



MERCHANDISING TIPS

to Sell More Pollinator-Friendly Goods

Proven Pollinators is a new initiative that is generating quite a buzz in test markets.

By Jessica DeGraaf

More than a buzz word or a passing fad, pollinators and the important role they play in our ecosystems and food web have finally reached critical relevance. While significant focus has been placed on bee populations and the pollination of food crops, we've also seen huge interest emerging in monarch butterfly migration patterns. School-aged children are not only learning the life cycle of a butterfly, but also the habitat required to attract them. This

core focus on creating habitat and food source for pollinators transcends the monarch and the bee, providing a massive platform for our industry.

From Pollinator Clubs to focused end caps and displays, garden centers can provide education and, more importantly, the plants necessary to support this movement. The key opportunity lies in creating pollinator buffet displays showcasing annuals, perennials, flowering



vines, and shrubs that provide food and habitat sources from spring through fall.

These spaces can change dramatically throughout the season, providing garden centers with the opportunity to educate customers on the specific pollinator each plant attracts. Pre-made plans for gardens of all sizes ensure that any customer can take part and create a pollinator paradise!

Promoting Pollinators

As a brand, Proven Winners has placed significant emphasis on developing and marketing plants that offer more than beautiful flowers or foliage. We believe that plants have to not only perform exceptionally in the garden, but also offer solutions to common gardening problems and support critical ecosystems. Over the past three years, we've been working on an initiative we call

**"Every third bite of
food, thank a bee or
other pollinator."**

– E.O. Wilson

Proven Pollinators. This program offers a subset of our existing varieties that create food sources and habitat for pollinator populations.

With thousands of new gardeners entering the garden center space, this program offers IGCs the unique opportunity to engage with young families, first-time gardeners and nature lovers over a common cause. In addition to an optional Proven Pollinator container, we also offer free social media graphics, POP designs, and Club Sprout kids gardening projects to help IGCs to market and merchandise the program.

Over the past two seasons, we've partnered with key wholesalers and retailers to test this program in various areas of the country. From these test markets, we saw significant interest from consumers in focused, branded pollinator displays and better sell through of these products.

Home Nursery, Albers, Illinois

Home Nursery is a 100-year-old wholesale nursery that specializes in the production of perennials, shrubs, groundcovers and vines. Hilliary Metzger, director of sales, says, "I think it is very important to not only sell plants that are beautiful, but also provide important ecological functions. Partnering with Proven Winners to sell plants in the Proven Pollinators program helps provide abundant food sources for pollinators, and it is a no-brainer for our garden center customers since the perennials literally fly off the shelves thanks to the eye-catching pollinator pots and signage."

So, how did they sell the program? Home Nursery offered a simple rack program to customers during the month of June to provide product for National Pollinator Week. These pre-made racks were filled with Proven Winners perennials in color, which allowed their IGC customers to quickly unload and merchandise product.

Even better, Home Nursery provided each customer with bench tape, bench cards and posters to fully merchandise end caps or benches of product. Home Nursery had 100% sell through in 2020 and has increased production by 200% to meet demand from their customers in 2021.

Ahner's Florist and Greenhouses, New Baden, Illinois



The team at Ahner's brought in the program and had great results, with 100% sell through, and product was sold at a higher margin than other plants sold in non-branded containers.

"The collection of the plants that was chosen for the Proven Pollinator program was outstanding. It's great when you can get a teaching moment and educate a consumer about plants and the benefits!" says Dawn Ahner.

Additional trials were conducted in the Western states with Proven Winners annuals yielding comparable results — significant interest from consumers, greater sell through and higher price points leading to more dollars per square foot.

Molbak's Garden + Home, Woodinville, Washington



A large Proven Pollinators display featured select Proven Winners annuals, perennials and shrubs. Annuals grown in the Proven Pollinators specialty container were merchandised here and in a separate location in the standard Proven Winners pot. The result: annuals in the Proven Pollinators container outsold the same varieties in the standard pot 2:1.

Windsor's Nursery, Kimberly, Idaho



The annual area of this store was remerchandised for the month of June, including National Pollinator Week. The goal was to sell larger, 1-gallon Royale annuals for a second turn in the space.

The result: customers were immediately drawn to this display upon entering the garden center and the product sold through quickly.

As an industry, we've long discussed how to engage with consumers after the traditional spring season. By focusing on solutions and key topics that interest and engage them, it provides us with a unique opportunity to extend our sales season and educate new consumers on topics that are of significant interest. This is the perfect time to think about how you can incorporate key programs into your mix that not only support our environment and ecosystems, but also the growing group of new gardeners interested in giving back! 🌱

Jessica DeGraaf is a regional account manager for Proven Winners. To learn more about the Proven Pollinators program and how to implement this at your garden center, email jessica@provenwinners.com.