

HALF-BUILT ON SUCCESS

While finished displays are great, the staff at Hill Country Water Gardens uses a half-built approach to encourage and educate their DIY customers.

By Steve Kainer



Displays in Half Build

Hill Country Water Gardens keeps a lot of pottery in stock — approximately four containers worth — and for good reason. We turn 40 to 50 percent of it into disappearing fountains, which is a top-selling item for us and something we've sold since day one.

Disappearing fountains look great in a landscape or worked into a pottery display, but if a customer is new to the concept, they might not understand how it works and what it takes to get them running.

We introduce this water feature through our half-built disappearing fountain displays.

Basically, this means we've taken a feature that would be installed in a customer's home and instead of showing how the finished project would look, we do not completely install it into the ground. We only cover half of it with gravel, leaving parts exposed that normally wouldn't be. This way customers can see the grates, the mesh and the kit that makes the fountain run.

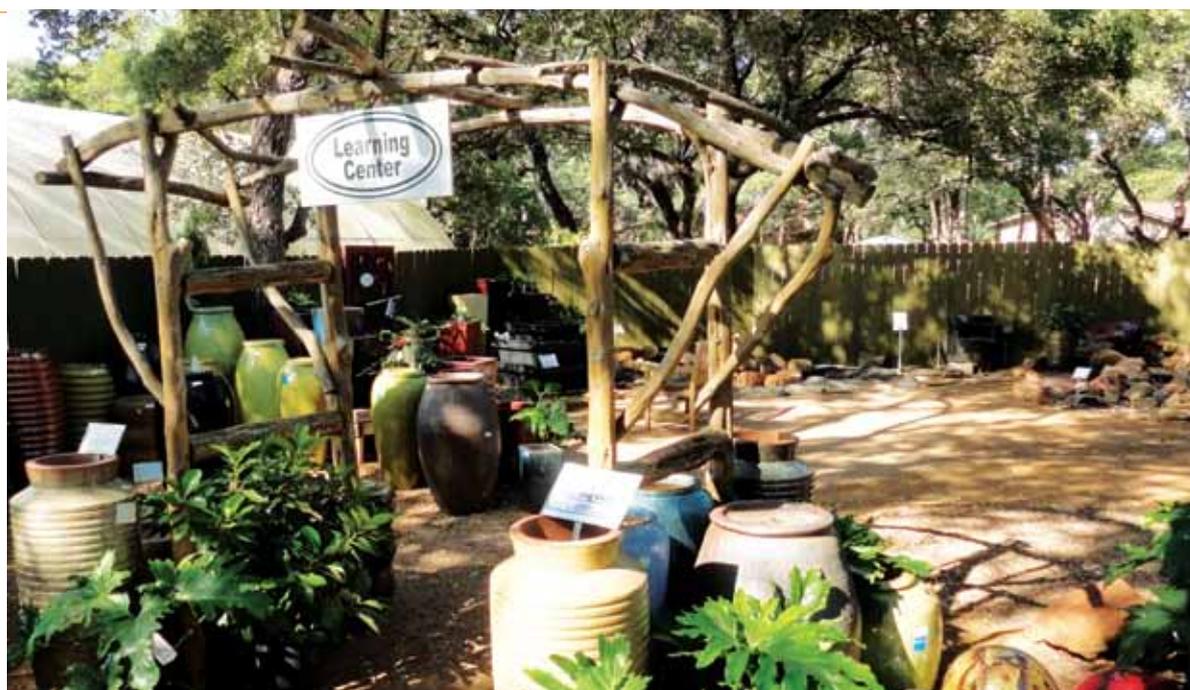
Building Their Confidence

After seeing something day in and day out, year after year, sometimes we can get into the habit of thinking something's stale or obvious. But it can be a very neat thing to witness a customer see a disappearing fountain for the very first time and not quite understand how they work.

Our Learning Center will play host to four to six instructional seminars in the spring and summer on disappearing fountains, which typically draw 30 to 40 people. At any given time, though, this area is also a great sales tool, too.

Set toward the back of Hill Country's layout, ponds, water gardens, half-built disappearing streams and rainwater collection systems are also on display for better understanding.

In this area, customers will walk up to a half-built display and get an easy "aha!" moment and go, "Oh, I get it now."





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MERCHANDISING



Staff of Experts

During the peak season, Hill Country will have 25 to 30 staff on hand. Part of our training is the disappearing fountain's road to a sale. Our staff is great at interacting with customers who are still unsure of how a disappearing fountain works. They'll walk the customer back to our learning center to see the concept "in the works." There they'll receive a pamphlet and checklist detailing the project.

This is a multi-faceted project that includes a reservoir, pump, gravel and the feature, which can be pottery, travertine stones and boulders.



Making Sense

Once customers leave the Learning Center, they are now able to walk the yard with a better sense of how this water feature can work for them.

They'll say, "Okay, now I know how they did that. It's easy enough for us to do it, too."

They also know the cost of the disappearing fountain kit. There's no gray area. All they have to do is add the feature (pottery, travertine stones and boulders) and they'll know exactly what their spending. **LGR**



Steve Kainer is the owner of Hill Country Water Gardens in Cedar Park, Texas. You can reach him at steve@hillcountrywatergardens.com.