

# GARDEN & Chic life

Adventures in  
IGC Entrepreneurial  
Retailing

featuring  
Kerby's Nursery  
Seffner, FL

## Kim Kerby Bokor, Co-owner

STOP BY KERBY'S Nursery in Seffner, FL, and you may be offered a taste of a bilimbi, wampi and jak-fruit, among up to 120 other fun fruits produced by plants sold at the garden center.

"Being in Florida with such warm weather, we're able to grow so many varieties of fruits," says Kim Kerby Bokor, Co-owner. "We just keep finding new and better ones."

Kim heads up the second-generation garden center with her husband and brother. They didn't set out to create an edibles niche, but their unusual palatable offerings quickly gained popularity.

"Customers will start with something they recognize, like a blueberry or blackberry plant, and once they have success with that, they'll start getting more adventurous," Kim says. For customers looking for an usual variety that isn't currently in stock, Kerby's will special order it. "If they can grow in this area, we try to accommodate them," Kim says.

Offering the unusual extends beyond edibles. Among the displays of plants and pottery, customers find unusual items unrelated to gardening, perhaps an old suitcase or turn-of-the-century furniture as props. To complement a variety of different grape plants, wine racks did the trick.



"We'll stop in different antique shops, not looking for gardening things specifically but anything that catches our eye," Kim says.

Although the initial intention wasn't to sell the props, customers starting asking how they could purchase them. Now, every prop is immediately priced when it is put out on the sales floor. "If someone wants them, we're happy to sell them," Kim says. "It gives us an excuse to go shopping again."

When Kim goes shopping, she also looks for new display ideas for the garden center. Williams-Sonoma, along with grocery stores, are common places she seeks inspiration. "When I go into a store and it makes me feel inspired to buy something, those are the places where I try to get my ideas because we're hoping we can produce that same inspiration for our customers," Kim says. She adds, "We also get a lot of ideas from *Garden Chic* on how to keep things fresh and up-to-date."

### What They Want

For today's time-pressed homeowners who aren't always experts in the garden, Kim strives to make it easy. "I think it can be intimidating, so when

we're doing displays around the nursery, we'll try and set them up in a way where the customer can walk by and say, 'Yep, that's what I want in my yard,'" she says.

Especially for Gen X / Gen Y customers, Kim says it's important to "make things less complicated."

Kerby's offers a "we plan, you plant" service to simplify the process for customers. "It's a free service that we offer by appointment," Kim says. "Customers can come in and meet with one of us at the nursery, where we can take a look at their pictures. Then, we walk them around the plant yard to show them different ideas and suggestions."

The planning service keeps Kerby's

staff at the nursery instead of out making house calls, and there is no confusion for the customer about which plant is being recommended. The garden center even provides a rough sketch to show customers how to install their plants when they get back home.

"We'll notice them grab a cart that day and start loading up," Kim says. "We get a lot of repeat business from the service. And we also get a lot of word-of-mouth business because their neighbors see them in the garden working and realize maybe it's their turn to get out in the yard."

Young homeowners especially favor the use of color and pottery in their plans. "We try to put the pottery and color toward the front of the nursery so they start getting inspired as soon as they walk in," Kim says.

Signage is key to getting customers of all ages to open their wallets. Kerby's visuals are bright and clean. "The color really grabs everyone's attention," Kim says. The garden center recently added photos to its signage so customers can see what the plant looks like in peak season. "It motivates them to go ahead and buy now instead of waiting to see what the flower will look like," Kim says.

Nectar plants that attract flutterers are popular among area homeowners - in fact, interest in butterflies surpasses birds. "The favorites are milkweed, passion vine, pentas and several herbs that attract butterflies," Kim says. Kerby's has even set up a 10'x10' screened walk-through butterfly garden as an attraction. "We'll transfer the caterpillars into the screened area and let them start going through their life cycle," Kim says. "Usually, by mid-spring, we'll have quite a few butterflies flying around." ■