

Positive Openers

How are you greeting customers? Are you following the rules of not asking a 'yes or no' question? Are you avoiding the annoyance factors? Are you truly engaging them when they do ask a question? Brainstorm with your fellow staff members on ways you feel are best to interact with customers.

Garden Q&A

Now, let's plan on answering the tough questions.

1. **How many gardeners have a plan when they arrive?**
 - a. Ask the right questions
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
2. **“No matter how wonderful the plant, no matter how terrific it would look in that spot – I must be able to ensure it's happiness there so I can enjoy it's beauty.”**
 - a. Don't over promise on plants – especially ones 'out of the zone'
 - b. Teach them to read a tag
 - c. Teach them to plant
 - i. Nursery/Greenhouse grown – level with ground
 - ii.
 - iii.
3. **Insects: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**
 - a. Is it harmful?
 - b. Are there enough to cause a problem?
4. **Weeds: Backbreaking enemies**
 - a. Too much roundup?
 - b. When was it applied?
 - c. Weather conditions
 - d. Mulching
5. **Disease Diagnosis**
 - a. Where is the plant growing?
 - b. How have you been caring for it? (fertilizer, etc.)
 - c. Most of the time you don't need to worry about the fancy name of a disease or how to spray a chemical – ask what environmental conditions can be easily changed
 - d. Correct light?
 - e. Correct soil?
 - f. Enough space?
 - g. Too much mulch?
 - h. Wet feet?
 - i. Over fertilization?
6. **Corrective Action: Environmental changes**
 - a. “Plants not favored for browsing by deer”
 - b. Pine needles for mulching hosta
 - c. Cover crops in the vegetable garden
 - d. Crop rotation
7. **Gardening Resources: OSU Extension & Land-Grant System**
 - a. Visit the office – we have lots of resources
 - b. Faster - Ohioline – <http://ohioline.osu.edu> - or <http://extension.org> (all states)
 - Search for your topic
 - Click on Home & Garden Link
 - “Web Pages” link is best for searches
 - Find Factsheet Databases

Air and Sunlight Can Reduce Disease in Your Garden

-Eric Barrett

Bacteria and fungi growing on plants cause many of the problems in the garden. In order to grow and reproduce, these diseases need the appropriate environment. The best environment for many diseases consists of cool temperatures, darkness and the presence of moisture. When the gardener isn't careful, they are encouraging these diseases to persist by providing just the right kind of environment. So, if one can control the environment – take out a piece of the appropriate environment – disease can be controlled or eliminated!

To reduce the amount of disease in your garden, eliminate the environment for diseases by following some simple steps:

1. Water in the morning – Most gardeners know that watering during the day can allow the water to heat up on the leaves and damage the plant. Watering in the evening is better than during the day, but it is not ideal. Evening watering allows moisture to lie around the garden all night on plant leaves and stems. The more natural process is in the morning, like when the dew forms. Watering in the morning allows for a natural drying process with the rise of the morning sun. We can prove afternoon watering is 'the best' – but who has time to do this? And, who will do it correctly – at the root zone with drip irrigation!
2. Water low to the ground – Many of us make the mistake of acting like natural rain when we water. Since we have the opportunity to add water, we should do so in the best interests of the plants. Keeping water off of leaves and stems keeps diseases from having the moisture they need to grow there. This means using soaker hoses or a garden wand to put the water right on top of the ground to filter down to the roots. A garden wand is like a shower head – it produces a lighter mist of water and keeps us from washing the dirt away from plant roots.
3. Prune and shear certain plants– Treat larger perennials like you would a fruit tree. That is, get sunlight and air to move through the plant to dry out water left from rain and watering. Pruning (selecting certain stems to cut out) and shearing (cutting the tops off) can both be useful. Pruning can be done by taking out dead stems or removing stems in crowded sections of the plant. Be sure to check with the type of plant before shearing – some need pruned in autumn to have better flowers, others in the spring. Shearing at the wrong time of year can prevent flowering for the year. Both pruning and shearing can increase flower size.
4. Space Plants Apart – Overcrowding of plants decreases the air circulation in the garden. Packed full gardens are sometimes beautiful, but will require much more attention when it comes to disease than a garden with good plant spacing. By splitting apart plants in the spring and fall we can not only increase air circulation in the garden, but we can increase the number of plants we have by giving them all a little more room.

Please contact the office if you have questions about plant diseases – we will help you get them identified and give you options for control!

Trends for 2012

How are you utilizing the trends of today? Pull up some information from the internet on garden center trends, then use your fellow staff members to enhance these trends with what questions you heard or ideas you gained since last season. How will you use these to be a better retailer?

Garden Centre? Why not a Fruit and Vegetable Centre?

By John Stanley

When a consumer entered a garden centre in the 70's or 80's they were instantly exposed to an array of flowering shrubs and bedding plants. It was the era of garden beautification.

It is now 2008 and it is time to re-look at what the garden centre should look like. If we observe the consumer we find that in the U.K. they are spending time on their allotment and fruit and vegetables are the in products to grow in the garden. Is this a fad or a trend?

If it's a fad the retailer should allocate the space to the fad and be prepared to shrink down the space as appropriate. If it is a trend, the whole look of the garden centre needs to be analysed.

Personally, I believe grow your own food is a trend, not a fad. We have seen the Farmers Market industry grow dramatically over recent years, the consumer is wanting to reduce food miles and know the origin of their food. What could be better than having home grown produce?

Who will be the Bravest?

I've already seen the trend in Belgium of the fruit and vegetable plant an ancillary product shops in the High Street. It is not too far of a jump to see garden centres where the primary focus in on a food related offer.

Farmers markets and farm shops are starting to be incorporated into the retail mix in garden centres, so why not take the next step.

The garden centres key retail offer could focus on fruit trees and shrubs, plus vegetable plants. This would be a category in its own right and be the dominant category. The range could be extended to include edible flowers and traditional ornamental plants that can also be used in food preparation or as a food.

The sundries category could also take on a similar approach with a category designated to help the consumer grow food. Apart from growing aids this could include books and sundry products.

The gift department could be replaced with cook ware to enable the store to offer a "from soil to plate" offer to the consumer.

The garden centre would also have a demonstration fruit and vegetable garden incorporated into the outdoor sales area. I have already seen this done successfully in a garden centre in Arizona and at Eden Gardens in Sydney, Australia. In Perth, Western Australia, we have a company that will plant and care for your vegetable garden all you do is pick the crop.

My suggestion is that if all these ideas were integrated into one store I believe that the retailer would have a great marketing opportunity to grow a market niche that is in tune with today's consumer.

Bold Initiatives

This is a time for bold initiatives, the old retail model is not working as well as it used to and therefore it is a time to try dramatic changes.

There are a lot of consumers in the market place who want to grow their own food, but do not know where to go to find the experts. By combining all the elements together, the consumer will start to look at you as the food expert.

You may think it is a crazy idea, but it is working in small niche retail situations, we need to be brave enough to take it to the next level.

The Model



Bugs: EAB, ALB, Asian Lady Beetles, etc.

How do we help people deal with these?

Deer!

How do we help people deal with these? Are we using deer to make money, or sell the right plants?

What will make them 'happiest' in the long run?