

## CONSUMER TALK

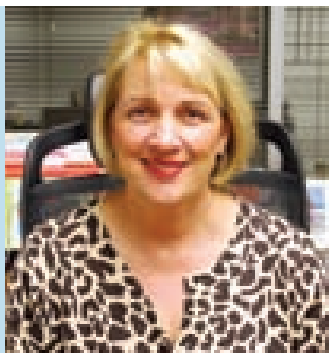
"Consumer Talk" appears in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer to examine the issues facing today's garden center customers. Our panel of consumers will provide you with insight into their gardening and retail experiences to help you better understand today's customers' needs.

# Getting Into the Holiday Spirit

How do you get your customers excited for the holidays? Read what our panelists' favorite garden centers offer — from special sales to hot cider and inspiring displays — during this busy time of year.

### Becky, 49 Dallas, Texas

"The big garden centers always sell Christmas trees out front, which is convenient for people like me. Some of the smaller 'boutique' garden shops go all out! I usually see a lot of beautiful wreaths on display and Christmas lights in the windows. They create many holiday gifts as well."



### Claudia, 61 Gainesville, Fla.

"The weekend following Thanksgiving, the holiday music is playing, Christmas smells are in the air, hot cider is in the urn, and all of the new Christmas merchandise is out and 10 percent off for the weekend. The weekend is advertised on their street sign and in the paper. Year after year, the store draws a constant flow of customers — some buying, others planning their holiday decorations.

"There seems to be a steady flow of customers throughout the holiday seasons. Each day over the weekend, a decorating demonstration is presented using their new merchandise. All the supplies are assembled for the customer to go home and recreate the designers' ideas. Holiday merchandise is reduced before the end of the season, raising the percentage amount the closer the day gets to the 25th. Arrangements and potted plants are displayed in special containers. Mixed flowering plants — some using poinsettias, others with nontraditional holiday plants — are presented as gift ideas along with the general merchandise. The many gift and decorating inspirations makes this a one-stop shopping experience."



### Jeanette, 52 Berwyn, Ill.

"Unfortunately, one of my favorite garden stores is a standalone seasonal store, and except for some cut Christmas trees, they don't offer any garden items or garden decorating items during the holidays or off-season. However, another favorite garden store in my area does stay open most of the season and will have specials during the holidays.

One thing that they do is an open house-type family activities day, where you are welcome to come in and make simple crafts. They will also have hot chocolate and cookies and other simple activities, little things to do while you mingle inside their garden center checking out specialty plants, garden products and possible gift ideas. It's a break from the hectic holidays and a way to 'think spring.'"



### Sheila, 50 Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

"Garden centers in my area do a variety of things. One specializes in living Christmas trees that are in pots and can be planted in spring. One has the annual Zonta Applefest at its site. This includes corn mazes for the kids, craft stands and, of course, a variety of apple products for people to try and buy."



## Questions to Consider

- Does your garden center advertise holiday promotions? Do you create eye-catching signage to promote holiday sales?
- Do you sell live Christmas trees? If so, do you create a visible, decorative display?
- Does your garden center create a holiday department for decorations, gifts and winter plants?