etsy-inspired marketing to shops with character, personalization is key.

This issue has a trifecta of articles focused on optimizing the experience from the time shoppers drive by in their vehicles until the time they're standing in your checkout line.

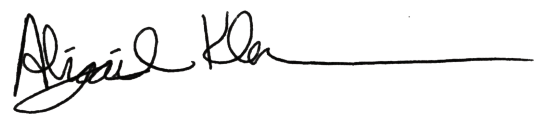
Each article comes at the topic from a completely different perspective, and all three are worthy of your time.

First, on page 12, Bridget Behe from Michigan State University puts recent eye-tracking research to work and gives you recommendations based on the findings.

Do customers shop from simple or complex displays? Should the price be on the left or right side of a sign, or does it depend on the number? How far ahead are people looking at any given time? She has all your answers.

Then, turn to page 18, to read Lauren Snyder's ideal vision for retail. She comes at the topic as a former garden center employee and young consumer in the industry. You won't want to miss her ideas for fun signs, creative social media and inspiring recipes.

After that, head to page 66, for how columnist Christina Salwitz finds ideas from browsing magazines, Pinterest and other retailers. She has some key takeaways to spice up your displays.



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