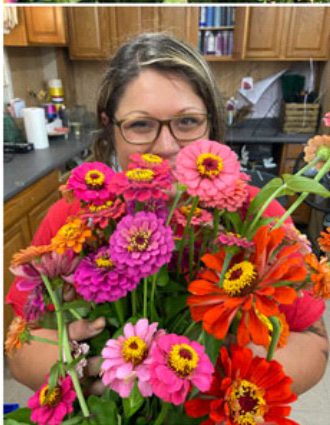


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What Are Your Sustainability Goals?

Jennifer Polanz



I asked that recently in the pages of this magazine, as well as through Ellen Wells' buZZ! newsletter. Casey Schmidt, engagement manager at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, answered the call. Here are just some of their plans, in Casey's words:

We're a medium-sized IGC and we're working very hard to take steps towards being more sustainable. Here are a few things we've done/are implementing now:

Solar Panels: We just invested in a solar panel project that should be installed this spring. It will cover 100% of our store's electricity use.

Christmas Tree Recycling: We offer our customers to return their tree to us. We chip it and use it for mulch in some of our event areas and the customer receives a \$20 gift certificate as a rebate. This is a more sustainable option than the landfill, gets our customers back in the door and creates good will.

On-Grounds Harvest for Flowers: Our staff in the seasonal department plants up our front beds with cutting flowers that our florist harvests and sells. This reduces the carbon footprint of our floral arrangements during the growing season, which would normally have mostly imported flowers. It's also a great way to increase profit margins in that category since we need the beds to look good anyway!

Compost: We compost most of our plant waste. It's not a commercially viable product, but we donate it to community gardens and schools that need compost.

Event Waste: We run a Christmas light show where we provide free hot chocolate. We've switched the cups over to compostables instead of styrofoam.

Future Plans: Investing in electric equipment for our landscaping division, investing in an electric van that will deliver most of our fresh flowers and smaller plant deliveries. We would like to have a pot recycling program, but we are still working out the logistics of what that might look like.

We have a long way to go, but we are trying to be progressive in how we approach the environment. I'm excited for the brainstorming our staff does to see how we can better improve our operations to be a force for good. **GP**