

2008 Existing Business of the Year

Howard Pine's Garden Center & Greenhouses

Owner	Gerald Pine
Nature of Business	Retail Garden Center/greenhouse
City	Lawrence
County	Douglas
Phone	785-843-9229
Business Structure	Sole Proprietorship
Business Began	1968
Employees	24
KSBDc Consultant	Maggie Bornholdt and Will Katz

Howard Pine's Garden Center & Greenhouses was started in 1962 in Lawrence, KS. The company began with four employees. In 1978, Howard Pine's son, Gerald "Gerry" purchased the business at age 21 and continues to own and operate the business. Since that time, the business has continued to grow physically and financially. Howard Pine's Garden Center & Greenhouses currently employs 22-24 people and has seven greenhouses on the property. The primary products include annual and perennial plants, including flowers, vegetables, rosebushes, and seeds. They also carry gardening supplies, berry bushes, ornamental grasses, and fruit trees.

Over the years, in addition to growth, the business has experienced the hardships of being a weather-affected business as well as a seasonal operation. Gerry first contacted the KU-SBDC seeking assistance in outlining his financial position clearly so that he could better manage his revolving line of credit due to the seasonal nature of the business. Through this counseling, he has gained a clearer understanding and perspective of the company's cash position and how to plan financially.

Gerry describes himself as a perfectionist, and said that this trait, along with having control over the physical growth of the company makes the greenhouse business a good industry to be in. "The physical facilities are easier to build and cost less than many types of businesses," he explained."

Secret to Success

"I wouldn't have it any other way. I'd rather be in charge of my own means than dependent on anyone else. I highly recommend business ownership if you put your best into it, have a really good product, and give it everything."

Over the years, Gerry has had employees who develop a deeper interest in the industry and/or small business ownership, and with whom he has been able to mentor with advice and by example. "A fair number of people who have worked here end up taking horticulture classes," Gerry said. "They get inspired to get into this line of work."

He feels rewarded by the hard work and love that he and his team of employees put into the product, and happily passes along these rewards to customers and the community by producing and selling the best quality and healthiest plants and flowers possible and displaying them with the utmost neatness. "Customers are always in great moods when they are here," he said. He also emphasized the significance of giving a percentage of attention and business to local merchants, not only by patronizing local businesses but by purchasing locally grown and made products. "It's very important to understand that supporting local business supports the community."



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Gerald Pine, Owner



Gerry Pine has owned and operated Howard Pine's Garden Center & Greenhouses since 1978.

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