

by Fred Russell

FULL Florist AHEAD

David Boekisch of Green Thumb West Floral and Gifts has spent the majority of his career running a garden center and nursery and it wasn't until September 2008 he took the plunge into the flower bed. Because of his background in greenhouses and nurseries, David understands the importance of organic plants and natural fertilizers that are vital for plant development and encourage healthy roots systems. David holds classes to promote flower and vegetable gardens vital to our ecosystem. And he practices what he preaches. "There's nothing better than walking into your backyard and picking out your own vegetables for dinner," says David.

We spent time with him finding out his impressions of this relatively new segment of his business.

● **HOW DID YOU GET STARTED?**

For many years one of our key employees and lead designer, Wayne Osborne, insisted that one particular area would be great for designing. I just wasn't sure about it, but some things happened that made the decision easy for me.

● **WHAT'S BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?**

The biggest problem is knowing what to buy and how much. I just got a call the Monday after Valentine's Day from someone to order for Mother's Day and I just wanted to say can I please

Seeing the proverbial forest through the nursery trees, David Boekisch decided to add retail floristry to his business.

have one day to recover! We do keep good records—my wife Dawna has a good idea for hard-goods and containers and Wayne knows the fresh side. I also think you have to take calculated risks and try new things. You also need to partner with good suppliers who understand your business. Unfortunately, there's not a crystal ball to tell you what to do, but we manage.

● **WHAT GOALS HAVE YOU ACCOMPLISHED AND WHAT WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?**

Since we're still a new business in the floral department, my major goal last year was to be more profitable than last year. It is a business after all, and you have to make money to be successful. We've done a good job securing new business with hospitals, churches, rental halls, cake decorators, and other partners to expand our business. I also want to expand our wedding business—it's profitable and I find it rewarding because it's nice to see the bride get excited and really make her day.

● **DISCUSS PARTICULAR BUSINESS STRATEGIES THAT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL.**

I rely on Wayne and Dawna a lot. We have a lot of talented people on our staff and you have to let them do their job. Jenny, our general manager, and Sue, our nursery manager, do a great job and are always pitching in to help out. During Christmas and Valentine's Day, it's always all-hands-on-deck and we have a great team.

● **WHAT MAKES YOUR BUSINESS UNIQUE?**

I think it is our ability to connect with our customers and build loyalty. Sometimes it's hard to beat the big boxes and grocery chains on price, but we'll always beat them on quality and service. Every one of our employees understands that not one of our arrangements goes out unless it is absolutely perfect. We understand that every order was placed by a customer for a special reason and we treat it that way. We want to make sure the customer and recipient are satisfied. 



FAST FACTS

Owner:
David Boekisch

Shop:
Green Thumb West
Floral & Gifts

Location:
Augusta, GA

Year Established:
2008

Employees:
13

Interesting Tidbit:

✿ David's Green Thumb West shop in Augusta, Ga., has again been named the "Best of Augusta" Nursery/Garden Shop winner. Each year readers of *Augusta* magazine choose the best of the best and David is the three time defending (2007-2009) champ.

>>> Just within the last two years, David added retail floristry to his garden center and nursery business.