

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Target Closes Garden Centers

Chris Beytes



Take a good look at this Target garden center in Merritt Island, Florida, as it's the last you may see: The big-box retailer announced in March that it's closing its remaining garden centers in Florida, California, Arizona and Nevada and getting out of garden centers altogether, effective late September. The move affects more than 260 stores.

Why? "Several reasons," answers Target spokesperson Jana O'Leary. "First is that the garden centers don't provide significant value to our guests. Also, it's no longer a profitable

business for us."

When asked if they would continue to sell garden hardgoods inside the store, such as potting soil and fertilizer, Jana replied that they'd continue to do that this season, but she couldn't confirm if they'd continue inside L&G sales beyond 2010. She also couldn't confirm whether or not they'd continue to sell poinsettias and other holiday crops inside the stores. However, *GrowerTalks* has heard that they have committed to growers for poinsettias for 2010. Until September, they will continue to operate "business as usual throughout the entire spring and summer seasons," she says.

You can't talk about Target without talking to Ken Altman of Altman Plants, headquartered in southern California. He estimates they provide 85% of the plants to Target's garden centers—so it's a major blow to his business. Still, Ken seemed to be taking the loss of a major customer philosophically.

"You know, you never want to take a hit like this," he says, "but we've had a really, really great relationship with Target since the mid '80s. They're a great company. They've been great partners. They've worked with us on programs and they've always been open to our creativity. Even something like this, they gave us eight-nine months notice to adjust."

Ken says his focus now is finding other ways to use his production capacity, to save as many jobs as possible for his employees. **GT**