



## Garden Centers of America: Together We're Better!

### GCA's Key Connections: Member Profile

**Scott Moon, Manager**

**Sargent's Gardens, Rochester, MN**

### Two Diverse Locations, One Unified Brand at Sargent's Gardens



Whether residents of Southeastern Minnesota need to completely redesign their outdoor rooms or just need to satisfy their latest floral "itch," IGC 100er Sargent's Gardens has two locations in Rochester, MN, to meet all sorts of customer requests. The diversity in locations has earned Sargent's the No. 79 spot on *IGC Magazine's* Top 100 report with \$7.3 million in reported sales for last year.

The store on 2nd Street, called the "in-town" location, occupies two-thirds of a block, while the north location resides on about 80 acres. Scott Moon, Manager of the 2nd Street store, explains the niches offered at each location.

"The location I manage is strictly a retail garden center with a floral department. We do not grow our product here, and we do not have a landscape design/installation department," he says. "Our north location has a garden center, a landscape design/installation and maintenance departments, a growing greenhouse and a nursery for larger caliber trees and shrubs."

The in-town Sargent's is well-known for its colorful annuals and staple green goods, like perennials, trees, shrubs, evergreens, house plants and tropicals. A full line of hardgoods, mulches, chemicals, fertilizers, watering supplies, pottery and garden gifts are all packed into the small retail footprint. Sargent's north store stocks the same green goods and hardgoods, but it lacks the gift and floral departments.

"We grow a lot of our own annuals and perennials at the north location, so we feel like we can offer a very good product," Scott says. "The fact that we're a grower that can produce fresh product out of our local facilities sets us apart from other IGCs."



He admits that they have toured other garden centers around the country, whether through Garden Centers of America or other associations. “We’ve grabbed so many different ideas from garden centers that we’ve incorporated into what we felt would work in our market.”

Sargent’s sent a total of four staff members, a mix from both locations, on the 2015 GCA Summer Tour Milwaukee, where they were inspired with a multitude of ideas to bring to life at their stores almost immediately.



“Our employees were incredibly struck by how well made the signage was and the materials they used at each tour stop,” he says. “We’re definitely looking to incorporate those ideas, if we haven’t already, by this year.”

Different display ideas were immediately introduced into Sargent’s in-town location. “I definitely noticed for the next month and a half to two months after the tour that the two employees I sent from my location were recreating displays they had seen on the tour,” Scott says.

He continues, “It’s a huge benefit to either send someone on the GCA Summer Tour or go yourself. Whether it’s looking for ideas from other gardens centers or spending time networking on the bus between stops, it’s just so valuable, and you learn so much. It’s an unbelievable experience.”

Scott feels that being a member of GCA has allowed him to create long-lasting friendships with people in the industry. “I can certainly call up another member in another town or state to bounce ideas off of them,” he says. “Having that ability at your fingertips is pretty nice.”

## Customer Appreciation Done Right

Sargent’s certainly knows how to put the customer first, especially with its Garden Rewards Club. “We have about 24,000 members in our Rewards Club from both locations,” Scott says.



It is free to join the rewards program, which allows customers to receive 2 percent back on their purchases after they spend \$250 or more during a given accrual period. Then, the store sends out a postcard to each member with the total amount of reward dollars they have to spend at either store.

In addition, members receive a weekly or bi-weekly e-newsletter, depending on the season, that showcases seasonal gardening ideas and tips, new plants, materials, sales, and upcoming seminars and special events. Members have access to special sales and discounts only allotted for the

Rewards Club. Sargent's POS system tracks members' purchases and keeps receipts saved in case they need to take advantage of the receipt-free two-year warranty on any purchased trees or shrubs.

Every summer, Sargent's shows their appreciation for these members by hosting an event specially designated for them. The Garden Rewards Party, hosted once in the afternoon and again in the evening at both locations, features light appetizers, cocktails, live music and specials throughout the stores.

"Both locations get about 1,000 people in attendance, so the customers really enjoy it," Scott says. "We give members a coupon to use during that evening or up to a week afterward."

### **Getting the Next Gen in the Garden**

Once a month from April to December, Sargent's north location hosts different children's activities and workshops, dubbed "Wee Wednesdays," to get the next generation of youngsters excited about gardening.

The activities, geared toward pre-school and kindergarten aged kids, range from planting terrariums to learning about insects and making pollinator gardens.

"Each class garners about 40 kids," Scott says. "The presenter will read a story to set the stage, then they'll do their project and enjoy a snack. Both the parents and kids love it."

