

Hoffman Garden Center grows with energy efficiency



Energy curtain helps business bloom every season



Project description:
Energy curtain upgrade



energySMART incentives:
\$16,959 in total incentives



Energy savings:
16,959 therms saved per year

Hoffman Garden Center is a family-owned business that started as a flower and vegetable farm and expanded to several greenhouses and florist shops. While growing perennial flowers and vegetables has been a Hoffman family tradition since the early 1990s, energy efficiency is a more recent business success.

In the early 90s, Richard installed the Garden Center's first energy curtain. Early energy curtains, like the first energy curtain Richard installed, use a pulley system with cables, requiring an employee to manually pull and adjust the curtain daily, based on the location of the sun. Richard felt limited with the equipment—especially because it was manual—but did notice an increase in heat in the greenhouse and lower energy bills.

"Over the last several years, things have changed. We've gotten to a point where we always want to make sure that we are getting the most out of our energy use," said Richard Hoffman, Hoffman Garden Center owner.



The project

When it was time for Richard to upgrade the energy curtain, he contacted energySMART, a Nicor Gas program. energySMART worked closely with the manufacturer and Richard to calculate the energy savings achieved from the new energy curtain. These calculators also helped determine the Garden Center's rebate of \$16,959. energySMART works with businesses to identify custom energy efficiency projects that are not eligible for standard rebates, but still produce substantial therm savings.



Benefits to Hoffman Garden Center

Greenhouses are not often built with energy efficiency in mind. They suffer from leaky walls and roofs that allow cold air to filter in and warm air to escape. Because energy can be a large operating expense, energy-efficient upgrades may provide significant relief in monthly costs.

The Garden Center felt immediate benefits with the energy curtain. The curtain prevents warm air from escaping through the greenhouse ceiling, conserving energy needed to cool and heat the greenhouse. It also maintains a set indoor temperature, keeping flowers and crops safe from damage that occurs with fluctuating or extreme temperatures.

"I'm happy Nicor Gas was able to give money for the upgrades. I was not aware each month a certain percent went into this energy efficiency fund. It's really a great fund. For us, it's outstanding."

—Richard Hoffman, owner

The experience

Today, the Hoffman family enjoys reliable heating and cooling for their garden. The greenhouse's thermostat consistently reads 65 degrees, even in the winter. "With the new energy blanket, we'll get 10 years out of them. It keeps the greenhouse so tight," Richard said. "Now, I don't have a fluctuation of four to five degrees. I'd say we're seeing a savings of 20 percent on our bills. What makes me the happiest about this project? The quality of my plants."

With the new energy curtain, Hoffman Garden Center saves 16,959 therms annually—that's the equivalent of planting 2.306 trees every year.

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