



Building Birding Success

Niche, niche, niche — are you sick of hearing that word yet? It seems like all we have been hearing lately is that you need a niche to stay in “competition” with the big boxes. Whether it is the competition aspect or just need for something specific in your market, niches really are beneficial. Having one does differentiate you from the boxes, and it also makes you well known for having a certain product selection that no one else has or does like you do.

That is what Hastings Nature and Garden Center in Atlanta, Ga., has done in its store. Yes, most garden centers carry some birding/nature products, but Hastings has done it in a unique way. This Atlanta garden center has taken a good part of its store and turned it into an upscale bird sanctuary where all of its birding products are stocked.

The area is filled with plants to give it a slightly tropical atmosphere, while making you feel like you are still in a garden center and are able find all of your birding needs at the same time (cross merchandising). One thing that seemed to go over very well was the birdseed deli that

the store offered. There were six bins in a display rack filled with different kinds of birdseed, and customers could just purchase as much as they wanted. This is a major benefit for bird lovers because so many of them have a variety of different birds flying around their backyards, and it is hard to cater to all of the different birds if customers can only buy large multi-pound bags of seed. This way the customer can get what they need, purchasing as little or as much as they want, for all of the different kinds of birds in their yards.

Birding is a large part of garden centers. After reading the article “Expanding the Birding Concept” in the March issue of *Lawn & Garden Retailer*, it is becoming more apparent that birding is pretty important to consumers. If birding stores are looking to get into the garden center market, as stated in the article, then garden centers are going to need to start looking for ways to make their birding departments different and more appealing. When it comes to building a successful and unique birding department keep in mind that, in this case, “for the birds” is a good thing. 🐦

— Catherine Evans

“Do something.

If it doesn’t work,

do something else.

No idea is too crazy.”

— Jim Hightower