



Check out the final six garden centers in the running for Lawn & Garden Retailer’s 2017 Merchandiser of the Year competition.

By Abby Kleckler

Each year our Merchandiser of the Year competition continues to grow, and this year was no different. We had a record-setting number of entries. From showstoppers at the entrance, to gift shop creations sure to turn heads, to creative ideas in the greenhouse, the entries spanned every aspect of the garden center. A panel of judges continues to deliberate on who will be crowned the 2017 Merchandiser of the Year in our September issue. Here’s a quick look at the impressive finalists.

Al’s Garden and Home
WOODBURN, OREGON

Every year the visual team at Al’s Garden and Home creates a plan to carry through the seasons. This year they are focusing on pollinators as that is a topic on all gardeners’ minds these days. Displays were implemented in January and continued throughout the following few months during the busy spring season.

Butterflies were selected as a visual element to show customers the vital role they play in pollination. The visual team for the nursery created all sizes of butterflies out of foam core, cardboard, wire and different materials to add texture. They were painted bright oranges and blues.

The goal is to draw people into and through the store with your eyes dancing from visual to visual. The large displays are placed to achieve this, and end caps carry the theme through the store. In the nursery area appropriate plants are used in displays.

Customer response has been wonderful. Shoppers all loved the butterflies and asked questions in regard to pollination.

They are carrying pollination through into the store’s summer theme with installs of large bees and honeycombs created out of different materials that add depth and texture.



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As Lawn & Garden Retailer’s 2017 Merchandiser of the Year, the winner will receive the Dramm 60116 Display, which retails for \$2,778, and a \$500 Wholesale Gift Credit and a 15 percent discount for Braun Horticulture’s 2017 Catalog offering (one time). Thank you to our sponsors.

MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR — FINALISTS

Angie's Greenhouse

COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA

Angie's Greenhouse uses a variety of old vehicles to create fun displays. They have an old milk truck parked out by the highway that is their sign with flowers planted under the hood. An upside-down tree sits behind it and the flowers are planted up in the root ball. It has been such a popular display that they had to put a registered trademark on it and it now has four sculptural copyrights. People were taking pictures of it and three puzzles were created as well as calendars, shower curtains and bedspreads.

A new display this year to go along with the theme was created for Father's Day and features fun signs and different things dad might like. They used an old truck, which was cut in half by the owner's husband. Old bins from a hardware store were used to create flower boxes behind the cab, and an employee planted flowers in the bumper and added many finishing touches to the display. A display next to the truck has berry plants for dads with a sign stating, "We love you berry much."



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MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR — FINALISTS

Sky Nursery

SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

When Sky Nursery decided to feature edible plants for 2017, they knew they wanted to do something unique. They hoped to inspire customers to think outside the 4-by-6 raised bed, and to blur the lines between edible and ornamental gardening.

Located along the main walkway in a large greenhouse, the Cottage Garden display ties together edibles, perennials, edible trees and shrubs, and annuals both spatially and conceptually.

A locally crafted potting shed with an old-fashioned cottage look creates a visual centerpiece of the display. White picket fences and wooden furniture add to the vintage feeling, while whimsical garden art brings the display into the present and adds eye-catching splashes of color.

Both the plant selections and the layout continually evolve through the seasons. The Cottage Garden is very interactive. They wanted to connect with all customers, whether they are seasoned gardeners or just getting started. Beautiful handmade signs guide customers through the space and provide inspiration. The display also features a vegetable gardening information hub, which includes a dynamic representation of which vegetables are currently in season at Sky, as well as a selection of free information sheets.



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MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR — FINALISTS

Molbak's Garden and Home

WOODINVILLE, WASHINGTON

At Molbak's Garden and Home, the focus has historically been on women for inspiring customers and capturing sales. But buyers saw the opportunity to tap into male product categories, and a "Gifts for Guys" area was born during the 2015 holiday season. This section has continued to increase in square footage and prominence since then.

This display was set up the third week of May for Father's Day 2017. The "bones" of the display are constructed from masculine fixtures layered to create multiple surface areas designed to showcase gift ideas for dad. A reclaimed wood workbench anchors the center of the display, while a vintage salvaged metal locker placed behind it holds personal care items, books and other gifts and gadgets. A pegboard painted gray is suspended above the display, reinforcing the workbench concept while also showcasing dad's favorite flannel shirt.

It capitalizes on Molbak's Northwest location by highlighting the outdoorsy man with signs that replicate popular trail markers painted and placed throughout the display. Even during the initial set up, the display was attracting a crowd — especially men. The sports section was a particularly strong seller right out of the gate (Seattle-ites love their Seahawks!).



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Alden Lane Nursery

LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA

In sunny California, Alden Lane Nursery is in the middle of the “Summer of Love” celebration. They are remembering 50 years of flower power from 1967 to 2017.

This display at the front entrance of the nursery was created to get customers excited about summer gardening and put some “flowers in your hair.” The “Summer of Love” evokes the free spiritedness of a colorful era and sets the tone for whimsy in the garden.

Watering cans in bright colors were used as the basis for the color palette. They are a symbol of gardening that everyone can relate to. The repurposed yellow Volkswagen door makes a perfect signboard for this theme. Customer’s reactions have been great.



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Gulley Greenhouse

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

Gulley Greenhouse decided to change their gift area this year to include vignettes of their different styles of living gift arrangements from succulents to house plants, vases to terrariums, and so much more.

A family friend gave Gulley some glass windows from an old hotel, and they just knew they needed to incorporate them into their design.

They were then able to find recycled corrugated metal siding from a torn-down barn in eastern Colorado, which completed the look. Customers could not believe the change, and the response was immediate.

The walls focus the space, while the windows keep the airy, open feeling that is so important in a garden center. **LGR**



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