



Daryll Combs, owner of Daryll's Nursery in Dallas, talks with customers about plant selection on a recent visit. The nursery propagates many rare or unusual varieties. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Plant Paradise

Daryll's Nursery has plenty unique and rare offerings to inspire the garden lover

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Daryll Combs, the owner of Daryll's Nursery in Dallas, jokingly explains that he likes plants because "they don't talk back."

His wisecrack actually isn't far from the truth — as working with plants seems to offer him a sense of peace.

Years ago, Combs found he felt claustrophobic working indoors, so he made a career of trimming trees. After doing that for several years, the physical nature of the job took its toll, so he had to take his livelihood in a different direction.

"I had already started kind of a hobby plant business, and it just got bigger," Combs said. "When I had to stop the tree work, I just started my own nursery."

Combs opened his first nursery in California and has nurtured a love for working with plants since.

"It's all I want to do. ... It's tough to make ends meet," Combs said, "but I just enjoy growing plants."

In 1992, Combs moved his nursery from California to Dallas. It took time to adjust.

"Before, at my nursery, the average temperature was 70 degrees, so it's totally different here," he said.

The lessons learned, however, were worth it.

"I wanted to own my own property, and I didn't down there," he explained. "I made several trips up here looking and I would talk to other nurserymen around to find out where a good place was. One guy in McMinnville told me to check out Dallas."



Looking to make your garden grow? Daryll's has plants, soil, and plenty of advice for those wanting to make an upgrade to their landscaping this summer. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

He found the property, a former nursery off West Elendale Drive, and started carving out his niche. Now peaceful, with a few quirky touches, Daryll's Nursery was a little rough when he took it over 23 years ago.

"There was nothing when I came here," Combs said. "It was just weeds, so I developed this arboretum."

"That arboretum" is to the left of the entrance for people driving in and features several stands of bamboo, a plant Combs likes for its meditative environment.

"What I like about bamboo, it's just peaceful," Combs said.

Pushing bamboo stalks

aside in the largest of the stands, Combs reveals where he has orchestrated the bamboo plant to form a space in the middle large enough for a picnic table.

"This is my room in here. This is like a fort, a hide out," Combs said. "I started it with one piece, right there, right in the middle. Then it just grew into this mass."

Spring is the season for new growth in the bamboo



Cistus, or rockrose, is a speciality at Daryll's.

stands, something he anticipates every year.

"It's so exciting when they start coming up," Combs said.

Bamboo isn't his only plant passion, though. Daryll's Nursery special-

izes in cistus, or rockrose, propagating and selling about 45 varieties of the plant that produces small, delicate looking flowers.

"They are pretty spectacular," Combs said. "Nobody in Oregon ... that I know of propagates as many varieties as we do."

He brought his first cutting of rockrose to Daryll's about 12 years ago. He said the plant can take most curve balls Mother Nature can throw at it, and some varieties will bloom into the fall.

"They are a heat lover, a sun lover," Combs said. "For the most part, they are deer resistant, disease resistant and pest resistant. They're a pretty hardy, good plant."

And for anyone familiar with Daryll's Nursery, there's one plant dotted around the property that's really hard to miss. Think big — giant, really — green leaves.

"Dinosaur food, that's another of our specialties," Combs said, smiling.

It requires a lot of water, but the mature plant is something to behold, with deep dark green leaves that would be easier measured in feet than inches.

Daryll's also features a large selection of ornamental grasses and 30 varieties of unusual or hard-to-find ferns, along with many more plant gems.

What you won't find are annuals. Combs said he tried to sell annuals his first five years in Dallas, but couldn't compete with chain stores on price.

He does have the perfect growing environment for annuals — or any other plant.

Combs mixes his own soil and, at the encouragement of a landscape designer in Portland, began selling his mixture.

"We have people coming in here from all over, even from Portland, and that is all they buy," Combs said. "It's mostly compost and then there's some fine bark and some pumice in it. We can go through 20 to 30 bags in a day. It's crazy."

Perhaps it's just another indication of how much Combs and his staff, Nikki Dorrell and Josiah Brown, love their jobs — walking around Daryll's is a horticultural education.

After years of growing each variety, they have a wealth of knowledge about how individual plants will mature and how to make them thrive.

"We know from experience what things are going to do, so we make signs that give you all the information you need," Combs said.

Zen Garden

What: Daryll's Nursery.
Where: 15770 W. Elendale Ave, Dallas.
Contact: 503-623-0251, <http://daryllsnursery.com/>.
Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Of note: specializes in bamboo, cistus or rockrose, ornamental grasses, dinosaur food, ferns and more.



Daryll Combs and Josiah Brown load a dogwood tree into a truck for a Mother's Day delivery last month. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer



Dinosaur food, one of Daryll's specialties, takes a lot of space and features big, bright green leaves once mature. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer



Nikki Dorrell puts soil and plants in pots at Daryll's Nursery on a recent warm and sunny spring day. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer