

WORKING THE CHAIN GAIN



Bridget White, Editorial Director
(847) 391-1004
bwhite@sgcmail.com

Between Martha Stewart's legal troubles, striking grocery workers in California and a ruling to block Target from building in an upscale Atlanta suburb, there's been a lot of backlash about the chain stores in the news lately. Everyone from the federal government to unionized workers to upscale consumers seems to be making a negative statement either about the chains or that will affect the chains.

So what does that mean for us? Can all this chain store backlash actually benefit independent garden centers? Sure, anything's possible, but if we are going to see some real benefit from the current hostile climate, we'll have to understand why people shop at the chains and do something to get them into our stores instead.

TAKING THEIR CUSTOMERS


Can we? That is, can we really take customers from Wal-Mart and Kroger and all the other chains out there? And if we can, do we want to?

Well, we'd be fools not to want more customers, so I guess we really only have to decide if we *can* draw in the chain store customers. After all, this is a pretty loyal group of consumers. They tend to shop at the same store and to do so almost every single week (imagine if we could get some of our customers into the garden center every week...heaven). They spend a tremendous amount of money at their store of choice, often purchasing across multiple categories, for example, sporting goods, groceries, clothing and yes, L&G. And when surveyed, the major reasons they list for choosing a store are convenience and value, notice I didn't say price because these two are not always the same. You know what, for all that we bash the chain stores and their customers, this is a pretty attractive customer profile.

Unfortunately, I don't have any easy, set answers to help you target and win over the chain store's customers. I just wanted to share my realization with you, and that is if it is ever going to

be, the time might now be ripe to launch a campaign to land these customers. There are many people out there unhappy with chains right now, whether it be because they don't want one moving into their neighborhood or they suddenly realize that the chains aren't so good for hourly employees or what; I don't know. I just know that the airwaves are full of a lot of chain store angst right now, and this could be your golden opportunity. All you have to do is show those customers that you too are convenient and provide a value and who knows!

DON'T FORGET

Since May is the busiest month in most garden centers and you'll hardly have time to sleep, much less read a magazine, we'll be taking a break in May and will come back in June to take you through the rest of the summer. Can you believe we're already talking about the end of summer...my how time flies! 

Bridget C. White

Coming in June...

Management:

The basics of making an employee handbook

Ways to increase security in and around your garden center

Off-Season Ideas:

Creating a garden, or garden plants, for rent

Plus:

- modern retro: the new accent
- plants for more than three seasons
- hot international pottery sources

LAWN & GARDEN Retailer

EDITORIAL

Editorial Office:	(847) 391-1004
Bridget White	Editorial Director bwhite@sgcmail.com
Carrie Burns	Associate Editor cburns@sgcmail.com
Catherine Evans	Associate Editor cevans@sgcmail.com
Kelley Murphy	Associate Editor kmurphy@sgcmail.com
Neda Simeonova	Associate Editor nsimeonova@sgcmail.com

ADVERTISING

Sales Office:	(817) 731-9352
Felix Schilling	Account Manager (817) 731-9352 felixschilling@sbcglobal.net
Tami Morrell	Integrated Accounts Manager tmorrell@sgcmail.com
Doug O'Gorden	Integrated Accounts Manager dogorden@sgcmail.com

STAFF

Tim Campbell	Group Publisher tcampbell@sgcmail.com
Judith H. Schmueser	Director of Production Operations jschmueser@sgcmail.com
Scott Figi	Production Manager sfigi@sgcmail.com
Linda L. Lambdin, C.C.P.	Director of Circulation llambdin@sgcmail.com
Erica Rivera	Advertising Coordinator erivera@sgcmail.com
Jody Cardinal	Director of Corporate Communications jcardinal@sgcmail.com
Judy Ann Paul	Sales & Marketing Associate jpaul@sgcmail.com
Donna Aly	Classified Advertising daly@sgcmail.com
Joy Stirling Images	Photo Library Barb Versalle, (231) 894-1774 info@joystirling.com

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dale Bachman	Bachman's Floral Home & Garden
Stan Pohmer	Pohmer Consulting Group
Judy Sharpton	Growing Places Marketing
Steve Vanderwoude	Spring Meadow Nursery
Mitch Whitten	Birding Business
Jack Williams	Ecke Ranch

CORPORATE

Karla A. Gillette	Chair/CEO
Sheldon Schultz	Vice Chairman/COO
Edward Gillette	President
Halbert S. Gillette	Chairman Emeritus (1922-2003)

Lawn & Garden Retailer accepts no responsibility or liability for the validity of information supplied by contributors, vendors, advertisers or advertising agencies.

Subscription Information

Lawn & Garden Retailer magazine (ISSN 1540-9023) is published eight times a year in January, February, March, April, June, July, August and September by



Scranton Gillette Communications, Inc.,
380 E. Northwest Highway, Suite 200,
Des Plaines, IL 60016-2282.
Telephone: (847) 391-1000 Fax: (847) 390-0408.

Subscription rates in the U.S. are \$30 per year (Canada and Mexico are \$50 and all other countries are \$60 payable in U.S. currency). Periodical postage paid at Des Plaines, IL 60016 and at additional mailing offices. Reproduction of contents is forbidden. Copyright 2004.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Circulation Department, Lawn & Garden Retailer, 380 E. Northwest Highway, Suite 200, Des Plaines, IL 60016-2282. PRINTED IN USA.