

Today's GardenCenter®

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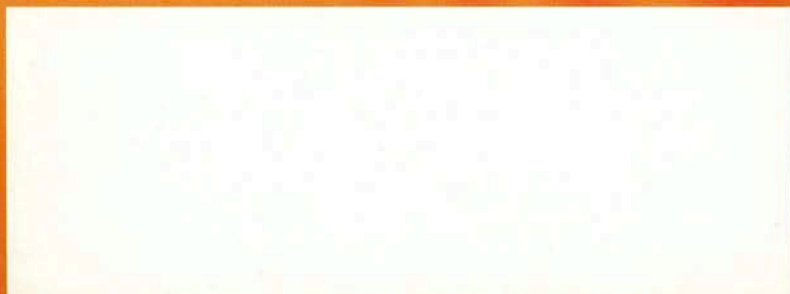
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Leading the Revolution in Garden Retailing

100 Revolutionary

g a r d e n c e n t e r s

*Find out who is changing the landscape
of garden retailing.*

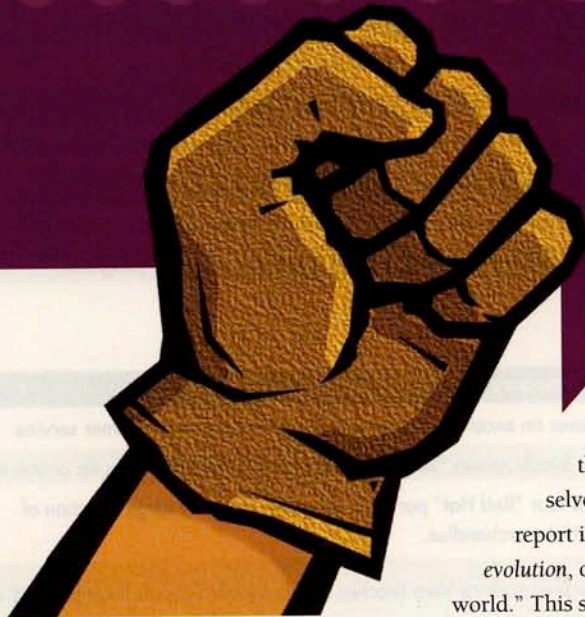


You say you want a revolution?

Well, we've gone out and found the 100 most revolutionary garden centers in the country and are presenting them to you by region.

100 Revolutionary

g a r d e n c e n t e r s



Ever since we launched *Today's Garden Center* at the end of 2003 with our upward-leading fist and tagline – Leading the Revolution in Garden Retailing – we've been excited by the response from readers who also believe in the revolution, as more garden centers embrace the best of modern retailing.

The challenge has been identifying what makes a garden center revolutionary and who these leaders are. There isn't any one place you can find them. In our sister magazine, *Greenhouse Grower*, we publish a Top 100 Growers ranking with size as the criteria. In the garden center industry, there is a ranking focused on dollars that also includes big-box retailers. We decided we would create a definitive report focused solely on independent garden centers that would give single-location retailers equal weight with larger independent chains. It would be based on leadership, not size or money.

We worked with industry insiders to identify the ingredients that would make up the most revolutionary garden centers. Then we developed a questionnaire and assigned points to the criteria, with a maximum of 100 points. These questions covered employee training, industry involvement, profitability, marketing, use of technology, purchasing, customer service and community service. We graded on a curve. The highest score was 91 and we established a baseline of at least 50 points to make the list. We see this baseline climbing over time, as our 100 Club continues to raise the bar. Of the 150 completed surveys, 78 made the grade.

We identified the remaining 22 through industry resources and our own visits and coverage. We've presented them alphabetically in each region, reflecting where concentrations of garden centers are.

This is really more of a "100 Club" of garden centers who share these progressive characteristics. The completed questionnaires themselves are a goldmine for new article ideas. Like our industry, this new annual report is a work in progress. As the famous Beatles song says, much of it is *evolution*, or change over time, and there's no question "we all want to change the world." This song is dedicated to all you garden retailers leading the revolution! Sing it!

