



One of the garden displays in 2011.



The Hamptons-themed garden in 2022.



During the event, Hicks has a special pre-season sale to entice customers to shop early and stock up on spring gardening staples.

Signs of Spring

Hicks Nurseries, Long Island’s largest garden center, kicked off the spring season with its 32nd annual Flower & Garden Show.

By Teresa McPherson

Spring came earlier than usual this year on Long Island, New York, when Hicks Nurseries hosted its 32nd annual Flower & Garden Show in March. Built from scratch each year in a 20,000-square-foot greenhouse, the event provides ample room for visitors to explore the gardens while maintaining a safe distance from others. The production includes over 3,000 plants and 200 different varieties, some of which were forced to bloom in heated greenhouses prior to the show.

Show Origins

Eleni Roselli, director of marketing at Hicks Nurseries, says the show was inspired by a peer group that had several members that hosted a garden expo each spring.

“They would host their vendors and other local businesses for a weekend gardening event. Seeing their success, we decided to give it a try to get customers into the store pre-season and stimulate sales,” she says. “We invited our vendors in to speak directly to our customers and showcase new products. We featured small gardens that accompanied those booths.”

She says the first show started in 1990 as a garden expo over one weekend, and later expanded into two weekends. The second weekend was called the “Horticultural Fair” and featured booths with local gardening clubs and organizations. Thanks to March’s unpredictable weather, the show was then expanded to cover three weekends and the focus was shifted to showcasing the gardens exclusively.



The Flower Show booth that was used from 1992-2003.

Roselli says the show has evolved into the garden center’s signature event, with seven to eight large-scale garden designs in full bloom in the 20,000 square foot greenhouse.

“It is our official kick-off to the spring season,” she says.

Getting the Word out

Roselli says Hicks Nurseries spreads the word about the Flower & Garden Show in a number of ways:

- A press release sent out on the wire to the local region a month before the event
- Pitching the event to local news stations to come cover it
- Email to 40,000 subscribers starting a month before the event and continuously reminding them throughout



A scene from the 2015 Flower Show.

- Mailer to 20,000 customers
- In-store signage
- YouTube video
- Social media campaign using posts, videos and ads
- 30-second TV spot on local news station
- Digital ads on local newspaper website
- Digital outdoor billboard

Connecting with Customers

In lieu of in-person seminars this year, Hicks Nurseries provided educational material on their website and YouTube channel. Garden advice was provided to their customers every day upon request.

In addition, Roselli says they offered sneak peeks of the show on their digital platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok.

Try It Yourself

Roselli has a few tips for garden centers considering holding a similar springtime event. “You need to find what will get your customers excited enough to get out when the weather might not be telling us, ‘It’s time to garden,’”



One of the 2009 gardens.

she says. “Our show gives us the opportunity to get the store set before spring and use that as an opportunity to stimulate customers early in the season. That only works in certain parts of the country, and you don’t need a ‘show’ to do that.

“If you want to hold a similar event, set clear objectives for what you are trying to achieve. Make sure you provide your customers with a ‘wow’ experience when they come into the store, and have a plan to integrate your sales and merchandising into the show experience. Also, given the cost to set up a show, you want to maximize the return on the effort and investment, so consider the length of time you will have it.” 🌸