

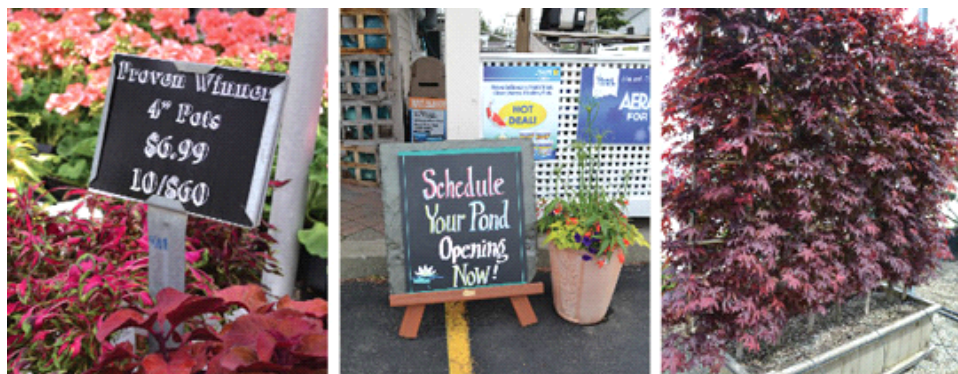
Features

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Cheap Tricks: May Mayhem

Jennifer Polanz

It was a pleasant sight: an overcast Wednesday before Mother's Day (it had rained that morning) and the parking lot at Bremec Garden Center outside of Cleveland, Ohio, was packed. As in, I had to drive around the lot twice and then make my own parking space. This cheerful grower-retailer set in the countryside of Chesterland makes for a great destination stop for everything from trees and shrubs down to tiny fairy garden plants and everything in between. It's a fan favorite—hence, its designation as Best in the East (that's the East side of Cleveland) for five years in a row via a consumer survey from Cleveland Magazine. Here we show just a few reasons why, but if you'd like to see for yourself, Bremec will be on the garden center tour for Cultivate'14 in July.



Premium Branding

The value of branding isn't lost on the folks at Bremec's, who carry not only their own branded (homegrown) material, but also Proven Winners, Monrovia and others. Here you can see how the Proven Winners brand is valued—and note the bundled pricing of 10 for \$60, giving the customer a nearly \$10 discount for purchasing more.

Starting Up

Ponding is a great niche and the pond shop here has everything needed to get started. They also offer a service to help customers “open up” the pond by coming out and getting the water garden started for the year.

Give Them Some Privacy

This is the first time I'd seen an item like this for sale, at least around Cleveland, and I think it's a great idea.

These Japanese maples make a beautiful privacy screen. Bremec also had another group of potted espaliered trees, which is such an interesting niche item to have on hand.



Pottery Barn (Literally)

Bremec takes its pottery and statuary seriously. So much that it has an actual barn for showcasing it, featuring side windows and skylights to complement the artificial lighting inside. It makes for a great atmosphere that can be shopped even on rainy days.

Overwintering

Bremec employs a couple of cool ideas to keep things going through the winter. One is the offer to overwinter tropicals for customers. They will pick up plants, remove them from containers and/or repot them, apply pest control and deliver them in the spring. There's a price list available depending on the size of the plant.

Bonding With Customers

Bremec has two locations—the main one in Chesterland and then a smaller one, called Bremec on the Heights, in Cleveland Heights. Both stores offer Bremec Bonds from January through the end of February. For \$35, customers can buy a bond and it's worth \$50 at the stores May 1 through August 1.

Fairyland

This retailer has gone all in on Fairy Gardening and it shows with displays of miniature plants (again, premium priced) and lots of options for decorating said fairy garden. However, if someone wasn't super creative or didn't have time to put their own together, they could still enjoy a fairy garden with some that were already beautifully done.



Stay Happy

Bremec's did a lot of things right, but one intangible that's so important is happiness. The employees (who

were working hard on this overcast Wednesday thanks to a full parking lot) were happy, friendly and even complimenting customers on their choice of plants. It made it fun to shop there.

Tell 'Em What's Up

The folks here do a great job of communicating with customers. This display shows plans for an exciting outdoor kitchen addition to be finished this summer, complete with plans and a map. Keeping customers in the loop makes them feel like part of the team.

Stop Them in Their Tracks

Another thing Bremec's did really well was signage. These bright, eye-catching pop-up signs along the busy Route 306 on which the garden center is located did a great job of letting people know there was a garden center (and it was having a sale) well before the driveway. **GP**