

# EXPOSING THE "INNER BIRDER"

These three tips will help develop the wild bird business in your store.

**G**ardening and birding really do go together! Aside from the fact that a love for these pastimes generally indicates an appreciation for the great outdoors, statistically gardeners and birders are both reported to number in the millions. What many don't realize is how easy it can be to merge the two, and in the process, add a new dimension of sales to the equation.

Though there are many tips and tricks to improving your "bird presence," I'm focusing on three foolproof ways to engage the gardeners and birders who are already shopping in your store.

## 1. Visual Aids

They taught us the importance of visual aids as early as grade school when we were drawing pictures of what we wanted to be when we grew up. As we've matured, so has the message.

Customer expectations have changed. In order to stay in the game, so must we.

The use of colorful signs is certainly effective, but the big winner is video. When shopping in-store, customers look for a personal, engaging experience. Video is stimulating and makes the shopper feel involved.

Small business owner Vicki Adrian from the 3,000-square-foot Adrian's Boutique in Buhler, Kansas (population 1,200), is proof that "video sells!"

"We sell beautiful clothing, jewelry, purses, gifts, gourmet foods and ... 1,756 Squeegee Bungee-Jumping Squirrel Feeders since 2013," Adrian says.

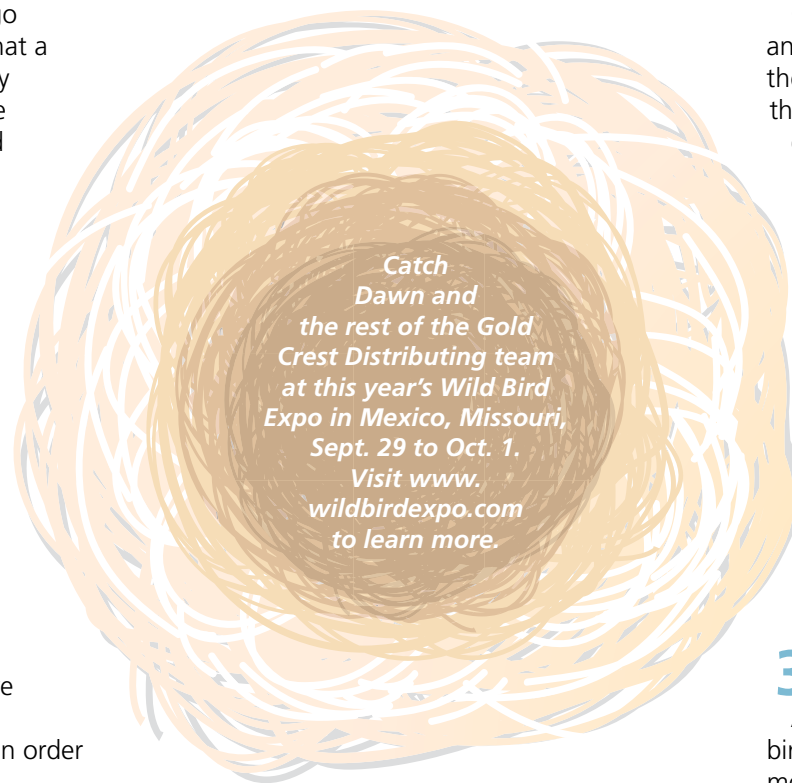
That's more Squeegees than the total population of the town!

How did that happen?

"I came across the Gold Crest booth at the Atlanta Market, and they were playing the Squeegee video. I thought it was hilarious to see those squirrels jumping for corn and thought it would make a good spring item for our store if there was a video available," Adrian says. "The video has been playing in my store every day since I got it in 2013."

How about the space needed to display a video? What about return on investment (ROI) for running a video in the store all day, every day?

"We use exactly 1 foot 2 inches of space with a TV mounted above our display. We face out nine



pegs with the Squeegees, and the video plays all day long. Also, average life of a TV with built-in DVD player is about 4 years. It costs 17 cents per day to run a DVD in your store," Adrian says. "I don't know of an employee who would talk about a product, with passion and enthusiasm, for eight to 10 hours per day at a net cost of 17 cents per day. Pretty good ROI."

If Adrian can sell a backyard nature item in a retail dress shop with the use of video, a garden center store certainly can!

## 2. Plants

This should be a familiar topic. There's no clearer example of how well two hobbies work together since certain plants attract certain birds.

Here are a couple plant/bird combos to help you market the plants you stock to increase your bird business:

- Fruit plants attract fruit eating birds!

Bluebirds, orioles, thrushes, waxwings, woodpeckers and others will visit a backyard featuring a fruit plant including any one of the following: ash, chokecherry, crabapple, dogwood, hackberry, hawthorn, holly, madrone, magnolia, mulberry, serviceberry, sugarberry and fruit trees.

- Hummingbirds are a favorite backyard bird and are wildly attracted to certain plants. Try the following to bring these tiny beauties into the backyard: delphinium, gayfeather, Chilean glory flower, cardinal flower, butterfly bush, flowering tobacco, weigela, foxglove, salvia, yarrow, bee balm, Maltese Cross, hollyhock, Mexican sunflower and Wild columbine.

Speaking of certain birds, why not do a layout in your store by-the-bird? Consumers love the ability to find functional items to attract specific birds, as well as gift items. Plus, focusing on the favorites creates a space showing the consumer everything they need to attract the bird of their choice. Not only does the consumer feel confident about their purchase, but it also makes your store and staff a more knowledgeable and credible resource.

## 3. Get to Know Your Customers

As I mentioned earlier, many gardeners are birders too. Getting to know your customers means identifying their wants and needs. In return, you get loyal customers and more profit.

"Whether a sophisticated shopper or not, both types are equally motivated to buy through 'psychodynamics,'" says Matt Ketcham, customer development specialist with Gold Crest Distributing. "Psychodynamics is the interaction of conscious and unconscious mental and emotional processes as they influence personality, behavior and attitude."

Ketcham says to start by, "Asking questions to learn their psychodynamics. Find who and where your customers come from. Learn to leverage behavior and influence buying."

Discovering your "bird shoppers" makes it easier for you to focus on the products and services necessary to grow your backyard nature department.

Certainly there are many other things you can do to improve your bird department, but by mastering the above three topics, you will see more wild bird consumer business in your lawn and garden retail store. **LGR**

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