

MERCHANDISING ORNAMENTS FOR FUN & PROFIT

Coming up with new ornament merchandising ideas can grow harder and harder every year. Here are some constructive ideas to help decorate your store for the holidays.

By Richard Adler

The holiday decorating or “Trim-a-Tree” business (as it is commonly called) can be very lucrative. Lawn and garden retailers understand that the holiday season is a peak shopping period when consumers have more discretionary income available than at any other time during the year. Operating a Christmas shop in your store to supplement your main business can be highly profitable and provide you with a great deal of enjoyment. But before entering the Christmas decorating business, you should know the basics...

Buy A Broad Variety

If this is your first time purchasing holiday decorations, buy across the board and emphasize breadth (not depth) in your line. After you buy a variety of products and test the waters, you will develop an understanding for your customers’ buying preferences. In subsequent years, you can concentrate on specific items that are popular among your customers. Seek out suppliers who can fulfill reorders as late as possible, and allow for substitutions if an item sells out. Be aware of all the categories offered in a complete Christmas ornament line and understand what categories you decided not to stock.

The most vital facet of buying product is knowing your market and customer. Personal taste is not always the answer; you should always buy what sells and what the customer wants. Work closely with your supplier’s sales staff; they should be highly knowledgeable about holiday trends in your region.

Scores Of Licensed Ornaments

When people buy ornaments, oftentimes they are remembering wonderful memories. Some decorations remind people of classic



Outdoor enthusiasts really enjoy ornaments that have that *Field and Stream* look to them. (Photos: Kurt S. Adler)

movies, old TV shows, wonderful cars they drove in the past, great experiences fishing and hunting, or fun games they played as kids. Manufacturers have created and produced ornaments that feature top licensors’ well-

known designs and icons of the entertainment, sports and corporate worlds — licensed icons that cater to consumers’ nostalgia. There are many ways you can turn these licensed ornaments into a themed display. ♦

CHRISTMAS RETAILER

MERCHANDISING



One of the hottest new trends in holiday ornaments is ice cream motifs.

Incorporate corporate icons into a display, such as Coca-Cola, Pillsbury, General Motors and Ford. Outdoor enthusiasts will run for *Field & Stream* and Ducks Unlimited designs, and game lovers will pick up licensed collections that feature Monopoly, Chutes & Ladders, Mr. Potato Head and Scrabble.

You can also develop displays that cater to the younger generations by using names they know. For girls, choose from ornaments featuring Barbie, Hello Kitty, Dora The Explorer, My Little Pony, Winx Club and more. For boys, offer Hot Wheels, Monster Jam, Bob The Builder and Boy Scouts holiday collections. Bring in Major League Baseball ornaments for sports collectors.

One of the hottest trends recently is taking part in charitable causes. You can show off your garden center's goodwill and community service by displaying items from the

American Red Cross, the American Lung Association and other charities. There are even ornaments designed to support U.S. troops.

Some of the hot new trends in holiday ornaments feature ice cream motifs, retro looks, contemporary country, glass flowers, toy land, Victorian, blue china, pixies, gingerbread, lodging (fishing/hunting), ballet, musical motifs and more. Other styles you work with can be religious, inspirational, nautical, Irish or Western. Ornaments are designed in nearly every color, style, shape, material and price point imaginable.

Remember, you should not buy items that are too trendy; Christmas continues to be a traditional holiday. Fashion-forward ornaments should be integrated into your merchandising mix, but key items con-

tinue to be Santas, angels, snowmen, carolers, elves, etc.

Constantly replenish merchandise for a fresh, new look.

Inspect all decorations to ensure they are clean and in good condition and be sure to attach price tags prior to display.

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Always make sure to carry traditional items, like these santas, to keep traditionalist customers coming into your store.

Create Attractive Displays

Christmas merchandise should begin to arrive in your store around mid-August, and you should assign a certain area for inventory. At some point, you should plan to close off an area for your Christmas shop. Your holiday display should be completed in early November. In most cases, retailers choose to prepare them even earlier.

Trees are pivotal for displaying ornaments, and they can be decorated in a variety of themes to show different looks. Miniature tabletop trees can be used to feature individual ornament collections such as sports, pets, golf, professionals, hobbies, personalized ornaments and other themes (see Decorating Trees on page CR4 for more information). Larger decorations, such as snowflakes, gift box designs and spiral shapes, create excitement when suspended from the ceiling. For a fun display, invert a wreath over a kitchen table and decorate the wreath with ornaments featuring different foods, Santa chefs and the like.

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Developing innovative displays is extremely important for your Christmas program; some ideas to consider include:

- If you have the room, show hol-

iday merchandise on hutches and furniture. Suspend glass ornaments over archways using specially designed wreaths.

- Create vignettes of interest featuring one ornamental theme or an eclectic mix.

• Large decorations serve as excellent mediums to enhance your displays and build traffic. Attractive window displays are important. It is vital that you alert customers and further promote your holiday program by illuminating window displays day and night (you may wish to use timers).

• Your window dressing should be determined by your store location. For example, a store in a pedestrian location with a large amount of foot traffic can offer animation and detail, featuring intricate displays and smaller-sized ornaments and accessories.

• Since Christmas merchandising is a decorating business by nature, it is imperative that you invest the appropriate time and effort in holiday displays. If necessary, hire professional designers or tap young talent from nearby interior design schools to ensure quality displays.

In addition to generating strong profits, your holiday business will be fun and exciting and can add immense satisfaction to all who become involved.

Richard Adler is vice president of Kurt S. Adler, Inc., a resource for holiday ornaments and accessories that is celebrating 60 years of making holiday memories for millions. He can be reached at (800) 243-9627.

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