



Garden Centers of America: Together We're Better!

GCA's Key Connections: Member Profile

Kevin Burke, Owner/Founder

KB Landscape Supply, Wildwood, FL

Constant Innovation, Dream of Being 'No. 1' Drives KB Landscape Supply



Operating as a retail and wholesale garden and landscape supply store, KB Landscape Supply strives to be the number one destination for every consumer's gardening needs, modeling his store after the large, full garden centers that many of his retired clientele are used to shopping at in the northern states.

"Our goal in the next three years is to be among the top 100 garden centers in the country," Kevin Burke, Owner/Founder, says. "But my long-term goal is to be the number one garden center in Florida."

Kevin's passion for the garden center industry first developed about five years ago when he noticed that Florida's Wildwood-The Villages market was seriously lacking a full-service garden center.

"I had a vision of having a really nice garden center that doesn't exist yet in Florida," he says. "We're in a unique market, and I feel a garden center could have long-term business here. I want to provide people in this area with a garden center where they feel like they're shopping back home – a place where they know we'll have everything they want. Those garden centers up north almost model grocery stores."

Before he even opened his business, Kevin attended IGC Chicago to see what the industry was all about and get a feel for the consumer market.



"I've been going to the IGC Show ever since," he laughs. "The IGC Show is a must! I met

someone from Florida at the 2015 Chicago Show who had never been till last year. I asked them, 'How can you be in the garden center business and never go to the IGC Show?'"

When he attends the IGC Show Chicago each summer, he makes sure to sign up for the IGC Show Monday Garden Center Tour the day before the trade show opens.

"Some of the best displays of color I've ever seen have been at the garden centers in Chicago," Kevin says. "Gethsemane Garden Center, in particular, had these vibrant painted tables in different colors. I would have to say that that retailer was hands-down the best on the tour. They did a great job of displaying pottery in ways that haven't been done, and that's one idea we want to implement in our store."

He wants to arrange their pottery selection in a similar fashion, and plans on adding a potting station, where store staff will design and plant a container for customers who can have the container delivered or sent home with them.

While he was on the bus, Kevin learned about an inexpensive app program for garden centers through another attendee. "She said it was roughly around \$500 to set it up then a monthly fee of about \$99 to maintain the app. We'll have that app set up for the store soon."



Not only has the IGC Show Monday Garden Center Tour been instrumental in keeping KB Landscape Supply on top of consumer trends and store updates, but the GCA Summer Tour has also been an inspiration for ideas.

"I've been on three GCA Summer Tours – Ohio; San Francisco, CA and Milwaukee, WI," he says. "I found a lot of great ideas on the Ohio tour, but the San Francisco tour was my favorite. I saw some great signage ideas from those retailers."

He continues, "The tours are also great for networking. It's always good to talk to other retailers on the tour to find out how they're conducting business in different parts of the country."

KB Landscape Supply is 'Ever-Changing'



Taking advantage of the Florida weather and landscape, most of KB Landscape Supply's retail areas are located outdoors or in greenhouses. A combination of paver walkways, concrete and asphalt weave a trail throughout the garden center, winding past annuals, perennials, trees, ornamentals, citrus, pottery, fountains, soils, chemicals and mulches.

The largest greenhouse on-site is about 25,000 square feet, adding to the combined total of 50,000 square feet of greenhouse growing space on the property. “We grow about 10 percent of our plants right now,” Kevin says. “In the next 24 months, we’d like to grow about 75 percent of our annuals and perennials.”

The store’s biggest green good sellers are Proven Winners’ Blue My Mind, aka Dwarf Morning Glory, and Dwarf Allamanda. “We started growing the Blue My Mind ourselves because our distributors couldn’t keep it in stock for us,” Kevin says.

The retailer regularly draws out young families to the store with its koi pond and waterfall with a wooden bridge. “We keep adding fish,” he says. “Some of our customers decide to get rid of their koi and donate them to us.”



Kevin is considering adding a bubble gum machine that will dispense food for the koi for only a quarter. But they have to be careful at how much food they set out in the dispenser as the koi are already pretty big, ranging from 18 inches to 20 inches in size.

Kevin’s clientele is mostly retired homeowners living in a retirement community just south of Ocala, FL, known as The Villages.

All of Kevin’s recent updates and additions are pushing him further to his goal of being that destination for his retired customers, and ultimately, the number one garden center in Florida. “Every month, we add something new,” he says.

In the next 18 months, Kevin is looking to add more garden gift merchandise to his store’s offerings as well as green goods that the boxes don’t sell. His team just finished a landscape design office on-site, rounding out the long list of recent additions.

Kevin admits that it has taken him a little longer to get his store running to its fullest potential, but that’s because he has taken the time to pay everything off. “All of the merchandise, greenhouses, the new office – they’re all paid for,” he says. “The only thing that isn’t is the land.”

Kevin continues, “In the end, I want KB Landscape Supply to be clean and ever-changing, so that it’s not the same every time someone comes in.”