

RETAIL trends

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Spring Flings to Make Your Registers Ring

NOW THAT THE ORNAMENTS have been packed away and the holidays are a distant memory, consumers' thoughts should turn to visions of spring flowers as the snow melts outside. They need a nudge, though.

As you catch your breath after a busy holiday season, now is the time to plan events that go hand in hand with purchases for the year to draw customers of all ages, including Gen X / Gen Y, to your garden center.

Opportunities to Educate

This is the year of education. As society looks to the future, sustainability will play a larger role. Whether the activity is growing, preparing or preserving vegetables, collecting water through a rain garden or barrel, or just enjoying a container planted with beautiful flowers, Gen X / Gen Y consumers need to know how to do it themselves. Businesses that help them answer their questions will benefit.

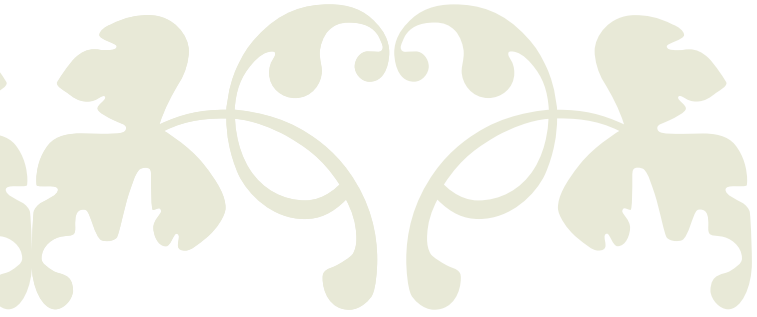
Gen X / Gen Y consumers identify with local businesses and have a desire to support them more than a faceless national retailer. Because a central element to sustainability is localization, garden centers should focus on local solutions and make sure they're available on the sales floor. Use your unique point of view as part of



Local flavor For a tie-in to the local community that appeals to Gen X / Gen Y consumers, consider inviting a chef from an area restaurant to present cooking demonstrations using ingredients fresh from the garden.

the larger local picture.

There is proof that when businesses join together to promote and produce an event, there is greater success. Winning new customers is expensive, so why shoulder the



cost alone? This year should include discussions and coordinated efforts with your local business community to see what opportunities are available to support one another and increase foot traffic.

Once you have planned your event, put the names and faces of all the participating business owners out there to encourage local-minded consumers to attend.

Natural Tie-Ins

When selecting a theme for your open house this spring, consider creating a natural tie-in to the local community. In the mid-Atlantic, for example, the theme might be “Chesapeake Week.” Area garden centers could highlight plants and products that are good for Chesapeake Bay, promote gardening practices that are better for the watershed and feature cooking demonstrations by local restaurants using fruits and vegetables from the garden.

Here’s how it could all come together to draw key consumers of all ages.

The event could feature a chef from a local restaurant who presents cooking demonstrations. The sessions, targeting difference age groups, could feature different titles, use different ingredients and have different outcomes:

- Organic Cooking for Dummies - for first-time cooks in their early 20s.
- Organic Cooking for Lovers - for recently married couples.
- Organic Cooking for Silver Foxes - for seniors with special dietary needs.

Utilize both traditional and social media to advertise the event. Before the show, create a Facebook fan page for the event that connects to your garden center’s website and the restaurant’s website. Assign a staffer to Twitter a few times each day about what is happening at the event.

As winter gives way to spring, another retail cycle will begin. Be prepared to make the most of it. ■