



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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September 2002



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EAST STORE

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Wichita, KS 67203
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316-943-6886

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Meet Johnson's "West Wes"

Carolyn Utter, *Editor*

His background includes retail experience at hobby stores, drug-stores and department stores. He has been the business manager of one church and on the maintenance staff of another. Now on the staff at Johnson's Garden Center, he is excited to combine his experience in retail and management with his love for gardening as assistant manager at Johnson's West 13th Store.

Wes Karst (we sometimes affectionately refer to him as "West Wes" because we have another Wes at our east store) started at Johnson's in October of 2001. His first experiences at the garden center included dismantling the lawn and garden displays to set up for the Christmas season. Working alongside more seasoned staff members, Wes "tried to stay out of their way" and let the more experienced people decorate the store for Christmas. Soon, it was time to set up the store for spring and Wes was able to put his retail experience to work planning the store's layout and product displays.

Wes got some of his gardening experience on the family farm in Falls City, Nebraska where he and his two sisters grew up. As a kid, Wes remembers falling in love with iris (the flower ... not a girl) and he shared fond memories of faithfully weeding the plot of iris growing near their farm house. He also remembers saving his pennies to buy a few bulbs to plant.

Fast forward a few years to the spring of 2002 and Wes' infatuation continues as he is carefully transplanting and caring for some miniature iris growing at the house he and his family recently moved into. His eyes lit up as he talked about purchasing some of the reblooming iris that we'll have at Johnson's this fall.

But the real twinkle in his eye came when Wes talked about his wife, Jame and their four children; Eli (8), Laura (6), Jacob (3), and Gabriel (2). Wes and Jame met in Enid, Oklahoma at a time when Wes was a manager at Woolworths. Jame came into the store for a dose of nostalgia at the old-fashioned lunch counter. While seated there, she spotted Wes stocking shelves. Although she never spoke to Wes that day, she remembers saying to herself "that's the man I'm going to marry." Jame prayed for a little divine intervention so that one day they would meet. The Lord soon provided when a mutual friend of theirs (who didn't know of Jame's prayer) suggested that Wes use his vocal talents to try out for the Summer Music Theatre. As assistant director of the musical, Jame finally got her chance to meet Wes! They began to officially date after the musical's cast party and the rest, as they say, is history.

Wes' hobbies include yard work, canning and houseplants. (That's how you know if someone is a REAL gardener ... they mention yard work as one of their hobbies!) As the parents of young children, Wes and Jame are learning that hobbies often take a back seat to kids' activities as they shuffle between Eli's baseball, Laura's gymnastics and other activities.

While at Johnson's, Wes has enjoyed learning about plants he was previously unfamiliar with, such as lantana and penta; and he has enjoyed learning more about his favorite flower, the iris.

As the pages of 2002's calendar turn, Wes will experience the fall season at Johnson's for the first time ... and then it's back to decorating for Christmas. Wes is really looking forward to Christmas now that he has a little experience under his belt. In no time at all, he'll be decorating trees along with Johnson's other "seasoned" Christmas veterans.



Wes Karst is the assistant manager at Johnson's West 13th Store.