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An adventure worth taking

On a recent weekend, I did
something I don't do enough — I went
to a retail garden center.

You see, as a nurseryman, the honest truth is that by Sunday, I usually feel like I've seen enough plants. I can't wait to go out into the woods for a run, clean the house, putter around in the garage or maybe even go wine tasting. I feel like I'd rather do anything but go look at more pretty little plants all lined up in rows waiting to be sold.

However, on a Sunday in late March, that is exactly what I did — and it was incredible!

On a slightly brisk but dry morning, my wife Kattie, 3-year-old daughter Alyce and I arrived just a half-hour after the garden center had opened.

We noticed quite a few cars already parked in front. This told us we were not going to be alone, even though it was quite early in the spring season.

As we walked through the gates and grabbed our little red wagons — we needed two because Alyce insisted on pulling her own — we began to witness something I wasn't expecting.

We saw not only great selections of plants carefully curated for our region and the early spring season, but something else more subtle: There were a dozen families, many closely resembling our own, meandering about in a way that resembled an adventuresome stroll through the park. It didn't look like "shopping" in the typical sense of the word.

The kids were frolicking about smelling the flowers, touching the pokey plants and threatening to break the statuary. Meanwhile, the parents were undoubtedly deliberating whether they needed shade-loving perennials for that empty back corner (the original reason we set out on such a mission), or succulents for the pots (we got a few of those, too) or if the front yard was big enough for two more fruit trees (almost).

There wasn't even the slightest resemblance to one of those warehouse superstores with everyone gazing about like zombies, steadily herding one another like cattle through all the plastic stuff. People seemed so relaxed. I think it's because they were looking at real living things — things that can bring such genuine joy (and function!) to their homes, or better yet, their busy lives.

We picked out a few ferns, a couple heucheras, some small shrubs, and an olive tree. We also got a small turtle statue that Alyce carried with her for the next 12 hours despite the fact that it weighed at least a third of her body weight.

We took them home. Then we soaked up some sun as we mixed the plants into our landscape. They added just the new touch we needed to make our yard feel a little bit more like us.

We talked about the olive tree growing big enough to pick olives from. Maybe someday we could all sit underneath it on a hot afternoon. And after most of the plants were planted, I plopped down on the bench that had once sat all alone in a bare spot under a cluster of birch trees. I was surrounded by the colors and textures of new plants. It felt so much more comfortable, and I swear my beverage tasted better (no joke!).

The adventure was fun and the rewards were incredible. I think I know what I'll be doing on another weekend soon! ☺



Josh Zielinski
OAN PRESIDENT

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