

Features

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Austrian Garden Dynasties

Erwin Meier-Honegger

Starkl: A Multifaceted Family Business

Josef Starkl I started a nursery business in 1912 only 50 kilometers outside Vienna. But it was his son, Josef II, who purchased an old monastery with an adjacent park and built Austria's first true garden center in one of the most scenic settings imaginable. It is still overwhelming today to enter the 30,000-sq. ft. wooden hall, which was built in 1967.

Pictured: It doesn't look like much now, but this old factory could soon be one of Europe's most interesting new garden centers.

Virtual Inspiration Tour

To see the videos from the Virtual Inspiration Tour, go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7645438>. Click "CC" for closed captioning, as they are mostly in German.



Josef II left four heirs: Josef III, Anton, Maria and Ludwig.

Simple arithmetic told Josef II that for four children to

one day divide their inheritance fairly, four equal retail locations were needed. He quickly built those. The question of whether or not the children were interested in the nursery did not arise. They had grown up in the company, had always worked there and were allowed to do the training they wanted. But when the time was ripe, everyone took their part in one of the four branches of the family business—voluntarily and with pleasure, they say.

Today, Starkl is Austria's largest horticultural company. More than a dozen family members of the fourth-generation business run six (soon to be seven) garden centers, two tree nurseries in Austria and a third in the Czech Republic, plus a mail-order plant business. The company generates annual sales of more than \$23.5 million.



Each retail location is managed autonomously, but shares the umbrella brand and advertising. The family meets several times a year to discuss goals and plans for all locations. These are sometimes the subject of heated debate, especially considering that six (of 18) grandchildren have joined the business.

One of them is Ludwig Starkl. At 39, he has been working in the family business for 12 years. Now he is managing director and owner of several Starkl garden centers, including what will be the newest: Ludwig recently purchased the lease on an old factory in

Pfaffenstätten, beautifully situated on the historic Wiener Neustadt Canal, which at one time was Austria's only shipping canal. The factory, which dates back to 1822, was at one time a cotton and twine mill and later a bed-feather processing factory. By next April, it is scheduled to become one of Europe's most beautiful and interesting garden centers.

Pictured: Starkl's original location in Tulln was the first true garden center in Austria. It features a massive wooden greenhouse showroom that is impressive even by today's standards.

Inset: Ludwig Starkl touring guests through his next garden center.



Lederleitner: Garden Center Royalty

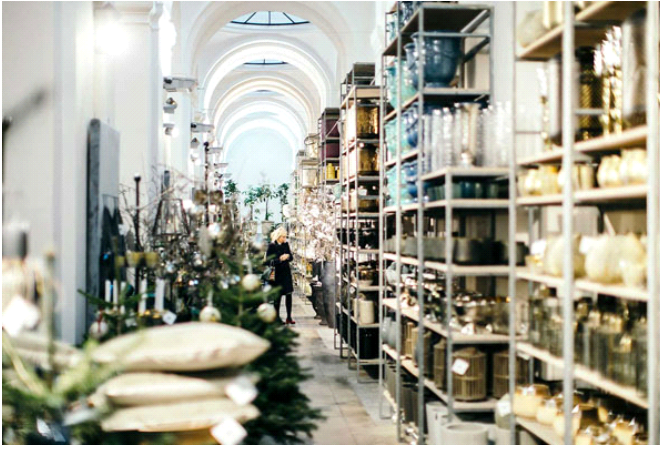
Can you imagine choosing the grounds of a medieval castle as the setting for a garden center business? Or would you consider the basement of a 19th century stock exchange building in the center of a European capital?

Pictured: The orangery of an old imperial palace in Laxenburg is the home of one of Lederleitner's 10 retail stores.

Each of the 10 Lederleitner shops and garden centers in and around Vienna has a unique setting. Depending upon the location, the assortment varies from plant-focused to purely interior furnishings and decor. The aim is that the brand shall be first stop for stylish living space—both outside and inside the home. The retail part of the business is therefore complemented by a garden design department as well as interior design consultancy.

The premise of the Lederleitner brand is maybe best summarized in their new concept store in Vienna's most exclusive shopping district, the "Goldenes Quartier." In between the boutiques of international designer labels, Lederleitner's Home Concept store offers high-end gifts, accessories, books, magazines, lifestyle products, contemporary furniture and home decor ideas.

In stark contrast is Castle Walpersdorf, a huge Renaissance castle the Lederleitner family purchased in 2017. Constructed in 1571, it has served as residence for a number of aristocratic families. Its present-day owners combine modern home trends, culture, arts and crafts exhibitions, and concerts.



Pictured: Lederleitner Wien (which means Vienna) is located in the basement of the old Vienna stock exchange building.

A more plant- and garden-related Lederleitner store is situated within the premises of another imperial palace outside of Vienna, in the town of Laxenburg. The castle formerly served as a summer retreat for the imperial Habsburg dynasty. The garden center is situated in the old orangeries of the castle.

Another eclectic Lederleitner store can be found in the 10,000-sq. ft. basement (the “Roman Market Hall”) of

the old Vienna stock exchange, where Lederleitner presents the newest trends in floral design as well as exclusive and playful accessories and garden furniture. The landmark structure was built between 1847 and 1877 in the Renaissance Revival style. The basement setting is unexpectedly bright thanks to its high vaulted ceilings and large round ceiling windows, and the many plants give the feeling of walking around in a garden. At the same time it smells like an amazing mixture of flowers and food, because the Lederleitner store shares the market hall with a stylish restaurant.

Markus Lederleitner created a cult firm for garden lovers out of a family nursery in Austria. Now his daughter Anna and son Hubertus are working in the company. Lederleitner is a true family business that reflects the contrasting Austrian spirit to perfection. **GP**

Erwin Meier-Honegger is CEO and co-owner of Ernst Meier, an independent garden center in Zurich, Switzerland.