

City Lights



Botanical Garden Sparkles with Holiday Gifts

Gardening typically doesn't conjure up images of Santa and snowflakes and sleigh bells, but retailers can reap holiday sales by thinking "spring." Gardens merchandise is the perfect holiday gift for both avid and novice gardeners. Even those who lack a green thumb can enjoy a "special something" with a botanical scent or a nature motif.

There's no Christmas lull at the Atlanta Botanical Garden's (ABG) gift shop, which sees year-round traffic due to its extensive selection of merchandise, offered at various price points and appealing to all tastes, whether locals or tourists, master gardeners or hobbyists, adults or children. Its rich source of product appeals to anyone who appreciates the outdoors.



Extra Special Events

At the ABG, 30 acres of greenspace with stunning city views draw gardening and nature enthusiasts alike throughout all the seasons by hosting entertaining and educational activities. Events range from the "Atlanta Blooms!" tulip exhibition in the spring, to cooking demonstrations with local chefs in the Edible Garden in the summer, to imaginative scarecrow displays in the fall, to "Orchid Days" in the winter. The gift shop ingeniously complements ABG's special programs with themed product displays.

When ABG debuted its holiday extravaganza "Garden Lights Holiday Nights" to sold-out crowds, the exuberant audience overflowed into the gift shop. The botanically inspired lighting exhibition, featuring 1 million energy-efficient LED lights, transformed ABG's gardens, lawns, terraces and wooded areas into a "twinkling outdoor winter wonderland."

Gifting Options

ABG's savvy gift shop was fully prepared to welcome visitors with gorgeously decorated holiday displays and an exquisite product selection, accentuating the magic of the season. Scarlet cardinals and "woody" and snow-dusted pinecones topped red and green saturated displays. Lighted sleighs and lanterns added sparkle. An oversized, decorated evergreen tree hovered by a table brimming with Santa figures, gingerbread houses and traditional children's toys.

And to highlight its home décor and tabletop product, the gift shop constructed a white and silver vignette with color-coordinated dishes, candles, placemats and tableware, all carrying a botanical theme.

Among in-store holiday favorites was a massive outdoor lighting section that featured lighted branches and specialty light strings sporting pinecones, cardinals, dragonflies and flowers. Surprisingly, solar garden stakes – typically used in the summer – were a popular holiday item to spruce up winter gardens. Light-up necklaces, with dangling Christmas bulbs, were also strong sellers.

Perennial Sales

Holiday shoppers could also find an abundance of non-holiday products, too. "Even non-holiday merchandise sells well during this time, since gardens product makes the perfect gift," says Kathleen Cody Guy, manager of ABG's gift shop. "In fact, gardens merchandise is the perfect gift for the impossible-to-buy-for person, since practically everyone appreciates botanicals and nature designs." For gardening enthusiasts, there are coffee table books, tools, seeds, pots and statuary, to list a few. General gifts, such as picture frames, scented candles, dishes, table linens and cookbooks, feature some aspect of nature. ABG-branded items for tourists, such as T-shirts and baseball caps, are snapped up as well. >



Merchandise selection is heavily geared toward women – the shop’s predominant customers. Women’s products range from botanically themed jewelry, scarves and umbrellas to seagrass handbags, and botanical-scented body lotions and perfumes. An ample children’s section provides a wide variety of books on gardening, animals and the environment; children’s gardening tools; craft kits and plush toys.

“We carry product in every category and every price point so that we reach all audiences,” Guy says.

Cultivated Resources

To ensure the shop is stocked with the best selection, Guy scans both the Temporary booths and established showrooms during the Atlanta International Gift & Home Furnishings Markets®.

“At the Atlanta Market, I can find everything I need,” she says, citing the huge breadth of merchandise presented. Guy shops a variety of categories – particularly tabletop, fashion accessories, home décor, children’s, stationery and, of course, gardens.

But, she advises, “to get the most out of the Market experience, you need to take the time to cover all the bases.” In addition to the major gift markets, Guy shops AmericasMart during special events occurring at non-Market times throughout the year. She also makes showroom appointments. While relying on traditional best-sellers, such as jewelry and candles, Guy constantly sources new ideas, whether it’s a product introduction, different fragrance or new packaging.

“There’s always something new at Market,” she says. The important thing for retail sales, she emphasizes, is creating a constant turnover of displays to keep the gift shop exciting.

Essentially, their formula for success is why gardening is the No. 1 hobby in the U.S. — there’s always something fresh and new to keep it exciting. And there are products to suit any enthusiast in the Living. Outdoor/Indoor.® The Gardens.® Area of AmericasMart. ■



Kathleen Cody Guy is manager of the gift shop at Atlanta Botanical Garden. For additional information, call 404-876-5859 or visit www.atlantabotanicalgarden.org.

Images courtesy of Atlanta Botanical Garden