

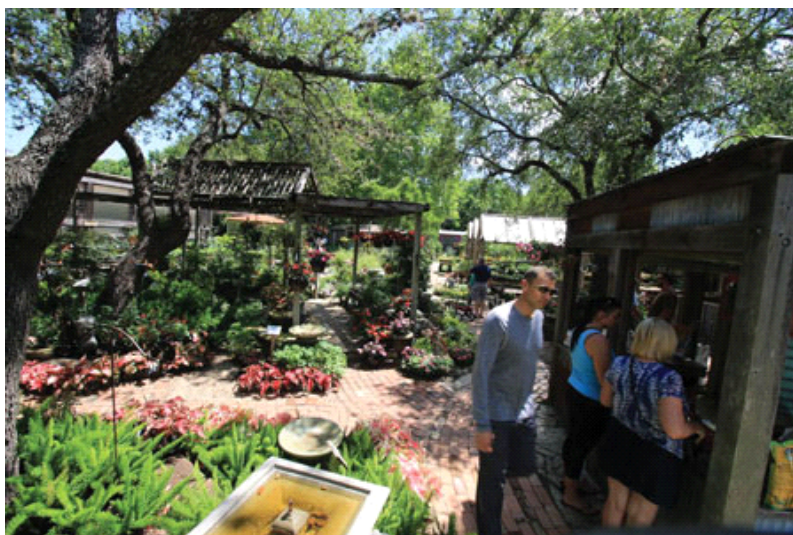
Features

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Made In The Shade

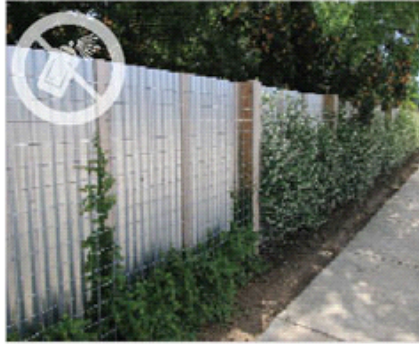
Chris Beytes

Shades of Green, a quirky little urban garden center in San Antonio, Texas, has what my wife calls “poke-around” factor. Despite its small footprint (four city lots), you can wander happily for hours. Or just sit in the shade and listen to soft music and bubbling fountains, as many local folks do on their lunch hours to “decompress,” says owner Bob Webster. Bob and his business partner, Roberta Churchin, started Shades of Green 34 years ago Mother's Day—he with a background in biology and she with a background in volunteer services for a hospital (including gift shops, which serves their garden gift business well).



They promote chemical-free gardening and offer regular gardening classes to customers. Prices are strong and they never hold sales except for cancer fundraisers. When asked if big box competition up the street had impacted the business, Bob says with fake solemnity, “Yup. We’re up considerably.”

Along with the meandering paths (no “race track” layout here; this is where you come to escape the rat race) and rustic timber structures, we most admired Bob’s solution for fencing: galvanized roofing striped randomly with wood strips. He uses a tall (10 ft.) version at the back of the property to block a neighbor and a shorter fence to define the entrance.



A similar fence out front features what he calls an “anti-graffiti” solution: a layer of galvanized livestock fencing mounted several inches in front, preventing anyone with a spray can from doing their best work. **GP**