

Features

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Ideas Abound in the Bay Area

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June's GCA Summer Tour hit the West Coast for a peek at some of the San Francisco area's best-known garden centers and nurseries. *Green Profit* spotted more than a few ideas you can implement in your own garden center ... pronto.



And Then There's This

About as no-nonsense as you can get—the names of plants written directly onto the black pot with chalk. This works best in low-rain regions and with folks who are okay with being loose and low-key.

Opportunity to Sell

Signage has been called the “secret salesperson.” In the case of Navlet's Garden Center in Danville, management decided to use signage to sell additional products. Check out the suggestion on this sign—buy the plant and don't forget to pick up some planting mix and some slug killer, too!



Telling Stories With Signage

Annie's Annuals and Perennials in Richmond, California, is the antithesis of everything you've learned about how garden centers are run: Block-and-board benches; everything is sold in 4-in. pots; many plants are sold not in flower and even just freshly pruned; pricing is color-coded by tags. And that's just the beginning of what

she's "not doing right." But, it's oh-so right for Annie's business, which has a dedicated and cult-like following, not just locally, but by mail order as well. It's what happens when a nursery business places emphasis on the specialness of the plants and not on the demands of the consumer.

What struck many of the tour attendees was the detail about each plant on the signage. It told a story—why Annie Hayes herself was offering it, what she liked about it, why she's growing this one and not another, and, of course, some information about the plant.

Over the more than 20 years Annie has been in business, she's become such a trusted plant source that her customers seek out and accept her recommendations. What Annie says goes. And so they keep coming back.

On the Other Hand

Armstrong Garden Center in Dublin, California, one of several dozen Armstrong locations, is a study in "less is more" when it comes to signage. All posted signs were crisp, clear, consistent and easy to read with a quick glance

Wicked Water Restrictions

All along California's highways the brown hillsides are clear and present evidence of the region's ongoing drought. A staff member at Alden Lane Nursery mentioned their area is down to a 50% water restriction. Educating customers about what that means for their plants has suddenly become very important.

Signs indicating a "water wise" option were peppered throughout Alden Lane. The UC-Davis Arboretum All-Stars plant program of sustainable (and water wise) plants was prominently featured at one of the main entrances. And they also were giving away empty plastic gallon jugs with signage encouraging customers to save water from showers and sinks for watering garden plantings.



Say It With Shirts

Green Acres in Roseville promotes water conservation heavily, as well. Staff shirts explained four different water-saving techniques (two are shown).

Bagged and Beautiful

Go to most any garden center and you can almost guarantee that the least favorable area of the store is the bagged soils and mulches. It's hard to make these items look attractive, let alone neat and tidy.

The bagged section of Navlet's Garden Center in Danville was a study in organization and neatness. I attribute it to the bags being contained within compartments and set off visually by the wood, metal fixtures and the trellis. The low height of the stacks also helps keep the bags looking tidy.

Armstrong's had a very respectable bagged goods section, as well, made more classy backed by a picket fence.



(Pictured) Alden Lane in Livermore also gets an A+ for their bagged goods display. **GP**