



Garden Centers of America: Together We're Better!

GCA's Key Connections: Member Profile Darrin Buswell, Lawn & Garden Manager Harpeth True Value Home Center, Franklin, TN

Harpeth True Value Rolls with the Changes to Deliver Same Award-Winning Service & Selection



Blending categories of hardware, home, lawn and garden makes Harpeth True Value Home Center in Franklin, TN, the No. 1 destination for customers looking to complete a wide range of home improvement projects or routine maintenance. That's why this IGC retailer has been voted the "Best Garden Center" in the annual Sizzle Awards five years in a row by readers of the *Williamson Herald* and *Southern Exposure Magazine*, sponsors of the contest, along with Franklins.

"From the big box perspective, we can't match or beat their prices, usually," Darrin Buswell, Lawn & Garden Manager, says. "But, we are unrivaled in customer service, knowledge and plant selection." He explains that Harpeth True Value offers a collection of hard-to-find, unique varieties of plants and edibles.

Recently, Harpeth True Value has undergone some changes. After the lease for the retailer's stand-alone garden center and gifts building was up, Harpeth True Value consolidated its garden center offerings into the hardware store. "The response from customers has been mostly good," Darrin says. "Our inside space is new, whereas before we were in a 130-year-old building."

Chemicals, fertilizers and gifts were moved to a sectioned-off area, marked "Garden Center," inside the main hardware store, then the green goods were relocated to shade houses at the back of the store.



Now, the owners of Harpeth True Value, and Darrin's sister and brother-in-law, Shelley and Mike Moeller, have to consider the options of building a new stand-alone garden center or keeping it a part of the main hardware building.

That was the focus of Shelley and Darrin's trip to Virginia for this year's GCA Summer Tour, where they saw a variety of small and large garden center structures that presented plenty of ideas they could adapt for their needs.



"Since we are thinking about constructing a new building, we took away mostly structural ideas," he says. "But we also got a lot of different display ideas and marketing tips."

That access to a wealth of business knowledge from other garden centers is one of the biggest benefits of being a member in Garden Centers of America, says Darrin. "Being able to talk to other people in this business, as well as hearing other people's ideas, is just so helpful," he says.

Darrin mentions that the discounts on the IGC Retailer Conference at this month's IGC Show and on the Monday Garden Center Tour the day before the trade show are huge benefits for indie members.

Getting the Harpeth Name Out There

Harpeth True Value's unbeatable plant selection comes from Tennessee-area growers, so customers know that these green goods have been bred for the Franklin climate. "We have dealt with some of our larger growers for years," Darrin says. "We have a better relationship with our vendors."

Bedding plants are the retailer's bestselling green goods, while candles are the best-performing giftware items. Harpeth True Value also does big business for Christmas.

Not only is Harpeth True Value known for its quality plant selection and knowledgeable, friendly staff, the indie retailer has a reputation for fun in-store events and a community spirit.

Throughout the year, Harpeth True Value will host events for specific sales, such as Green Egg Day, or open houses to stir up foot traffic. The IGC also taps into its community roots by working with the Williamson County Master Gardeners Association and donating soil, plants and other supplies to several community gardens.



Darrin says, "We try to get our name out there as much as we can. It seems like the younger generations are into helping out the community, which is good."

