

## I know what you're probably thinking

... not another magazine! We already have too many publications! ... But wait, *Garden Chic* isn't just another magazine. Let me explain.

As I have traveled the country during the last 20-plus years, I've seen many garden centers. Every time Jeff and I are in one city or another, garden centers are always a part of each visit - vacation or not! It is just a part of who we are and what we do. Through the years, there has been a definite refining process that has taken place. We all know that. But what may not be so obvious is the pressing need for garden centers to make their stores more upscale. Why?

Even though the big boxes have all the atmosphere of a warehouse, they are becoming more sophisticated. Their displays are improving and, probably more importantly, their product lines are better quality and more expansive than they were 10 years ago.

It is imperative, now more than ever, for garden centers to move up the ladder before they are left behind in the dust. Too many times, I walk into garden centers and they really don't look or feel much different than a Home Depot or Lowe's. By that, I mean the walls are white, the fertilizers are displayed with the chemicals, and the plant varieties are the same. Even the big boxes are selling orchids these days. So what's a garden center operator to do?

Read *Garden Chic*, of course!

Seriously though, there are so many inexpensive ways to creatively upscale your garden center without breaking the bank. It is my personal goal to bring you tried-and-true ideas and trends that are both simple and effective.

Beginning with this issue, our first stop is the well-known West Coast garden retailer Molbak's. Now wait, I know many of you are saying, "I can't be a Molbak's. I don't have that large of an operation." But you really don't need a lot of square footage to pull off the same concepts, I promise! Come with us and discover how the basic merchandising concepts Molbak's has implemented will work for you, too.

Next, we take you to the world of expos. What a wonderful way to upscale - to lead your customers through an exciting adventure of garden art designed and made by local artists. No need to pack your bags: You only need to read about Habersham Gardens' success with this unique concept to get inspired about bringing an art show to your store. This is definitely something the boxes can't do!

Next, we travel to Homestead Gardens to see its success in making its retail operation a destination to delight children and adults alike. How do they do it? Llamas! Not only do they roam the grounds, but ... well, you're just going to have to read the story to see for yourself.

Can't do llamas? What can you do? Think outside the box ... after all, that is what it's all about!

