

## Features

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### Greening Up the Garden Center

*Compiled by Jennifer Polanz*

For this topic, I tapped into the expertise of industry vet Park Pittman, who's been working with growers and retailers in the Great Lakes region as a sales manager for then Nexus, now Prospiant, for decades. I asked him for his thoughts on how a garden center could consider "greening up." He came up with this checklist of items to review, along with general recommendations to service existing equipment to keep it running optimally and replace old shade curtains for maximum heat retention or cooling. Also, he added, don't forget to let your customers know what you're doing to run a more sustainable business.

However, it all comes with a caveat. A lot of it depends on your size: "Each customer is unique with their own limitations and/or restrictions based on electrical and power source services, water availability, as well as your bank account!" Park noted. "Retailers all are different in the amount of space that they have available, as well. For example, retail garden centers are normally required to have five to 10 parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of retail space and some aren't willing to lose space for a boiler room, water reclamation tanks or a solar field."

So check out the list and see what fits for your operation!

- LED lights to replace metal halide and/or fluorescent
- Infrared overhead heaters
- In-floor hot water heat (will require a boiler)—This can cut down usage of overhead unit heaters and heat spaces where customers and plants are at. Hot water systems can have multiple stages of heating (versus on or off with overhead electrical, natural gas or propane unit heaters)
- Hot water perimeter fin tube heat (will require a boiler)—This also cuts down on overhead unit heaters
- Hydronic overhead hot water unit heaters or fin tube (will require a boiler)
- For natural gas or propane heaters, consider higher efficiency overhead gas unit heaters, like Modine Effinity 93 units
- Consider solar power, if local and/or state grant money is available, and the electrical company interconnection agreement/buyback program makes financial sense
- Ebb & flood/Flow benching with water tanks for recycling/re-capture
- Drip irrigation to lessen water usage
- Retention ponds/water tanks to collect rain water runoff and/or irrigation run off
- Evaporative pad wall cooling in place of HVAC (portable units can work for spot cooling)

- Well-placed ceiling fans used at check-out lines and/or heavy traffic areas for spot cooling
- Replace old horizontal air flow (HAF) or momentum fans with ones drawing less amperage
- Insulated metal coverings for roof/side/end walls to help cut down on heat gain and help with winter heat retention
- Add natural ventilation venting (roof and or side/end wall vents)—If you only have forced ventilation (exhaust fans) this can help to keep exhaust fans from running during the cooler months
- Replace old worn out doors with new, better sealing doors
- Automatic entrance/exit doors can help doors stay closed and keep interior temperatures more consistent
- In extreme climates, an entrance/exit vestibule can help keep interior temperatures more consistent
- Re-skin or cover structures with diffused coverings to help cut down on heat gain during warmer months
- 16-mm acrylic/polycarbonate coverings in place of double poly for better insulation value/heat retention
- Interior, motorized shade systems to be used as heat retention (closed weave cloth) or cooling (open weave cloth)
- Dual shade systems for the best of both. Clear, closed weave cloth on the bottom system can be kept closed during winter days to help keep heat in and still get sun to the plants, and the top cloth (open or closed weave) can be utilized for shade.
- Install interior side/end walls for smaller/separate zones, so that smaller sales areas need to be heated/cooled during slower sales months
- If you have three-phase electrical service available, three-phase motors, (vent, pad pumps, exhaust fan, lights) will pull fewer amps than single-phase motors

Do you have other suggestions that you've implemented that you can share? I'd love to hear them— email me at [jpolanz@ballpublishing.com](mailto:jpolanz@ballpublishing.com) and let me know! **GP**