

This issue premieres our new wildlife department

coverage. What's so special about our new format? Glad you asked. It has always been my long-held belief that birding and wildlife departments really leave a lot to be desired, not just in garden centers but in pet stores as well.

My husband, Jeff, and I love to feed the birds, and enjoy all activity that comes with it. Our four cats enjoy it perhaps even more, sitting in the windows, peering out and chattering as they "stalk" their prey. (Not to fear, we have a "no kill" policy: they are all indoor kitties.)

I've often gone to the store, looking for different bird feeders and perhaps some houses, too. The problem

is, everything is just stacked on the shelf, and I have no idea where to start! Why should I buy one feeder over the other? Do any of the birds we enjoy use houses?

I know I'm not alone in the quest for answers. These same questions were answered by extensive research provided to *Garden Chic* by Dee Merica, a fellow avid bird lover and Marketing Manager at Organica. The research revealed the exact same conclusions as mine to these dilemmas.

What are the questions you need to answer to increase your sales? 1) "What birds are common to my area?" Of course people know what a cardinal and blue jay are, but there are many more birds just as fascinating that your customers will want to attract. 2) "What do they like to eat?" Almost all birds like sunflower seeds, but sunflower seeds are a commodity - and how much can you make on a commodity? Introducing private-label and speciality seed is a great way to increase sales - *if* you educate your customers so they feel comfortable spending

more money. Add value, and they will pay more for it. 3) "What is each bird's preferred habitat?" This one gives you a huge entry into cross merchandising plants, baths and water features.

So what do you do with all of this information, and how do you profit from it? With the help of our bird expert George Harrison, in each issue we will provide a chart listing specifics on similar bird groups, allowing you to arrange your birding supplies by what suits each bird. We will provide downloadable high-resolution PDFs of the charts at www.BeGardenChic.com that you can take to Kinko's, blow up, laminate and post above each bird group merchandising section to both educate your cus-

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tomers and sell more product! What more could you want - it's a sure-fire way to increase your sales!

The key, though, is to pre-sort your offerings to make it an easy, educated buying decision for your customers. Then, be sure to cross merchandise and include high-end product, such as binoculars and bird-song items. Then, watch your sales soar!

This will be our last time together until the Independent Garden Center Show this summer in Chicago. We are so excited about not only the variety and mix of all the vendors who will be there to see you, but the extensive conference program we have lined up!

I personally invite each of you to come and be energized by the stimulating discussions and ideas, discover new product and enjoy the great city of Chicago. I look forward to meeting you and learning about what you are doing. Come and enjoy the (business) experience of your life!




chic [sheek] *adjective*, -er, -est.

1. style and elegance, esp. in dress: Parisian clothes are so *chic*. 2. fresh; beautiful; progressive: *Garden Chic* is dedicated to raising the bar and helping independents bring the *chic* style to their stores.



a.k.a. 'Football'

Charlie, who loves to be carried like a football, is a 14-year-old Humane Society rescue and a true momma's boy. Severely stricken with diabetes and on death's doorstep four years ago, our now-happy, healthy little "miracle kitty" is a testament to God's healing power.