



Garden Centers of America: Together We're Better!

GCA's Key Connections: Member Profile

Noah Donovan, Green Goods Manager

Mesquite Valley Growers Nursery, Tucson, AZ

Industry Tours Offer New Opportunities for Fresh Displays, Growing Techniques



With about 20 acres of growing facilities and another 4 acres dedicated to retail space, Mesquite Valley Growers Nursery in Tucson, AZ, has everything that gardeners need to beautify their outdoor living spaces.

“As far as plants go, we offer everything imaginable, from 4-inch herbs, 4-inch perennials, annual bedding plants to 24-inch box oak trees,” says Noah Donovan, Green Goods Manager at Mesquite Valley Growers Nursery. And they employ a combination of growing techniques to ensure the success of their plant material, whether it’s still in-store or in the customer’s garden.

“We grow from seed for any of our native plants,” Noah says. “We grow from cuttings in many cases, and we also order in plugs from different vendors. We propagate in all of these methods.”

When Noah and his team are searching for new ideas for propagation, new plant varieties or interesting displays for their outdoor retail patio, they turn to what other garden centers and nurseries are doing.

“A lot of my inspiration for propagating new varieties that we haven’t grown yet comes from touring nurseries,” he says. “We’re fortunate enough to go to different industry shows and tours in California, Texas and even as far as Illinois.”



One of the tours Noah mentioned as being a real inspiration was last year’s GCA Summer Tour to San Francisco, CA, where he found some great ideas for displays. “Flora Grubb had really cool uses of succulents in displays. We do certain displays to that effect, but I really liked some of her succulent plantings.”



Noah continues, “We look for interesting displays more than anything, but we’re always on the lookout for something new, whether it’s an odd succulent or a gorgeous blooming lantana we haven’t come across.”

But browsing the diverse landscapes of different cities goes beyond the scheduled garden center tours, Noah makes a point to peruse neighborhoods' landscapes as well as people's gardens. "It gives us ideas for new plant combinations and what the home gardener wants in her landscape."

Garden center tours, including the IGC Chicago Monday Store Tour, have been a great source of ideas for Noah, especially since he gets to network and exchange information with other IGC retailers and growers. "It's great to share ideas with people, whether it's growing tips or management tips," he says. "There's always something you can take away from networking. Even if it is just one small important detail, it can change your year and how you conduct business."

Nursery Sprouted from a Seedling

Twenty-four years ago, Owner Thomas Birt started his nursery business in his backyard growing box mesquite trees and other types of desert trees. "Tom ended up renting a portion of his neighbor's backyard to expand his growing space," Noah says.

Eventually, Tom bought a small property for his nursery business then began picking up parcels of land surrounding the area. What started out as a small-time growing operation in his backyard grew to include approximately 24 acres with a nursery and garden center.

"As the years go by, we increase the diversity in our products and plants," Noah says. "We're trying to focus less on volume and more on diversity and quality."

Today, Mesquite Valley Growers Nursery is known amongst customers as the "go-to" garden center with the largest selection, largest variety and best quality of plants, trees, edibles, herbs, decor and supplies.

