

Retail Revival

Ideas for IGC's

By C.L. Fornari

Presented to the MNLA 2022

Events

Sunday Seminars – classes in the slow season bring people into the store. What topics do your customers always ask about? Charge. (See below)

Grow Your Own Wedding - for DIY, Backyard Brides. Living centerpieces, grow your own flowers, making a bouquet.

Ladies' Herbal Night Out – herbal refreshments (tea/cocktails), plant a pot of mixed herbs, container tea or cocktail garden, short talk on herbs.

May Baskets - Spring (separate events for adults and kids/families)

The Cocktail Hour Garden – Plants to enhance the space, ingredients for the cocktails. This is a good “after hours” theme.

After Hours By Invitation – invite good customers to come for refreshments and strolling through the nursery at sunset. Possible guided “walk and talk” through selected departments. (Cashiers are there for sales!)

Make a Grinch Tree – Bundle branches and stick in wet Oasis, wind green wire around to hold and bend. A good workshop to use up tacky garland 😊

Local and Last Minute Night – holiday shopping close to Christmas. Invite local crafts people, artists and authors and give each a table or space.

Virtual Talks and Events: See C.L.'s PRO Green presentation called “Staying Connected With Customers” about presenting via Zoom.

Price events to make money. Retail cost of materials plus 25 to 40% more for your time in the preparations and clean up. Informational seminars charge between \$10 - \$30 and guarantee a seat and handouts.

Trends

Agricultural style, outdoor living (firepits, outdoor office), food. Which products and plants go with those trends?

Displays

Sink common size pots in ground so that quick displays can be created.

Recycled Pallets – create walls, sandwich boards, signage

Paint the Walls – hire a local mural artist

Paint for Special Events – Lavender festival, anyone?

Create Text in PowerPoint, project onto pallets, outline text and paint. You can also project graphics on walls and paint right over that image.

Photos - Foam Core Board

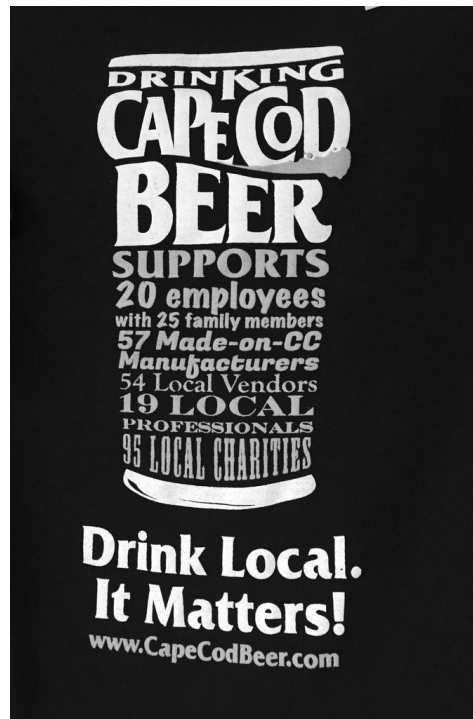
Use white foam presentation boards for fast blank-background photos for posting on social networks, use in presentations, graphics and event listings

Bringing in New Customers

Family Traditions Create opportunities for families. Photo op stations for each season, kid activities, animals on site, permanent fairy houses.

Partner With Craft Brewery Hold "Horticultural Happy Hours," pop-up information stations, craft nights. Bring handouts and talk up what's going on at the garden center at such events.

Idea from Cape Cod Beer: a tee shirt for your employees with a graphic about why buying from an IGC matters. (Instead of a beer glass shape, have it in a flower pot shape with your name on the top rim of the pot. "Buying plants from *Your Garden Center Name* supports")



Bringing them Back

Surprise them! Have unexpected, unadvertised experiences that appeal to your customer's senses. A strolling local musician or acapella group, tiny cookies, fancy cupcakes on a rainy day, offer cups of "dirt and worms" (chocolate cake and gummy worms), pass out sprigs of lemon verbena, springs of lavender or tiny, give-away bouquets.

C.L. Fornari is the author of eight books and numerous articles, including the regular column, *Retail Revival*, in *Garden Center Magazine*. She's currently the host of *GardenLine*, on WXTK and co-host of the *Plantrama* podcast. CL speaks to horticultural trade shows, gardening groups and public gatherings. She writes and runs a consultation service for Country Garden, an IGC in Hyannis, MA. Her not-so-secret mission is to keep horticulture solidly in popular culture...in the meantime she cultivates plants at Poison Ivy Acres on Cape Cod. Subscribe to her podcast at www.plantrama.com and keep in touch with C.L. at: www.GardenLady.com