

## CONSUMER TALK

"Consumer Talk" is a regular column appearing in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer that examines the issues facing today's garden center customers. Our panel of consumers will provide you with insight into their gardening and retail experiences to help you better understand today's customers' needs.

# Embracing Eco Efforts

The environment and its preservation are becoming more and more important to gardeners and other consumers. What do our panelists have to say about the trend toward more sustainable gardening?

### Claudia, 61 Gainesville, Fla.

"The dream yard with a lush, green, weed-free lawn bordered by an English garden is but a dream in these times of water restriction and knowledge of water runoff polluting our ground water and streams. As a gardener, the totally natural yard does not appeal to me. Somewhere in between, there must be a balance.

"I will try to pass over the impatiens in favor of the more drought-tolerant flowers, and I will try to live with a few more weeds in the lawn and use slow-release fertilizer just once a year. Native shrubs and wildflowers have been incorporated into our landscape plan with more to be added. The large flowering pots around the deck now have drip irrigation. That should reduce water usage over dragging a hose around. I do care about the environment and am willing to pay for products that use sustainable practices."



### Marie, 56 Mission Hills, Kan.

"As everyone becomes more environmentally focused, I have also looked for ways to conserve resources and garden in a more environmentally friendly way. I've taken baby steps so far but am looking for more opportunities to be eco-friendly.

"Our summers in Kansas are hot, dry and long, so keeping the landscape watered is a continuing challenge. Last fall we installed a sprinkler system the backyard. We've set the timer so that watering occurs in the early-morning hours. In that way, we can use the water most efficiently. We also put a drip irrigation system in one of the beds, again to conserve water.

"As part of our landscaping project last summer, we expanded the beds in the shade areas of our yard and eliminated a large part of our lawn. In the next 60 days we will mulch all the bed areas, both because I think mulch makes the beds look neat and orderly as well as to conserve the water required for the trees and plants.

"I'm intrigued by the concept of composting but admit that I haven't done any yet. As a weekend gardener, at best, I'm looking for an easy way to compost that will work within my schedule. I've been investigating compost bins or compost tumblers that require little regular effort to effectively make compost. That may be wishful thinking!"



### Sonia, 24 Miami, Fla.

"I am not taking additional steps to be a more eco-friendly gardener this year. However, I realize I have already incorporated several eco-friendly practices, even though my urban garden consists of potted plants on my apartment balcony and does not have much of an impact on the environment.

"I do not use any pesticides or chemicals in my garden to remove pests or encourage growth. To date, I haven't had any problems with pests, but if and when I do, I will use an organic alternative. Additionally, I use plants such as palm and hibiscus that are native to the region. As a result, they thrive without much assistance. And to add light to my garden in the evenings, I use solar-powered LED lights in the soil of my potted plants to add a beautiful, environmentally friendly glow to my garden."



## Questions to Consider

- Do you offer crops that are native to your region? If so, are your customers aware of their advantages?
- Does your garden center carry tools and other utensils to assist customers in composting and irrigating?
- Do your employees offer information on environmentally friendly alternatives to garden chemicals and their benefits?