

Features

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The Fall Event: Highlighting Their Strengths

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You can't be in this industry if you don't love to visit garden centers. It's even better when you can do it with nearly 200 of your favorite retailers. At this year's The Garden Center Group Fall Event, we visited three retail operations in Northern Delaware and Southeastern Pennsylvania: Gateway Garden Center in Hockessin, Delaware; Mostardi Nursery & Greenhouses in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, and Terrain at Styer's in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, on an increasingly rainy day (that culminated in a deluge at Terrain). Each retail store had its own vibe, which helped to set itself apart from the competition. Here's just a little bit of what I saw on the tour.

Solution Gardening

If a customer had a problem, Gateway Garden Center had a solution. From wet spots to encouraging fall planting for perennials, among other suggestions, Gateway let the signage lead the customer to maximum success.

Going Native

One of Gateway Garden Center's specialties is native plants and it's no wonder since co-owner Steve Castorani (who owns it with his wife, Peg) is also a co-founder and President/CEO of North Creek Nurseries, which helped to bring the American Beauties brand of native plants to market. Shrubs and perennials account for their top two categories, and this year, the goal was to bring in larger plants for atmosphere and higher sales. Mission accomplished.

Wow Factor

Both Gateway Garden Center and Mostardi Nursery are located on fairly busy streets with a decent amount of traffic, and it takes a lot to get potential customers to stop and pull in. The sunflowers at Gateway (left) and sunflowers, trees and mixed combos at Mostardi (right) create showstopping displays to entice customers to slow down and see what's inside.

A Welcoming Porch

One thing I loved at Mostardi Nursery was the covered "front porch" area in front of the store, which was merchandised with pots and seasonal décor. It was a great segue from the parking lot to the interior of the store and made for a great place to view the sales yard when the rain started (sorry for the raindrops in the picture).

High Impulse

Terrain at Styer's is textbook how to create a mood at retail. From the color blocking to the scents and music, this store has everything needed to create an emotional shopping experience, even in the checkout line. I love the natural wood vibe and these high-end impulse buys right before you hit the register.

Shoppable Décor

Another thing Terrain at Styer's does really well is showcase how something looks in use and then provides easily accessible product from which to buy. For example, this wall of wreaths and the stock of wreaths below.

Café & Special Events

Terrain at Styer's takes that feel-good vibe to another level with a café available for seasonally changing brunch, lunch and dinner, as well as rentable events space for everything from private brunch to wedding receptions. **GP**

