

Features

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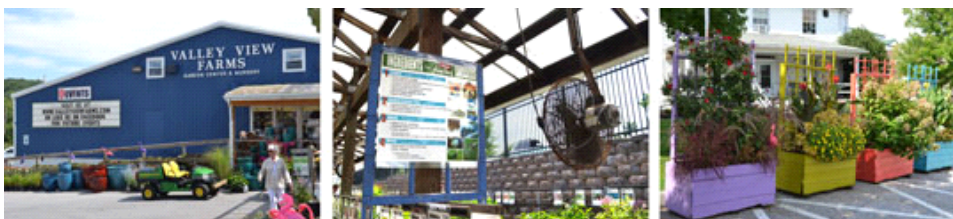
Turn Up The Wow

Jennifer Polanz

I recently visited Valley View Farms in Cockeysville, Maryland, and I'd like to paint you a picture of the day I went. The thermometer was pointing toward 100 degrees and the humidity was enough to make anyone sweat like a sinner in church. And yet, checking out this once roadside produce stand-turned full service garden center was positively pleasant. This easily was one of the friendliest staff I have ever encountered. They did a great job of recognizing me without being overbearing or overwhelming (no small feat—it's either too much one way or the other, usually).

While this store is not without its challenges (grading is difficult to overcome as the location has expanded over a number of years), it does a great job of giving customers what they want and need. It was recently voted Best Nursery locally by *Baltimore Magazine* and Best Perennial Retailer nationally by the Perennial Plant Association. In talking with store manager Tim McQuaid, he said they used to reduce their stock in July and August, but the past couple of years, they've decided to stay fully stocked in the summer months with hanging baskets, containers and perennials (annuals, mums and poinsettias are grown on a 128-acre farm offsite). It's paying off for them and they drive traffic with a continual events calendar.

And a side note: it was a Monday (remember, hot as blazes) and there was a steady stream of customers throughout the property. Not bad for the first week of August!



Sign Me Up

Valley View makes a big deal about its events, to the point where they even make mention of them on the side of the building! They also have events fliers in a kiosk outside, as well as on their social media pages.

Tips for Success

We all want customers to be successful and Valley View makes sure they are with signs like this one, which provides helpful tips on what to buy that will create the most beautiful plant possible.

First Impressions

This is what customers see as they enter and exit Valley View Farms. It's a bright, cheerful way of saying hi and goodbye—the plant equivalent of aloha



Hang 'Em High

I haven't seen this technique before for hammocks and I really like it—it shows how the hammocks look in use, but doesn't take up a ton of space on the sales floor.

The Buzz on Bees

Valley View was in the midst of an expansive pollinator education project, with information inside and out in the sales yard regarding pollinators, including the best plants to buy for a pollinator garden. I liked this sign just inside the front door, which was informative and easy to read.

More Education

This end cap inside was one of three in a row that used a small, flat-screen television with a loop of a video featuring resident expert Carrie Engel talking about the product on the end cap. In this case, the video also featured a clip from Ortho about how to use the product. Each end cap was geared toward a pest currently causing problems and how to solve said problem.

Blow Me Away

Okay, I had to laugh at this one— what a great idea! I've never seen another retailer do this, though many of you may do it. I just wanted to share in case you don't keep your wind chimes somewhere where the wind can blow them. **GP**