

Features

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Rockin' Garden Center Sales

Denise Schreiber



A drive along Interstate 90 in Ohio will give you wonderful views of Lake Erie, tempt you to visit the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, or better yet, lead you to Gale's Garden Centers—one in Willoughby Hills on the eastern side of Cleveland, the other in Westlake—which tells you it's on the western side of Cleveland.

Both Gale's locations are destination garden centers offering a wide variety of quality plants, garden goods, seasonal items, ladies apparel, giftware, wildlife supplies, outdoor living and plant services. At Westlake, they have a great selection of wine and beer should you wish to indulge at home or take for a party. Not only that, but they have frequent tastings of the wine. Need a plant as a gift for someone special? They have a full-service custom silk floral department, as well as greenhouse plants that are gift wrapped and delivered. What more could you ask for in a garden center?

Pictured: The entrance at Gale's Willoughby Hills is large enough to be seen from the road and features containers ready for purchase at the entrance. • There are lots of plants at the entrance for customers to pick up and purchase, not to mention catching the eye of passing traffic.

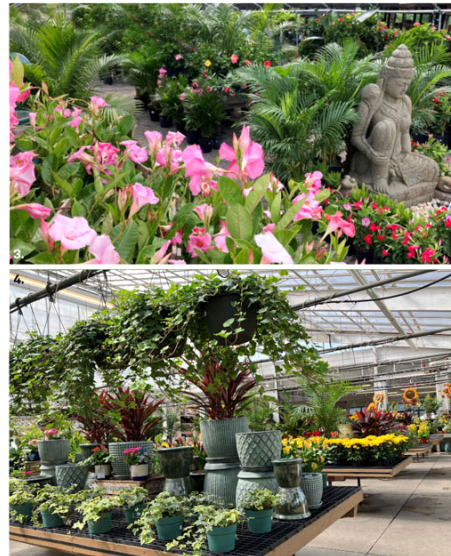
A Long History of Retail

Founded by the late Sam and Bonnie Donzelli, they're now owned by family members Pam Donzelli, Julie Donzelli DiFeo and Richard Rouser. The Westlake location was founded in 1965 and Willoughby Hills in 1968. As the garden centers have expanded their offerings since their inception, so has the customer base, bringing in visitors from other states, including Michigan, Indiana, New York and Pennsylvania.

During peak seasons, they have 40 to 50 staff at each location who are not only trained in their department, but are cross trained in other departments, as well. You can also sign up for a weekly staff newsletter, keeping you up to date on the happenings at Gale's.

In the spring, you can find summer-blooming bulbs, seed-starting supplies, transplants and a large selection of houseplants. Early summer brings a huge selection of colorful perennials and annuals, as well as trees and shrubs. Not only are there plants, but fountains in every shape and size, tools for gardeners of every shape and size, and supplies for fertilizing plants and organic supplies for your plant babies. Of course, if you don't have the time, inclination or unable, they can also do tree planting for you during the spring and summer.

Pictured: Tropical plants blooming to catch the eye of the customer. The stores bring in tropicals as annual sales in Northeast Ohio. • The greenhouse is filled with houseplants year-round, small to large, to remind customers that you can always have plenty of green in the home.



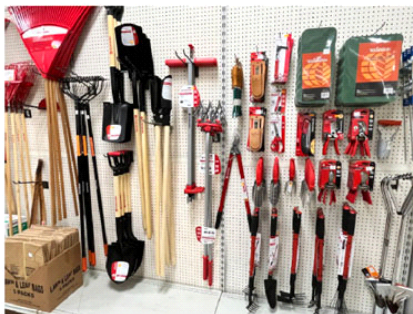
Fall & Winter Delights

When the temperatures turn cooler, shopping is always a delight, where you can choose individual spring-blooming bulbs or large quantities in just about every color. Plus, there are blooming mums, cornstalks, pumpkins and gourds of every shape and size to decorate or make pies. And this is the time when they've crossed into the next set of holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas, offering decorations and other items for those holidays, including Christmas ornaments, holiday plants, serving dishes for the holidays and so much more. And to add to the merriment, there's usually live entertainment most weekends during Christmas.

There are lots of events, too, at the Westlake site although more is coming to Willoughby Hills location. There's a Christmas Open House the first weekend in November (which I'll have to put on my calendar even though I do shop there), followed by Girls Nite Out in early November and Mr. Jingeling at Christmas (he's a local icon).



Pictured: For those cool evenings outdoors, Gale's offers a variety of outdoor heating options for homeowners to enjoy a glass of wine while keeping warm. • Tools are neatly displayed with hand tools separated from larger tools, all with pricing on them. • Both stores offer a little something for everyone in gift and garden accents, like this garden art stylishly displayed on a country hutch. • Christmas trees completely decorated with items to purchase and accessories to complete the home decor. Both stores offer a variety of themed trees each year, starting the decorating process in October, well before the Holiday Open House in early November.



But Gale's also gives back to the community by having fundraising for local pet rescues all Christmas long; they call it "A Home For The Holidays." Plus, they host

local pet rescues in the store and take donations for their "Giving Tree" where a customer can purchase an ornament for \$3 and they'll hang it on the tree with their family's name. Last year, the recipient was "The Rescue Inn." And family pets aren't left out of celebrating the holiday, so there's a Santa with Pets event at Christmas. Leashed pets are always welcome.

After the madness of the holidays, Gale's just doesn't stop. During February and in March, they have their winter seminars on Saturdays, so even though local residents can't get out into the garden much, they can still get their garden fix and talk with the experts. And see what's new in the greenhouse, too! **GP**

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