



Garden Centers of America: Together We're Better!

GCA's Key Connections: Member Profile

Brenda Brien, Manager

36th Street Garden Center, Boise, ID

Unique Product Offerings, Bistro Make 36th Street Garden Center a Destination



Located in the historic Collister neighborhood with several other garden centers off the beaten path in Boise, ID, which has been dubbed the “nursery crawl,” 36th Street Garden Center & Bistro mixes its unique products and plants, as well as its restaurant and advice from fellow GCA members, to draw customers to its destination.

“Networking with other GCA members has helped me,” says Brenda Brien, Manager of the store. “My largest struggle right now is getting feet in the door, because we’re located off the beaten path.”

While on the 2014 GCA Summer Tour to San Francisco, Brenda was able to brainstorm with other members on how they increase foot traffic in their garden centers. “The GCA Tour gave me some great ideas,” Brenda says. “I received some great inside perspective from listening to and networking with other members.”

Brenda recognizes the educational opportunities and benefits of GCA are unlike any other gardening industry association.



Brenda, who has attended a total of two GCA Summer Tours, says, “You get to see so much more territory on the GCA Tour than you could on your own. It was really nice to see what these visiting tour stops are doing and who’s successful.”

Aside from advice she acquired on the GCA Tour, one important feature that has helped increase the number of customers at 36th Street Garden Center is the Bistro.



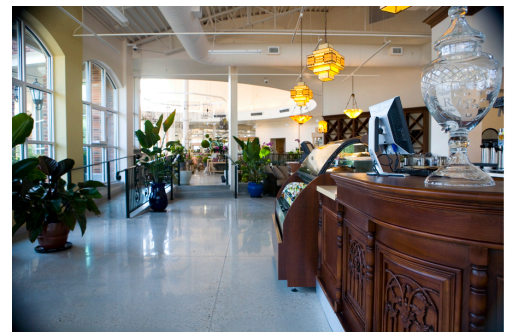
According to Brenda, a lot of the customers who come to the destination do so just to eat in the Bistro. “It’s a huge opportunity to spread the message of really what we’re all about,” Brenda says. “The best referral in the world is: ‘I’m meeting a friend here for lunch.’”

Brenda and her team grow a select amount of ingredients for the Bistro. Many of the menu offerings are seasonal and based on what is available from local growers.

She makes sure that the dishes are healthy combinations made with the freshest, most natural ingredients, including organic produce and low-fat meats. “Food is incredibly important for the healthy aspect of life,” she says.

Seven to eight years ago, Brenda and her team noticed that garden center owners were incorporating food into their businesses. “It was just the trend,” she says. “Putting a café in the garden center was a huge conversation among other retailers at the time. So we developed the space specifically for a café.”

The Bistro is operated separately from the garden center since the restaurant serves beer and wine. Even though they are logistically separate, the two depend on each other to draw a crowd. “Both businesses rely on each other completely,” Brenda says.



IGC’s Unique Offerings Stand Out

Another big appeal to customers to shop at 36th Street Garden Center is the unique product and plant offerings available that speak to people’s different personalities and styles. “Our store is a lifestyle store,” Brenda says. “For me, it’s about bringing your lifestyle into your home and garden.”

Following her motto, Brenda stocks the garden center with annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs and indoor tropicals, such as orchids and air plants. Diverse pre-built combination planters that marvel in texture and color as well as the ever-popular succulents round out the list of green goods available.



“We have the aspect to put the finishing touches on just about anything anybody wants to do in their yard or home,” Brenda says. “One of the owners of another garden center in the crawl said, ‘Brenda, we send people to your business for beautification.’ It’s nice that we all offer something different, so we complement each other.”

Customers who want to extend their gardening lifestyle into their home can do so with décor, furniture and gifts featured at the garden center. “We have a pretty established gift side of the business.”

Brenda continues, “We have so much to offer here at 36th Street Garden Center. Everybody finds their niche of what they truly love so they can garden actively year-round, even here in Boise.”

