

## October/November 2009 Issue

### How do you boost business during the off months?

09/29/09

In past years, pond and water garden retailers reported that sales slow significantly at the end of fall and throughout winter. Water Garden News asked these retailers how they keep business going during those off months. Here are their responses.

Courtesy of Cioli & Hunnicutt/BowTie Studio

"We recommend running features year-round. In late fall we offer 50 percent off plants and fish to reduce inventory. We direct-mail our customer list about store news, hour changes and recommended aerators, deicers and fish-feeding practices for the winter. We also offer at least one free, on-site, DIY pond-building class."  
Toni Fox, co-owner, Falls by Fox, Denver, Colo.

"To survive the 'Off' months here in Michigan, we plow snow to keep the cash coming in. In January we send out pond maintenance contracts to our clients to get them ready for the upcoming season. To entice clients, we offer a discount for those who pre-pay for the entire year by March 1. This gets a bank roll going before the season kicks off with spring clean-outs in early April."  
Dan Put, owner, Put's Ponds & Gardens, Chesterfield, Mich.

"We have a cafe and full-line pet shop to balance business and keep things going during the down times."  
Mike Ward, owner, Wards Garden Center Inc., Garden City, Kan.

"We prepare for the busy months during the off months. During winter we get our plants and water garden plants ready for the next season. We're available, but customers must call first because we don't have set hours for the winter months. We offer gift certificates that are valid for the holiday season. I do some seminars on the side. We have a website with a lot of information and handouts for customers."  
Lana Pettie, co-owner, Pettie Aquatic Garden Supply, Athens, Ala.

"Mild winters help. Word-of-mouth, good customer service and bilingual tradesmen keep business going."  
Pat Dartram, co-owner, Backyard Environments, Canoga Park, Calif.

Talk to Us...

How does using social networking benefit you pond and water garden business?

E-mail [smeyer@bowtieinc.com](mailto:smeyer@bowtieinc.com) with YSI in the subject line with your ideas by November 16. Selected responses will be published in an upcoming issue of Water Garden News.