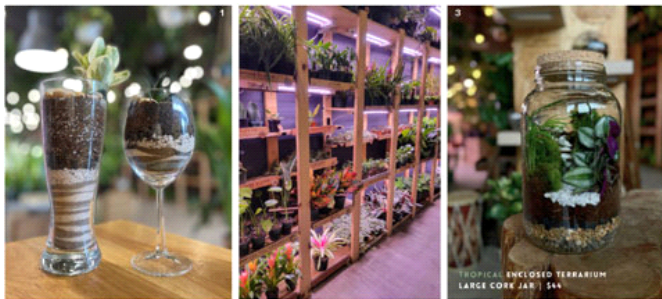


Features

6/1/2024

Connecting Through Plants

Wendy Komanchek



It was a cold, rainy day when I stopped by Spotted Leaf Company in Somerville, New Jersey. The shop was lit with soft lighting. Wood and plants decorated the store with a fun neon-type sign that said, “Welcome to the Jungle.”

Somerville is a small town in western New Jersey, and the Spotted Leaf Company has become a popular place there to buy houseplants and tropicals.

This cozy plant shop started in 2020 as a dinner conversation between owners Sam Shaw and Matt Grossman. Due to the COVID pandemic, they had to cancel their wedding and decided to tie the knot in their home’s sunroom and over Zoom for others to enjoy.

According to their website (spottedleaf.co), their sunroom was transformed into a jungle with “tons of tropical plants.” Sam and Matt’s jungle vibe for a wedding background helped them deal with the pandemic, inspiring them to create a place where people could gather and reconnect through plants.

Encouraging Plant Parents of All Skill Levels

Do you ever feel that you want to do something well, but that learning a new skill takes time? Customers who enter Spotted Leaf Company find that it doesn’t matter how much they know or don’t know about plants because the staff is always willing to help them.

The staff works with customers to learn more about their experience with plants, whether they're plant newbies, people convinced they have a brown thumb or experienced plant parents.

Sam said, "The Spotted Leaf Company is customer-focused rather than focusing on sales. We want the plants to style spaces."

Sam and Matt and their staff visualize themselves as a cross between interior designers and plant doctors.

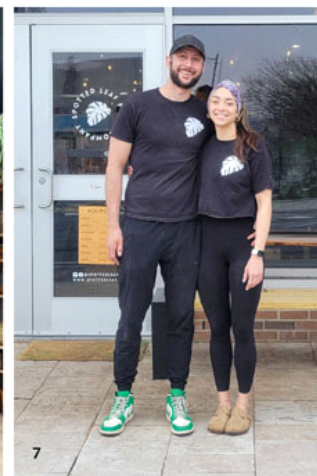
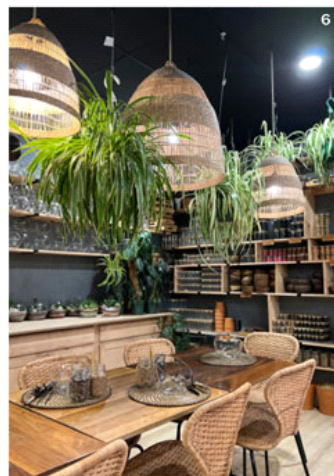
"The Spotted Leaf Company works like Build-a-Bear—just the plants to style spaces," she said, which is why they call it an "experiential plant shop."

When customers check out, they get care cards to go home with their new plants. The cards indicate how much light, water and other attention their plants need weekly. The staff also repots the new plant using Spotted Leaf's soil.

Connecting with Others Through Workshops

The back of their experiential retail plant shop houses the terrarium-building classes, which are held in the greenhouse room. Sam and Matt's first gathering was a Plant + Sip gathering, which validated that this was the life they wanted.

Today, Sam and Matt host parties, birthdays and life moments with their customers in the tropical oasis they've created. They're open Wednesday through Sunday, including many holidays, such as Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day. They're closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas.



1. Workshop attendees can choose containers to plant their terrariums, including wine and beer glasses.
2. Grow lights above every plant grouped for visual interest. The décor on the retail side and the greenhouse room are made of wood and other natural elements. Each plant in the display is labeled, as well.
3. Customers aren't limited to glassware for their terrarium building. Here's an enclosed terrarium that customers can build at the Spotted Leaf Company's workshops.
4. Sam and Matt make their soil for potting plants. They blend coconut coir, instead of peat, with other natural ingredients combined in a concrete mixer.
5. There are plants for all plant parent skills, such as "Plants for the Plant Killer." Folks who haven't been successful with houseplants or tropicals will find support for successful plant parenting at the Spotted Leaf Company.
6. Workshop space in the greenhouse where customers work together with plants.



7. Matt Grossman and Sam Shaw are the owners of Spotted Leaf Company, an experiential plant shop in Somerville, New Jersey.
8. "Welcome to the Jungle" reflects the fun and tropical theme of the Spotted Leaf Company.
9. Customers get their new plants potted at the potting station using Spotted Leaf Company's soil. Their new plants also come with care cards to remind the buyer how to take care of their new plant babies.

Wendy Komanchek owns The Landscape Writer and is a proud Garden Communicators International member. She writes for green industry trade magazines and content for lawn care, landscape and gardening services. You can email her at wendy@landscapewriter.com.