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Top 10 Pros to Working at an IGC

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I've worked at several garden centers over the ages, but I don't now and I rather miss it. I noticed this weird phenomenon when someone visiting my yard asked me what a particular plant was and, GASP, I didn't know. I didn't even think to make something up; I just admitted I didn't know and gave one of these ¯_(ツ)_/¯ and went back to drinking my sangria. That couldn't have happened back when I was working in a garden center.

1. Garden center employees know the names of the plants, always, in Latin and the common name, too. If a garden center employee doesn't know it, they find someone that does or make up something convincing. There's no giving up at the garden center. No shrugging it off. And most importantly, no sangria. You're the plant-knowing elite. You've seen it all. You work together to get everything IDed, every time.

2. When you work at a garden center, you always have people to bounce design ideas off of for your own backyard. It's nice when you can talk about your own spaces and not just customers' spaces—you've got more skin in the game. I miss the days of going to work with a gaggle of certified plant experts that reallllllly enjoy having and sharing their opinions.

3. Free plants—good golly, I miss the pitchouts. How can you sell a plant if you haven't grown it? AND how can you afford to grow ALL the plants? Easy. Take them home when they're mostly dead, nurse them back to life and then you can sell them with all your hard-won knowledge. Also? Since your co-workers are plant hoarders, too, there's intercompany plant swapping. It's a plant party, every day.

4. When you leave the garden center, you gain between 9 and 1,000 pounds. All that walking, loading carts and unloading trucks really adds up to a healthier you. In fact, you could probably market garden centers as a place to work solely on the health benefits alone. A large garden center could be used as mall walkers use the mall before opening. Would that lead to sales opportunities or be annoying? I don't know.

5. Something ridiculous happens every day: a customer comes in and asks for an ID on a hosta except they brought in a burdock leaf; a coworker spills their lunch down their front; a port-o-potty blows over; a customer

backs into the Dumpster. You can count on the bizarre happening. You get your laughs, for sure.

6. Fresh air. Aside from the crazy hours and low pay, you're really living the dream. All that fresh air and sunshine? Oprah might say it's your best life.

7. Working with like-minded people is so great. Face it, if you're working in a garden center, you're all Team Hufflepuff and the chances for a Slytherin getting in there is slim to none. You have a plant-loving posse at your back and that's good. Of all the places I've worked (and I've worked everywhere), garden centers have the least in-fighting by far.

8. Stopping somewhere, like Target to pick up toilet paper and peanut M&Ms, on the way home covered with work dirt keeps you humble.

9. You know what's new and have it first. It doesn't even make it off the truck before you're calling DIBS and it's in your garden before the magazines even spotlight it.

10. The parties: birthdays, babies, moving away, moving on … garden people know how to party (and cook and DRINK). **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is now a regular columnist in Green Profit magazine. You can find her funky, punky blog planted at KissMyAster.co and you can follow her on Facebook and Twitter @KissMyAster.