

## 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.

# Suggestion Box

Although we have a few months before spring hits, it's never too early to start preparing for your busiest season. This month, we asked our panelists to offer tips that would improve their garden center shopping experience.

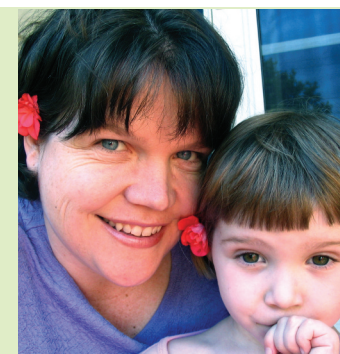
### Jen, 30 Glenwood, Iowa

I would like to see sets of plants sold in packages that will look good together. I often just start planting without thinking about how the grouping will look. If an expert gardener could take a picture of a plant grouping in a nicely landscaped yard and include it with the bulbs, or plants that would really help me. It may be pricey to purchase a whole set of plants at one time, but at least I would know it will look good once planted, and not a group of unmatched or all the same color plants in my yard. I also often forget to think about height in plants. Knowing where to place tall plants and short plants would be great.



### Juliet, 35 Santa Rosa, Calif.

With so many more of us doing our own landscaping and garden projects on a budget, I'd love to have more project idea sheets available at my garden center. These could be simple construction projects like building a raised bed or trellis, or instructions for making a pre-designed cutting or herb garden — with detailed supplies lists included. Even sheets with available plants that grow in sun or shade, attract butterflies, etc., would be helpful and introduce me to some new varieties.



### Maria, 52 Chicago

They could do a monthly newsletter with information on plants, gardening tools, and keeping of plants. Customers can send their photos and they can highlight a customer's garden each month.

Another idea would be to give a card to regular customers with a 10 percent discount or give a card that they punch each time you buy a plant and the tenth is free.

I would also like to see longer hours during the summer.



## Questions to Consider

- Does your staff offer customers recommendations on ideal companion plants for certain varieties?
- Does your garden center offer landscape services, and/or guidance for the do-it-yourselfers seeking assistance with landscape projects?
- Do you offer workshops for novice gardeners?
- Aside from your standard marketing promotions, do you correspond with your customers via e-mail newsletters?
- Does your garden center have a loyalty program for regular customers?