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Market
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From the Ground Up

International landscape, lawn and garden wholesaler calls Ballantyne® campus home

By Michael J. Solender

Visionary entrepreneurs recognize opportunities where others may see only barren ground. For Border Concepts co-founders Tony Ferguson and Neil Miller, unruly mulch beds and ill-contained lawn and yard borders led them to give up lucrative corporate sales jobs 34 years ago and start their own business selling steel landscape edging systems.

Ferguson recalls the earliest days when the pair had the idea of selling high-quality steel edging products directly to garden centers. “Neil and I worked together selling steel in the open market,” Ferguson says. “We saw the product line out in the marketplace, a steel barrier between a landscaped bed and grass, and there was no patent on it. We thought we could ‘create a better mousetrap.’ We were young and thought we’d give it a shot for a few years and see what came of it.”



Courtesy of Border Concepts

Border Concepts' steady growth and nod to a bright (and green) future played a large part in their decision to relocate to the Ballantyne campus in December 2023.

In November of 1990, Ferguson gave up his company car for a moped, and they started Border Concepts Inc. in Miller's Charlotte garage. "Steel edging is by far the best edging in the market," Ferguson says. It's the most durable and long-lasting. It delivers crisp, clear, defined lines. When we started, there was no major supplier of that product in the southern United States. We began selling to contractors, independent retailers and garden centers, which quickly became the backbone of our business."

Four decades later, the company is headquartered at Ballantyne and employs nearly 200 people nationally. It has a manufacturing facility and showroom in Lexington, North Carolina, and four distribution centers servicing the U.S. and Canada.

Their product line has expanded well beyond edging systems, too. It now includes pottery, decorative steel and wrought iron products, hanging baskets, win-

Visitors to the Border Concepts office in the Ballantyne One building will find plenty of open space, plants, colorful decorative pottery, accent pieces and great views of the fountains and expansive green space outside their back door.



Photo by Lange Photo Studio

dow baskets, decorative hooks, arbors and plant stands. Border Concepts is well known for its extensive and colorful line of imported pottery. Its specially made ceramic products are directly imported from all around the world, including Vietnam, Malaysia, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Mexico and Portugal.

Listening — A Key to Growth

Border Concepts sells in all 50 states to independent garden centers, landscape product distributors, wholesalers and large retailers (think Lowes, Home Depot and Walmart). The privately held business has revenues north of \$25 million annually. It thrives in a fragmented marketplace where it stands out as a “one-stop shop” and flexible supplier to its customers.

“What sets us apart,” says Chief Operating Officer Chris Bednar, “is how we listen to our customers, understand what their needs are, deliver quality products and provide a high level of service. Through listening and truly understanding our customers and the market, we’ve been able to springboard into many different products and broaden our offerings over the years.”

Decorative wrought iron is an example of the expanded product line that Border Concepts has added to its portfolio. Ferguson says that Border Concepts can respond quickly and creatively to customer needs by being a manufacturer and distributor.

He cites work they did for DeWaynes, a home and garden retailer in Selma, North Carolina, as an example of how their capabilities allow for building loyalty in their customer base. “They are such a strong merchandiser and a terrific operation,” Ferguson says. “They approached us about a need they saw with their customers. The owner’s wife wanted an unusual plant stand for hanging baskets, and we made one just for her. I called it Tina’s Tower, and it’s something unique and special and has proved to be a very popular item.”

Expanding Market for Outdoor Living

Bednar notes that since the pandemic, the market for outdoor living products has seen tremendous growth, lifting Border Concepts’ sales.

“For a long time,” Bednar says, “Lawn and garden companies were concerned that once the baby boomers slowed up with gardening, there’d be challenges. One of the things that occurred during COVID was millennials and Gen Z have gotten into gardening, and it’s proved to be a pretty sticky behavior. With them being such a huge segment of the overall population, that’s an exciting trend for every lawn and garden company.”

Border Concepts’ product line has expanded well beyond edging systems to now include pottery, decorative steel and wrought iron products, among other things.

