



Garden Centers Happy with their E-commerce

During my presentation “Opening Up to E-commerce”, I had a request for a list of garden centers that are happy with their e-commerce.

As a result, I started to put this list together. While I did reach out to some garden centers in my local region, I specifically contacted other garden centers nationwide. I thought it would be most helpful to you if I gathered a selection of hosted (Shopify) and non-hosted (Woo Commerce) e-commerce. This list includes garden centers that have a small selection as well as those that have expanded to most of their products. Personally, I wanted to take this opportunity to get some perspectives and insights outside of my company’s client base. This turned out to be very helpful, and I learned a lot about the current state of ecommerce within the garden center community.

Garden Centers Who are Successful May Not Want You to Know

The first thing I learned is that many of the garden centers that have successful e-commerce do not want you to know. More than 50% of the garden centers I contacted did not want to be on this list. When I asked why the common response was that they saw their successful e-commerce as a competitive advantage. They did not want other local garden centers to realize the potential value and compete for their e-commerce clients. I was also surprised to learn from this group that some of them had used this platform to reach outside of their local area with targeted plants and products with good success.

During my search I also did run into a small group of garden centers that failed. The common theme was that they started their e-commerce during Covid or to hop on the wave after other garden centers had done this. Most of these did not have a defined plan, staff, or budget. This was not viewed as a new business to reach new clients. It was often a quick fix. They often selected an e-commerce platform that was not appropriate for what they were doing or their budget. Without a clear long-term plan, budget, and staffing, these projects were doomed to failure.

There was also a related group of garden centers that had initially had challenges with their initial attempt and pulled back. They used what they had learned to reset and modify their approach. The garden centers who put in the effort and made these extra steps ended up being successful within the objectives and goals that they redefined.

Within the garden centers who are successful there were several common themes:

- 1) All the garden centers who were successful understood that this was a new business in addition to their current one. Almost all of them understood they were not going to be an overnight success from the beginning. They did a lot of planning up front to define this new business before they started and many of them started small to decrease the complexity until things were dialed in.
.
- 2) These garden centers evolved and shifted over time as they knew more. They often redefined their goals as they gained experience.
- 3) They all spent time thinking about the e-commerce platform that fit them best. They determined this by looking at how many items they wanted to have, budget, outside resources and staffing. A small group started on one platform and decided to scrap their initial choice and move to another e-commerce platform.
- 4) These garden centers expanded the resources for their online store as interest and sales increased.
- 5) All of them viewed this as an opportunity to reach new clients.
- 6) Many of them actively marketed the e-commerce store to their staff as well as their current client base.
- 7) Many of them put together a separate marketing budget and actively reached out to both their current and new clients through social media, their website as well as traditional media.
- 8) The common theme with all of them is that they said if you do e-commerce you need to be in it for the long haul. They all said stick to it until you succeed.

As I reached out, I was pleased to receive comments from a few garden centers. I think all of these provide valuable insights. Their direct comments are in [blue](#).

Jennifer Harmon - Al's Garden Center

What is the main thing you did right?

[“We chose the right platform for our needs to showcase our retail stores and incorporate e-commerce into our business. Timing was also good we built the ecommerce side of the business during the pandemic when stores were not allowed to be open. We were able to test our customer base and have the time to spend on building it out.”](#)

What you would have done differently?

[“Immediately built out an e-commerce team to manage inventory, back-end work, rotation of inventory, etc.”](#)

Michelle Shepard – Farmington Gardens

[“We do a small amount of ecommerce.](#)

[Bulk soil](#)

[Gift cards](#)

[Floral arrangements](#)

[Seasonal wreaths](#)

[These few items have been successful and easy to manage. What we found during our busy season, our phone rings off the hook. Customers with questions about availability, plant advice, and other things. We would often miss phone calls as we were all busy helping customers. E-commerce really helps capture those sales.](#)

[We have also offered some pre-orders sales for Roses and Fruit trees. This was also very popular and easy to manage.](#)

[We are getting ready to expand on that next season.”](#)

John Karsseboom – The Garden Corner

What is the main thing you did right?

[“The best thing we have done is keeping at it. It’s easy to start and give up or expect too much or feel like it’s costing too much or taking too much time. But building a](#)

community (and trust) takes time and energy. It takes time in real life. It takes time online too.”

What you would have done differently?

“I would expect change more often and accept the learning curves that it brings. Tech moves quickly. The quicker we accepted the change and the faster we accommodated it, the better we had results (mostly). “

Here is the requested list of garden centers that are happy with their e-commerce:



Yard and Garden Land

<https://yardngardenland.com/>



French Prairie Gardens

<https://fpgardens.com/>



The Garden Corner

<https://www.thegardencorner.com/>



Romence Gardens

<https://romencegardens.com/>



Chalet Nursery

<https://chaletnursery.com/>



Alsip Home & Nursery

[Alsip Home & Nursery | Northwest Indiana & Chicagoland Garden Center in St. John, IN & Frankfort, IL](#)

We're an independent garden center located in Frankfort, IL and St. John, IN. We offer premium plants, landscape supply, home decor, pet supply, and more.



The Groovy Plants Ranch LLC

[Groovy Plants Ranch](#)

Groovy Plants Ranch, your home for the grooviest plants on earth! We are truly passionate about horticulture, with a strong emphasis on exotic and unique plants



Al's Garden center

[Al's Garden & Home](#)



Farmington Gardens

[Farmington Gardens - Best Garden Nursery in the Portland Metro Area](#)

Your favorite locally-owned nursery for a beautiful garden all year long. We invite you to visit our inspiration garden and nursery, let the fresh air inspire you.

My hope is that this information has given you a better idea of what it takes to succeed with e-commerce.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Ron McCabe

rmccabe@everbearingservices.com

503-208-0076