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Steps to Better Store Signage

Now's the time to improve your garden center's signs before the spring rush.

By Kurt Fromherz

Whenever I talk about signs with a garden center retailer, the first thing I ask them to do is to take the 360° test: stand anywhere in your retail space and take a slow spin, counting the number of places you see your logo or branded identity. I joke that, in many instances, a consumer might think they are at Monrovia Nursery.

If this sounds like your retail space, then it might be time for a makeover. Spring will soon be upon us, so there is no time like the present to get started.

Here are a few simple ways to start the process.

1 Clear the clutter. Spring is a perfect time to take on a review of your store layout. The first order of business is to remove everything (as much as is possible) from existing fixtures or display areas. You can also take this opportunity to perform a purge of any products that are doing nothing more than taking up space. Create three categories: keep, clean up and dump. Make sure you keep track of anything you might toss; you can take these items as a business loss.

2 Define the sight lines. Now that you have cleared the deck, try to experience your garden center as a customer might. Start from the parking lot. Is it clear where you should enter and exit? Where are the carts? Is the checkout area obvious and fit the natural flow? Once customers enter

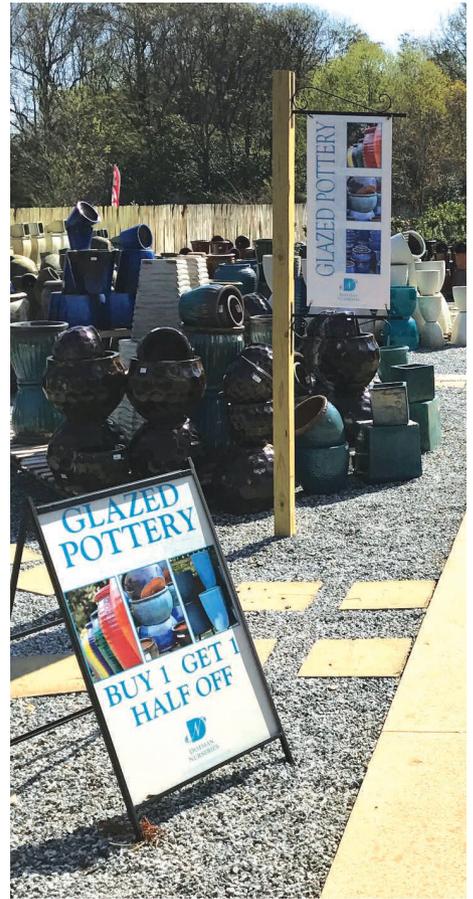
either the store or nursery area, is there a walkway that helps to move them through the shopping experience? If you answer “no” to any of these questions, then that is a good place to start. Again, clear the clutter, move fixtures or displays out of the way. You can move back what you need and again, determine if you need to purge.

3 Establish a style. A good way to begin to establish your brand is to establish a style sheet of sorts. Identify elements like your color palette, approved logos, typeface, images and graphics. You should establish a template of sorts not only to ensure your presentation is consistent throughout the store, but also with your other marketing such as website, print, and even social media. Each element of your store signage should contain the basics: logo, graphics, color scheme and photos.

4 Focus on the message. Show, don't tell. Each sign is going to have its unique purpose; some will be used to identify departments, while others to help direct shoppers. Other signs will be to call attention to specific promotions — whether seasonal, product specific or promotional.

Are you decorating your store, or displaying your product?

A display should have three key elements: fixtures, sign and product. If any one of these elements is



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missing, it isn't a proper retail display.

Each display should have a clear purpose and either inform a purchase decision or inspire customers to take on a project or try something new.

Sight Lines and Placement

Department signs (18 inch by 40 inch verticals) are typically placed to be read from 25-40 feet in distance, A-frames from 6-8 feet and table tops from 2-3 feet.

All signs should be completely visible and not obscured by plants or other signs. Think of your department signs as the street signs dividing your walkways. A-frames are used as end caps and variety signs are used on table tops. The closer you get the customer to the product, the more specific information you can provide.

Fixtures

Investing in the right infrastructure can make all the difference in the presentation of your signs. Outdoor sales yards should be equipped with sign posts, A-frame sign holders and table top

sign holders. We recommend using 4 foot by 4 foot posts that are sunk and secured with concrete to hold your department signs. These signs are typically 18-24 inches wide by 40-48 inches tall. They are typically secured to a yard arm with zip ties and grommets on four corners.

A-frames should be metal or sturdy plastic and typically hold a 24-inch by 36-inch sign (we use both Corex for short term signs as it is less expensive and Sintra for long-term use).

The Silent Salesperson

With an educated workforce harder to come by, signage in your store is more important than ever. Signs can deliver a consistent message, they never take a day off and they really make your garden center look good.

You should also make sure your signs provide a simple answer to a simple question. Think of your signs as your most informed salesperson — someone who has the right answers to the basic questions. A strong message would include why customers need it, how to use it and how much it costs.



Each sign display should have a clear purpose.

Vendor Support

While it might seem contradictory to the 360° test, you can instantly augment your signage budget by taking advantage of POP material from either your hard goods or green goods vendors. When used selectively to promote products that are unique to your market or the independent garden center channel, you can really stretch your dollars. Many vendors also offer cooperative advertising dollars for signs that promote their products. Check with your sales representative to see what your garden center might be eligible for.

COVID-19 Signs

There are many resources for signs reminding your customers to use masks, practice social distancing or other customer limitations. We offer customized design at Sunrise Marketing, but many templates are available for free downloads. While the vaccine is on the way, it might be another year before shopping gets back to normal; be prepared.

If you need help with your store signage, contact us and we'll walk you through the process and help you with your project. Visit www.sunrisemarketing.com/contact-us for more. 🌊

Kurt Fromherz is the founder of Sunrise Marketing, a marketing firm specializing in IGC and nurseries. With over 35 years of industry experience Kurt has written for many trade publications and spoken at many industry events. Sunrise Marketing is celebrating 27 years in business this year.