

CONSUMER TALK

"Consumer Talk" appears in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer to examine 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.

Diamonds in the Rough



We asked our panelists to tell us about their favorite independent garden center. Find out what makes these local gems special and how they keep their customers coming back.

Maria, 52 Chicago

"Lurvey Landscape Supply & Garden Center in Des Plaines, Ill., is my favorite garden center. Their staff is friendly, helpful and very knowledgeable. They have a beautiful selection of annuals, perennials and trees, and anything you need for your garden.

"Whenever I visit this place, I get the 'prefilled' planter boxes; they are pricey but worth it. What I like the most is that they run seminars and special events, which are fun. It's always nice to visit — I found it very relaxing to just walk around and admire the standard offerings as well as the exotic flowers and plants."



Kyle, 30 Crown Point, Ind.

"The Artful Garden in Crown Point, Ind., is definitely my favorite garden center. It's a boutique for your yard. They are not only a garden center but a great gift shop. They have beautiful, unique garden accessories, from hanging baskets to statues, as well as a wonderful selection of flowers (dahlias, geraniums, etc.).

"I remember driving by and seeing this amazing statue outside. It was a 38-inch Savannah Bird Girl statue. I went in for the first time when I saw it, and I have been going back ever since.

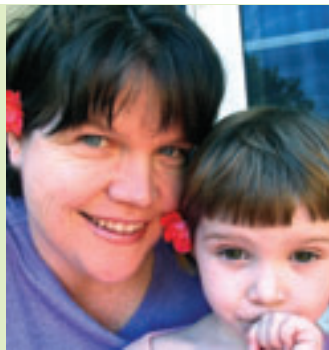
"The best part of this garden center has to be the customer service. If you have a question, they truly go out of their way to help you. If you go to one of the bigger corporate places, a high school kid who doesn't know the difference between a daisy and a weed is your only source of information."



Juliet, 35 Santa Rosa, Calif.

"I have several favorites, but the one I visit most often is King's Nursery in Santa Rosa, Calif. I first found out about it through their wonderful ads — funny little notes in the local paper that tell you when it's time to plant your sweet peas or bulbs or tomatoes. Those reminders keep me on track in the garden and keep me coming into the store.

"The prices are moderate, and the employees know their stuff and will take their time sharing it. Best of all, it is a lovely place to be. The best nurseries make you want to come back even when you don't necessarily 'need' anything — just to see what's blooming and to enjoy a break."



Questions to Consider

- Do you offer products outside the standard plants and containers for the garden? What specialty items do you carry?
- What type of training do you offer your staff? How knowledgeable are they in the various areas of horticulture?
- Do you host events at your garden center to keep customers coming back when they aren't shopping for anything in particular?