

Connect with Them

One of the big advantages IGCs have as a much-cherished “locally-owned” business is the opportunity to connect with customers. While many garden centers excel at this, many don’t. In these stressful times, the local garden center should be a place of comfort. Get to know first names, but even beyond that, be sure to share your love of plants and gardening. Ask customers what they have growing. Sure, in the spring rush, maybe you can’t, but how about the rest of the year? Turn on that charm.

Front Door Rush Zone

Recent research focused on floral and plant departments in food stores may help garden centers in positioning their displays. Many grocers were placing cut flower and blooming plant displays at the front entrance to pretty it up and “wow” arriving shoppers. The problem is, they’ve since learned, it hurts sales. Shoppers arrive on a mission to buy other items, and pass right by the pretty displays. Once floral displays are moved to a central location inside the store, however, sales bloom.

Ease Their Fears

Many gardening consumers are self-denied because they are afraid of failure. Especially among women, they “just know” they are going to kill that orchid, so why buy it? While “fear of plant death” is probably not an appropriate theme for a display, it should be challenged. They view you as a plant pro - have you ever killed a plant? Sure, we all have! Ease their fears with the proper care instructions, but also remind them that things happen, and plants can be replaced - it’s OK to give it a try!

It’s How You Say It

Customer service often hinges on the right word - or the wrong one. A customer asking if she can special order a particular item she’s interested in may be a bit of a pain, but don’t show it by saying, “I will have to check.” You sound bothered that they are troubling you. Rather, give it a more positive spin: “I’d be more than happy to check on that for you.” What a difference! It’s not rocket science. Just remember to make the customer queen, and treat her as the valuable asset she is to your store!

You
Can
BE
GARDENCHIC

‘Grow Your Own’ Fruit

With the “Grow Your Own” movement taking a firm foothold in vegetable and herb gardening at home, the next extension is a big boom in fruit trees. This trend is taking off right now across the U.K., where the GYO movement all started, so expect it to hit the States soon. One key for gardening success and increased IGC profits will be in educating customers on why it pays to take the pricier mature trees that will fruit next season. And don’t overlook the improved berry varieties.

Add Some Cheer

Planning a “Girls Plant Party” at your store? Add some wine, and watch your sales ferment. One IGC manager noted that after he added complementary wine and cheese to one of his by-invitation events for women, sales tripled. A little liquid inspiration, in moderation of course, can set those gardening plans in motion and make your special event one attendees want to stay at until the end. Throw in a cooking demo, and give them something to eat before they leave.

