

RETAIL trends

by
Clint
Albin

Stand Up and Be Different!

NOW IS THE TIME TO FINALIZE your merchandising statement for spring. Garden centers must choose different buying and merchandising strategies to get out of the “regular retail rut” that many sellers are in right now. Stand up and make your offerings

different! This can be achieved in one of two ways: either buy it or make it - but always stock it.

Make sure you have brought in enough hard-to-find items that produce higher margins. You cannot wait on placing orders for, and re-



Vertical 'vavoom' This veggie wall plays up on the hot trends of gardening “reach” and edibles. Set one up at your store!

ceiving, the limited number of items that scream big-style, high-margin, anti-commodity and urbane-unique.

What's Hot Now

One area that is going to be hot this season is anything and everything vertical - tall and lean, standards, tabletop lollipops and all things that “reach.”

Finding the options to fulfill a vertical gardening fantasy is easier said than done. There are great plants in many beautiful forms, but you have to look. If you have offered these in the past, call your vendor now and triple your order. Demand has the potential to skyrocket, and you will



be unable to dramatically impact your bottom line with just a few options. This has to be a thoughtful program that adds and subtracts items weekly to continue giving the customer a desire to return to the hunt.

Now that the foodie movement is in full swing, garden centers have decided to engage it in different ways. Some have done it with a handshake, and some have embraced it with a bear hug. Either way, this is the time for the next step in presenting different “forms” of edible plants at your store. Present large and small espalier fruit trees, berries grown on a stem, a flagpole of green beans and wall of yellow, green and white squash. With the influence of French gardening techniques, vines and stalks can give vertical rise in the garden by using a “teepee” of poles inside a container. Fill clay pots with root vegetables overflowing the rim and 5-gallon tomatoes planted inside a decorative wire frame. Garden center craftsmen have to become the next celebrity chef.

Citrus and herb varieties are so popular now with the foodie movement that every display should have a container planted with them. Homeowners will have fond memories as they smell the wonderful fragrance coming from the outdoor dining room table. To make an even stronger connection, display them with delicate pink and yellow ribbons tied along the central trunk. They make the perfect instant hostess gift that every mother would be proud to receive.

Whether it is tiny geranium standards in lemon and mint or a giant golden leafed philodendron in a 15-gallon ceramic container, be different from your competition by making style statements throughout the different sales areas of your store. Know that the alternative for consumers this year is to buy nothing rather than settle for something that everyone else has. People have been so bundled together with all the other societal things going on in their lives that consumers need a way of self-expression. ■