

{ LONE STAR } STANDOUTS

From themed display gardens to simple signage strategies, a quick visit to Austin, Texas, and its local independent garden centers provided plenty of useful ideas for you to implement now or next season.

By Pete Mihalek

HILL COUNTRY WATER GARDENS



Every pottery display showcased at least one pot-turned-fountain. Scan the code to learn how Hill Country owner Steve Kainer has taken full advantage of this product niche.

ROUND ROCK GARDENS



Old wooden fence segments get a new lease on life with a fresh coat of paint. Now they serve as the perfect backdrop to a perennials display.



As seen here on this chalkboard sign, important details don't have to be overwhelming.

THE OUTDOOR MARKETPLACE



The Outdoor Marketplace is a brand new, high end operation about an hour east of Austin.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS



Chimney flues and pallets — a little creativity and resourcefulness go a long way with customers in need of a little inspiration or just something different.



An experiment this year, The Great Outdoors decided to forgo sharing retail space with seminar space each spring weekend and created this Spring Seminar Series — a one-day educational event.



THE NATURAL GARDENER



Showing beneficials, problems or anything else under the microscope has proven entertaining and educational for staff, customers and the kids — especially when projected onto a larger screen. Scan the code to watch The Natural Gardener's John Dromgoole explain why he believes organic gardening is the key to reaching younger generations.



Creating aerobically active compost tea in a 100-gallon brewer, the Microbe Brewery is just one example (of thousands) of The Natural Gardener's dedication to organic gardening and its continued awareness. Every Friday to Sunday, a fresh batch of tea is available.



Display gardens outnumber retail space at The Natural Gardener. This herb garden has appeared in a variety of national, consumer magazines. The gardens are designed to show customers organic gardens at work.



Every vegetable sold at The Outdoor MarketPlace can also be found growing in a display bed. At harvest time, the displays turn into a "U-Pick" opportunity.



The organic Lady Bug Brand (www.ladybugbrand.com) was formulated by John Dromgoole, owner of The Natural Gardener. In this square foot gardening blend, John worked with guru Mel Bartholomew.

TREEHOUSE



At this new, Austin-based home improvement store, considerable retail space was devoted to merchandising by brand. Treehouse used chalkboard signage to highlight did-you-knows that make the brand special and stand out from the rest.



Want to see more? Check out complete photo galleries of each stop from Pete's garden center tour in Austin, TX. Just visit our *Lawn & Garden Retailer* Facebook page: www.facebook.com/LGRmag