



Create a winning combination in your garden center with great service, quality plant material and a touch of the unexpected.

By Faith Savage

What an exciting and inspiring summer we had, watching outstanding athletes compete in the summer Olympics. Who didn't cheer at the top of their lungs as Michael Phelps won his eighth gold medal and made Olympic history? His victory, however, was not just due to his extraordinary talent and effort, but to the great team he was a part of. Each member of the team was totally focused on their combined goal: to represent the United States to the best of their ability and to win, win, win!

I loved watching all the Olympic sports — gymnastics, track and field, basketball, beach volleyball, swimming — they were all different but still part of a great U.S. team. Are all the different departments on your team — from annuals to perennials, shrubs to hard goods, even accounting and marketing — focused on winning gold for your garden center? Do they have the dedication, commitment and knowledge to make it happen?

This spring and summer, I enjoyed traveling around the country visiting garden centers and watching their teams pull together to provide great products, outstanding service and exceptional shopping experiences for their customers.

From the North to the South, the East to the West, I saw top-notch efforts to create displays that both inspired and motivated the customer. Displays that tied in colorful pots with equally colorful plants in a way that really grabbed the attention of the customer and inspired those



Above: Whimsy in the display at Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville, Md., adds lots of inspiration and fun. Top: The Detroit area's English Gardens uses bright yellow pots mixed with silly garden ornaments to create a sunny floral display.

“impulse” sales that are so critical to success. Displays that brought an unexpected bit of whimsy into the equation — inviting the customer in for a closer look. All effective in creating that “wow” factor.

### Confront the Obstacles Ahead

It is so easy these days to become discouraged. We hear often that the economy is in a downward slump, spending is being cut back and homeowners are thinking twice before taking on landscape and home improvement projects. But just as our Olympic athletes, who work extremely hard throughout training and competition, are dedicated and focused on overcoming obstacles in their path, so are many of our garden center teams.

I saw so many employees working hard to gain more product knowledge so they could better guide the customer to make the right plant choices. And, at several top-performing garden centers, I saw something very exciting: employees who engaged the customer in “projects.” Not just selling a couple of mixed containers, but selling a “great look” for the backyard that included shrubs and trees for the landscape, patio furniture and accessories, and, of course, plants and containers. It was so energizing to see this type of service in action. It is definitely what we need to be doing to pull in and sell to those Gen X and Y customers we are all seeking, new customers who will help grow our businesses and drive us toward gold.

### Surprise the Customer

Focusing on the bigger picture for the customer is definitely important, but another effective selling tool is to provide the unexpected. Help your customer see a use for a garden accessory that makes it multifunctional and, therefore, a better value for their spending dollars. Here’s an example: Many of you sell fire pits, a great garden accessory, particularly when creating the desire in our customer’s mind for that cozy and comfy backyard experience as the weather chills.

But how about planting flowers in the fire pit? Show them that it can be an exciting accessory in the garden in the summer months too. Suggest they “heat up summer entertaining” with a sizzle of colorful flowers in reds, oranges, yellows and some great grasses too. I bet you’ll not



Springy green containers at English Gardens make healthy plants look even more verdant and helps the other blooms pop.

## BC900 Tete-a-tete



A favourite of the Bear Chair products is our tete-a-tete. Available in Northern White Pine (shown) or Western Red Cedar. Comes in a kit with predrilled sanded pieces, easy to follow instructions and all necessary hardware. Features a curved seat, sculptured back and routed arms.

**Manufacturer of quality 100% Canadian-made products for over 20 years!!!**

Call today 800-421-1406, fax 705-386-0915  
website [www.thebearchair.com](http://www.thebearchair.com), [info@thebearchair.com](mailto:info@thebearchair.com)

Write in 758

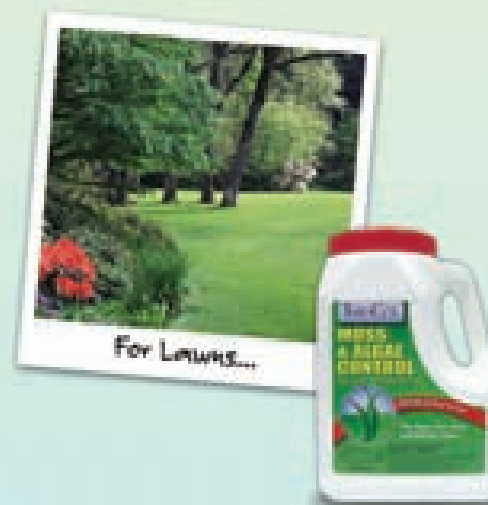
# DESTROY MOSS *and* ALGAE FAST!



## GreenClean Granular Algaecide

is a non-copper product that eliminates string algae on contact. Use GreenClean as a curative or spot treatment in your pond and on your waterfall. GreenClean is also a great tool for pond clean outs.

- EPA Registered
- Results can be seen immediately
- Use to kill existing algae
- Non-harmful to fish, plants and pets
- Available in 2, 8, 20, and 50 lb containers



## TerraCyte Moss & Algae Control

is an easy-to-use product ideal for lawns and turf grass. TerraCyte uses a granular chemistry that kills moss on contact without harming lawns.

- EPA Registered
- Results seen within 24 – 48 hours
- Uses no heavy metals or toxic chemistries
- Use on hard surfaces and walkways
- Available in 13 and 50 lb containers

BIOSAFE SYSTEMS  
THE BIOSECURITY COMPANY

**1.888.273.3088 (toll-free)**  
**[www.biosafesystems.com](http://www.biosafesystems.com)**

Write in 760



## PERSPECTIVE

only sell flowers to customers with fire pits sitting idle, but you will also sell a few more fire pits! The unexpected always creates inspiration.

### Deck the Halls with Gold

As we head into the Christmas season, what are you and your team doing to inspire your customers

with the unexpected? Great displays can be dramatic, and I have seen some awesome displays in past holiday seasons! But it is often the smaller, unique idea that meets that special gift-giving need that can really boost sales.

Show your customers how to combine poinsettias (a Christmas

favorite) with cyclamen for a unique and appealing centerpiece or wreath. Nothing sets off a beautiful red poinsettia better than combining it with pure white cyclamen; add in silvery foliage, and you have Christmas magic! Feature beautiful gift bags with a cyclamen inside by your registers

Put the Casual back into Casual Living.....

**Mad Mats®**  
by Mariachi Imports

Zero maintenance  
Recycled Plastic

800-871-7495 FX 215-629-9242 mariachiimports.com

Write in 782



Above: An "impulse" item that's sure to please — cyclamen in a gift bag. Top: Wow customers with the unexpected: A blaze of flowers in a fire pit can inspire more sales.

for those "impulse sales," or try this great idea that I saw at Mahoney's in Winchester, Mass., on last year's Garden Centers of America Holiday Tour: Display little Christmas trees in gift bags with small ornaments. This creative idea definitely got everyone's attention!

Think unique and different this holiday season. Think unexpected and multi-use. And, most importantly, make sure your team is armed with knowledge and is engaged in and committed to your company's overall goals. You are sure to finish the year out with a "gold medal" performance. Happy holidays! 🎄

*Faith Savage is retail manager for Goldsmith Seeds. She can be reached at (626) 918-1353 or [faith@goldsmithseeds.com](mailto:faith@goldsmithseeds.com).*

### LearnMore!

For more information related to this article, go to [www.lgrmag.com/lm.cfm/lg110806](http://www.lgrmag.com/lm.cfm/lg110806)