

"Consumer Talk" is a regular column appearing in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer that examines 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.

# Purchasing Decisions

**A**s far as gardening materials (from plants to tools to hard goods), where do you purchase them? How do you decide where to purchase them (price, quality, etc.)?

## Theresa, 36, Phoenix, Ariz.

"It's all about price and convenience. There is a Home Depot nearby, and I usually get my garden soil from there. There is a Big Lots Wholesale store and a dollar store that has basic, inexpensive tools. The tools are made cheaply. In fact, the small garden shovel is coming off of the handle already (2 years old), but it's doing the job, and it's staying in our budget.

"I don't have a lot of time yet to do a serious garden, but when the kids are older, I'll get all my nice things to do gardening (oh my gosh, I sound like my mother now)...and will probably buy them from Home Depot."



## Becky, 48, Dallas, Texas

"If I need to cover a large area or fill a lot of pots, I always go to the small-town Wal-Mart. It has hanging baskets for \$6-9, where in Dallas they are \$15-20. I remove the plant from the basket and put it in the ground for instant color and volume. Since I work in sales, I go to small towns all of the time, so it is no big deal.

"But when I need a gift or a special pot by my front door, etc., I go to the nurseries. I am lucky because we seem to have one on every corner. They are pricey, but Wal-Mart doesn't carry black mondo grass or azaleas that bloom twice a year.

"One story that is interesting: I went to Tyler, Texas, the rose capital of the United States (so they say), purchased 10 rose plants, had them planted by a pro and took care of them. I also purchased two rose climbers from Wal-Mart. Ten years later, guess which rose plants still exist? Yes, the ones from Wal-Mart."



## Claudia, 60, Gainesville, Fla.

"Where and what I buy depends on whether I am shopping for pleasure or on a mission. If my need is immediate, I will go to the neighborhood Ace Hardware to get things like hoses, timers, small bags of potting soil or items on sale. For planned shopping, I will check out the mass-market stores, Lowe's and Home Depot first. Traffic patterns, time of day and other errand locations will dictate which store.

"For pleasure or after the mass-market stores, I will check out the two local nurseries to see what's new or what plant options they have for the specific area that I am landscaping at the time. If I have the time, I love making an outing of my search and traveling 40 miles or more to other nurseries in search of the uncommon. If I am on a pleasure trip, I am more likely to impulse buy, being influenced by the attractiveness of the displays, i.e. plants in pots, yard ornaments, plant groupings, etc. No matter which store, the quality of plants is more important than the price."



## Lori, 50, Fargo, N.D.

"I buy all my gardening tools at rummage sales. I have some nice, quality pieces that someone must have received as a gift, as they have never been out of the original box. I buy my bedding plants at temporary plant stands set up in the local grocery store parking lot. Any new landscaping plants are purchased at a nursery. All my gardening purchases are based on price first and location second. I will, however, return to a higher-priced venue if I was impressed with the quality of the plants from the previous year."



## Questions To Consider

- Does it all really come down to price?
- How do we get them to check independent retailers out before they go to the big boxes?
- How can we get the consumer more informed about independent retailers and what we can do for them?