Northeast *Recommended by Industry Sources

Company Name	City/State	Locations	Years	Revolutionary concept or idea
American Plant Food Co.	Bethesda, MD	2	83	Holds "Earthwise University" training, which is 8 to 10 one-hour-long classes.
Ashcombe Farm & Greenhouses	Mechanicsburg, PA	1	43	Garden makeover promotions drew publicity, excited customers.
Aspatuck Garden	Westhampton Beach, NY	1	30	Sponsors non-gardening community events that customers attend.
Atlantic Nursery & Garden Shop	Freeport, NY	1	75	Extends plant guarantee to 2 years with purchase of Bumper Crop and Roots.
Barlow Flower Farm	Sea Girt, NJ	1	25	T-Shirt Club - Customers wear a Barlow's T-Shirt, get 10 percent off purchases.
Churchill's	Exeter, NH	1	49	Invests in pre-purchasing; buys from some vendors on consignment.

Country Market Nursery	Mechanicsburg, PA	1	60	Partners with non-profits to share costs, benefits and customer lists.
Fairfield Garden Center	Fairfield, NJ	1	38	Participates in half-hour pond building show on local cable station.
Gary's Gardens	Severna Park, MD	1	5	Uses technology to have availabilities on schedule, efficiency in restocking.
Grossman's Country Nursery	Penfield, NY	1	21	Vendors pay cost of advertising on TV/radio; garden center gets more exposure.
*Hick's Nurseries	Westbury, NY	1	153	Has a seminar room for events, cooking demonstrations and meetings.
*Homestead Gardens	Davidsonville, MD	1	36	Employs visual merchandising team for exciting, daring displays.



Barlow Flower Farm

What is your most revolutionary idea when it comes to marketing?

"The Barlow T-Shirt Club," writes Stephen Barlow III. "This is our twist on the frequent buyer clubs cards that are offered at many retailers. We sell a T-shirt to our customers. The shirt generally has a garden design with our name on it (it is different from our staff's uniform). When the customer wears the shirt, they receive 10 percent off their entire purchase."

Loughton Garden Center	Chelmsford, MA	1	71	Held an auction to boost lagging inventory sales.
Matterhorn Nursery Inc.	Spring Valley, NY	1	25	Buys container loads from overseas for volume prices.
*Martin Viette Nurseries	East Norwich, NY	1	76	Has an open-to-buy plan for quicker turns and less static inventory.
Parker Gardens	Scotch Plains, NJ	1	50	Participates in Jersey Grown program to tout homegrown products.
Peconic River Herb Farm	Calverton, NY	1	20	Used advertising budget on expansive display grounds for public use.
Riverside Nursery & Garden Center	Collinsville, CT	1	32	Calls customers personally; conducts in-home consultations; excels in service.
Scenic Nursery & Landscaping	Raymond, NH	1	10	Processes bare root, plugs and liners to grow on to saleable size.
*Sickles Market	Little Silver, NJ	1	98	Buyers in the company constantly study consumer trends.
Sonora's Gardens	Horseheads, NY	1	4	Growing less, buying in to conserve fuel and labor; buying locally.
Stauffers of Kissel Hill	Lititz, PA	6	74	Reduced inventory process to one to two days with handheld scanners.
*Van Wilgen's Garden Center	North Branford, CT	1	86	Redesigned traffic flow for improved efficiency.
*Waterloo Gardens	Exton & Devon, PA	2	64	Has a complete Web site for customer research, including gift ideas for holidays.
Williams Nursery	Westfield, NJ	1	85	Point-of-sale system used for multiple pricing, loyalty program.

Southeast *Recommended by Industry Sources

Company Name	City/State	Locations	Years	Revolutionary concept or idea
Across The Pond, Inc.	Huntsville, AL	1	2 ½	Focuses on excellent employees who provide great customer service.
Boulevard Flowers, Inc.	Colonial Heights, VA	1	50	Touts locally grown "Boulevard Fern" with custom print tags for premium price.
Countryside Gardens	Hampton, VA	1	3 ½	Hosts four "Red Hat" parties a year and carries a large selection of Red Hat merchandise.
DeWayne's Home & Garden Showplace	Selma, NC	1	14	New lines such as Vera Bradley and Rainbow Sandals have boosted sales.
Fairview Garden Center	Raleigh, NC	1	30	Uses the facility to host employee appreciation days for corporations.
Greenbrier Nurseries	Roanoke, VA	3	48	With POS it has paperless inventory; creates plant info that prints with receipt.



DeWayne's Home & Garden Showplace

How do you communicate your brand (the store) in your operation?

"We try to communicate our brand with a 'blanket coverage' process," says Marcia Woodall. "The logo is used on site to promote the store and make certain shoppers are aware of where they are shopping. Handcards, exterior signage, shopping baskets, checkout areas, employee uniforms, seasonal displays, informational signage, trash bins, gift cards, shopping bags and gift wrap all display our logo with a consistent design."