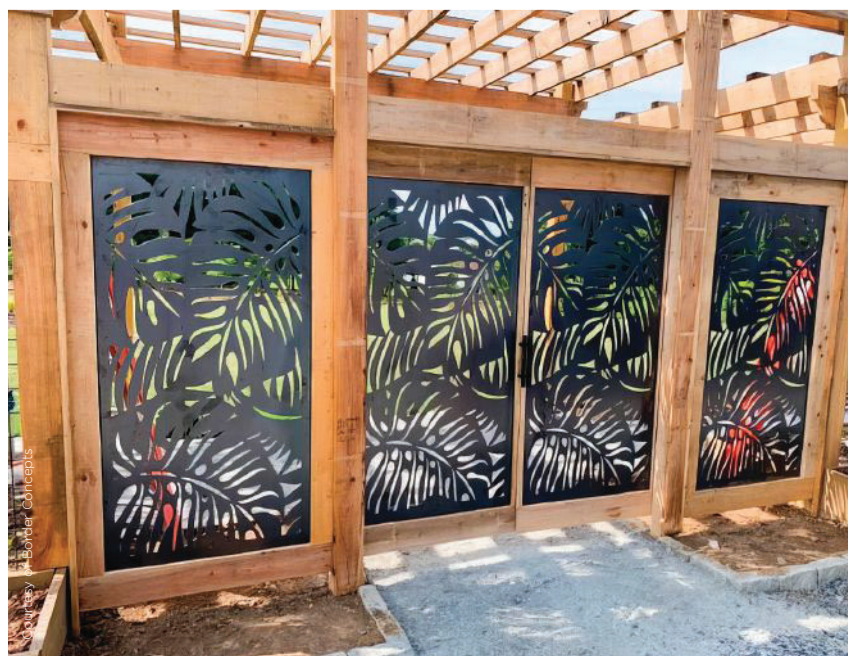
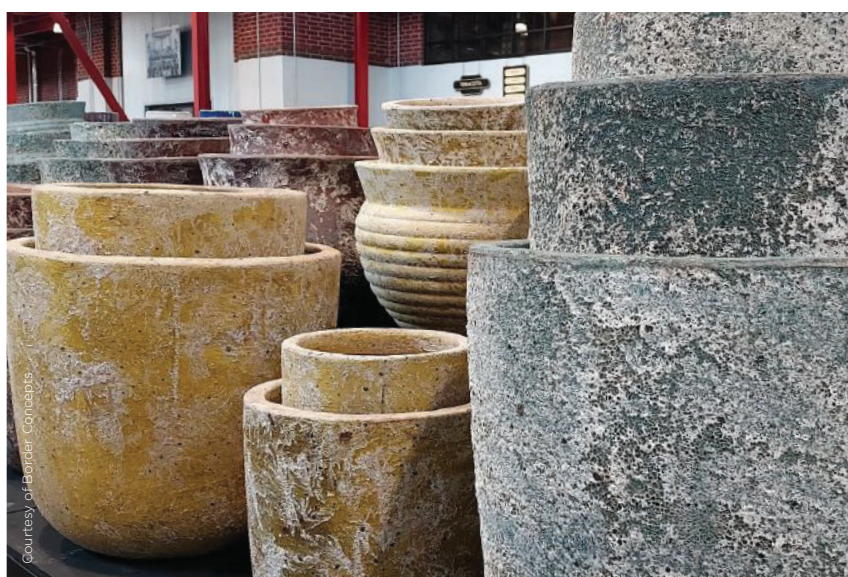




Photo by Lunge Photo Studio

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— **Chris Bednar**, Chief Operating Officer

Border Concepts' C-Suite consists of Chief Financial Officer Justin Forbes, Chief Operating Officer Chris Bednar and Co-Founders Tony Ferguson and Neil Miller.

According to Bednar, expansion in the demand for outdoor living options has also fueled interest in their products. “People want to be outside as much as they can, especially after being cooped up over COVID-19. That opportunity to take four fixed walls of a house or an apartment and expand to the patio or build a greater oasis in the backyard has added nice tailwinds to our industry. There’s also growth with multigenerational families living together, increasing the demand for outdoor living space. That’s a trend that we’re bullish about.”

Border Concepts’ steady growth and nod to a bright (and green) future played a large part in their decision to relocate to the Ballantyne campus in December 2023. “Attracting talent was a key driver in our choosing the space here in Ballantyne,” says Ferguson, noting the HQ staff comprises marketing, finance, supply chain and other back-office support personnel. We wanted a location that offers the type of culture and environment found here with retail and restaurant amenities, emphasis on outdoor space with walking trails and the amphitheater, and a location that offers convenient access — that’s all here in Ballantyne.”

Visitors to the Border Concepts office in the Ballantyne One building will find plenty of open space, plants, colorful decorative pottery, accent pieces and great views of the fountains and expansive green space outside their back door. “We’re always up for enjoying the outdoors,” says Ferguson. “It’s what we are all about.” **B**

Details: borderconcepts.com.



Courtesy of Border Concepts