

Personality Sells

John Moore, marketing guru behind Starbucks and Whole Foods Market, told the audience at his IGC Show keynote that **a company's personality is always its best form of advertising.** He cites Pizza Patron, a regional chain based in Dallas, as an example. There are tons of pizza joints, but Pizza Patron separates itself by catering to the Hispanic market. It even accepts pesos as payment. So what puts your garden center on the tip of their tongues?

GYO Hot with Gen X / Gen Y

There's no doubt: Growing your own veggies has hit loud and clear with Gen X / Gen Y. **According to updated IGC Show research by Kip Creel of StandPoint, six out of 10 consumers in these generations are actively involved in vegetable gardening.** Tomatoes remain the perennial favorite, with peppers and basil running second and third, respectively. The biggest reason for growing their own at home: personal enjoyment, followed by a quest for higher quality, fresher produce.

A Bag of Soil - and Merlot

G & M Pet and Garden Center, Muncie, IN, has obtained a favorable recommendation from its local planning commission to open a "farm winery" at the garden center. Owners Larry and Kathryn Simmons plan to form a separate business to grow, crush and process grapes. "We'd like to have our own vineyard," says Larry, who points out that Indiana has three dozen wineries. It's a great example of expanding the boundaries of the conventional garden center. What's going to set you apart?

Don't Just Play the Radio

Consumers are more aware of your background music than you think. Many retailers think it makes little difference what they play, so they simply tune in the local radio station. They are wrong! **Research shows shoppers look unfavorably upon a retailer's lack of effort when it comes to music.** Armstrong Garden Centers gets it: The IGC's prototype Gen X / Gen Y store plays specially programmed songs that are in tune with its target customer's age group. Differentiate yourself, and set a unique note.

You
Can
BE
GARDENCHIC

New Places to Advertise

It's a changing scene on the local advertising front. Once tried-and-true, the *Yellow Pages* and newspaper ad venues are fading in effectiveness as consumers change. Garden centers are exploring alternative advertising methods to get the word out. **Cleveland's Petitti Garden Centers bought banner signage at the Cleveland Indians' baseball games.** The IGC's banner on the field's wall is not only seen by the stadium crowd and local TV audiences but also gets exposure on national sports TV.

Home Canning Anyone?

IGCs plugged into the veggie gardening boom should look for more ways to align themselves with this massive shift in American home gardening. Many consumers who are new to veggie gardening are discovering a truth many of their grandparents knew: When their home crops come in, the yield often far exceeds the potential for immediate consumption ... even after sharing with the neighbors! A few savvy garden centers are offering in-store home canning seminars to solidify this base.

