

Front Lines

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Creating the Experience

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The folks at Colonial Gardens in Blue Springs, Missouri (outside of Kansas City), has been working on creating a true experience for customers and it all starts with the parking lot. After touring garden centers for nearly 20 years now, I can safely say this is one of the biggest “wow” moments I’ve had pulling up to a store. The inside matches with a modern inside sales area that opens up to a gorgeous open-air courtyard with a covered stage (inset picture) and events building.

The fun doesn’t stop there, though. The future of this location includes You-Pick fruit fields across the street, as well as You-Cut flower fields, along with a produce greenhouse to supply a café and on-site market. Owner Tory Schwope is still in the process of changing the property, which included a two-year renovation to create the Modern Prairie style garden center. That renovation included five remodeled greenhouses, an 11,000 sq. ft. outdoor showroom, an enlarged pond, offices and an eco-friendly bio-swale and bio-basin.

Tory isn’t just in the garden center business, though. His company, DCA Outdoor, has created a supply chain to sell trees to landscape contractors and it has a network of company-owned growers in six states. Colonial also is a satellite site for KAT, a wholesale landscape distributor, and DCA Outdoor.

There’s a lot going on with this property, but the one thing it does is make any customer visiting go, “wow.” **GP**