

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.

No Hibernation Here!

This winter, your customers will be actively planning what they will do with their gardens in the upcoming spring season. What can you do to help?

Jen, 30 Glenwood, Iowa

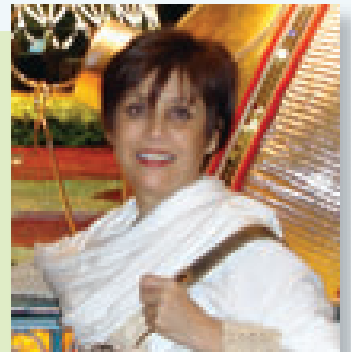
"Next summer, I plan to place perennials in a rock garden off my front porch. We've just started with landscaping around the new house, so many areas are ready for new plants. Some existing plants need to be split and replanted in various spots around the house. I need to visit with a garden center to see what plants will do well in my area. We have deer, so I will need plants that do not get eaten by deer. I also plan to landscape an area near a retaining wall in the backyard. We are still purchasing trees to place in our yard, as the backyard has not been landscaped yet. We have a large area to work with, so planning what to do in certain areas is the plan for this winter. Making a sketch really helps break the yard into workable areas."



Maria, 51 Chicago

"My list of things to do at the beginning of winter: Walk through the garden and collect all of the hand tools that are lying around; clean the dirt away, using a light machine oil on shovel heads and hoes to prevent rust; remove the gas from the lawn mower, clean the blade and store it in the garage for a long winter's rest; and drain water from hoses and coil them up."

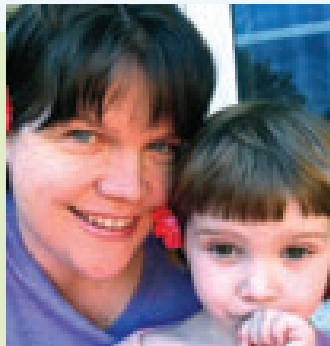
"By winter's end I will have to make a decision as to what I want to do with my garden. Do I want a very simple or a formal garden? What parts of my yard do I want to landscape? Last year I walked around my neighborhood and took some pictures of yards that I liked. I also kept some magazines that would help me get an idea. So after a little bit of homework I have a visual picture of the final results that I want. Early in spring, I will visit garden centers in my area so I can compare selection and prices."



Juliet, 35 Santa Rosa, Calif.

"My biggest gardening plan for this year is a result of my biggest gardening mistake. As new homeowners five years ago, we built raised beds for my herbs and vegetables in a sunny spot in the backyard, but each year they are receiving less and less sunlight as a neighbor's adjacent tree has gotten taller and taller. I'm hoping to move them to the front of the house where they will get more direct light and more attention from me as I come and go. I am a cottage garden fan and have been experimenting more with combining perennials with herbs and vegetables in my garden beds. Here in Northern California, the growing season never ends!"

"The biggest thing I've learned over the last few years is not to be afraid to transplant when a plant isn't thriving. Also, last year I fell in love with sweet peas, an annual that always looked too delicate and needy for my tastes. Was I ever wrong! New varieties are hardy and incredibly prolific, and I can't imagine my garden without them again."



Questions to Consider

- Does your garden center offer landscape service and/or consulting to assist homeowners designing their outdoor spaces?
- Are your employees able to suggest plants and other garden products based on your region and consumers' preferences?
- Do you hold workshops for new gardeners to become better acquainted with garden design and practices?