

# SELLING TO SETTLED-IN MILLENNIALS

Using today's technology is imperative if you want to attract project-oriented shoppers.

By Abby Kleckler

**R**eaching Millennials and selling to them is an ongoing challenge for garden centers. The new Growt! Garden Socially app targets Millennials between the ages of 28 and 32 – just the young customer every retailer hopes to attract. Before the app could be developed, however, Mason Day, co-founder (along with Seth Reed) of Growt!, needed to discover what works for such an age group.

Day refers to these Millennials as the settled-in Millennials. They are not still in school and have not just graduated. They are those people who have had a job for a couple years and are getting ready to buy a house, have bought a house or plan to rent long term.

In the following interview with Day, we'll learn where these settled-in Millennials exist and how we can get them planting.

**LGR:** Why is selling to Millennials such a challenge?

**Mason Day:** Millennials didn't garden with mom; they didn't garden with dad. Their parents had busy lives and they are what we often call the latchkey kids. The parents went off to work, the kids went off to day care and school, and there

wasn't a whole lot of time for gardening and miscellaneous activities.

When Millennials start getting apartments and houses of their own, it's an activity that they're not necessarily comfortable with.

**LGR:** How can gardening be made more accessible for this group?

**Day:** One of the things we've found is that Millennials aren't going to try anything that they're not really comfortable with without doing a lot of research first.

That's what is great about the Internet. It allows you to research all kinds of things before you start doing them. Even for something as small as tying a tie, you can find 6,000 videos online.

It's a little different with plants though because we have an idea that our customers have an inherent knowledge base of other plants that are on the market and have been on the market for the last 30 or 40 years.

Millennials, or anybody, can go to a garden center and they are bombarded with names. A plant name can seem like an entire sentence, but for somebody who's new to gardening or new to plants in general, they



are looking for a red flower that works in a pot for example.

**LGR:** Why is it important to provide Millennials with as much information as possible before they buy?

**Day:** We found out that if something doesn't work the first time, Millennials are extremely less likely to go back to it. If they fail with a plant, it may not be their fault, but they're less likely to try gardening again. It's almost as if they failed.

We need to help them succeed the first time, so they continue to come back and realize that small failures happen and that that's OK with gardening.

We've been so conditioned that failure is bad; it's our job to show them that that's not always the case.

**LGR:** Where does the GrowIt! app come into play?

**Day:** The Millennial generation goes out to a lawn and garden retailer with a purpose.

They are not going out there to shop around and see what they might add. They may say, "I need to redo my backyard, or I need to redo my patio." It's project-oriented shopping.

Millennials access their smartphone in stores to help with these buying decisions. They look up reviews. They look up ratings. They look up how things perform.

There aren't a whole lot of ratings out there with plants, so we saw ourselves as the right people to get that information out there. You hit the Explore feed in the app and select the type of plant you'd like, if you need it for sun or shade, where you plan to put it or even just what color you like (see sidebar on page 44 for a snapshot of the GrowIt! app.)

The geo-located app will help you find plants in your area that fit the criteria you have specified. You are no longer looking for a fancy, long name but something that has certain attributes.

It is giving you the knowledge to start your search rather than leaving you at the will of a garden center employee. If you know what you're looking for, it helps them help you better.

**LGR:** How do these resources translate into more purchases by Millennials?

**Day:** Everybody kind of thinks that digital, digital, digital is the way to go. But one thing we're

seeing is that it is important to not only have a digital presence, but also a physical presence. It's the combination of something digital but also something out there in the physical world.

We have no intention of making plants something digital; plants will always be something physical. We're seeing a migration back out into

the real world.

For a while, everyone was worried, "Are we just going to spend all our time on social media?" The answer is no. We're now seeing more and more people who want to get out and do things, but they want that to tie into the digital presence. **LGR**

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## At Their Fingertips

Consumers have a diverse diet of social media options from Facebook and Twitter to Pinterest and YouTube. But until now there has not been a one-stop social media shop for plants.

The GrowIt! Garden Socially app, launched July 2, 2014, helps gardeners find plants, but it can also help your garden center reach an ever-important demographic of settled-in Millennials, according to Mason Day, co-founder of GrowIt!

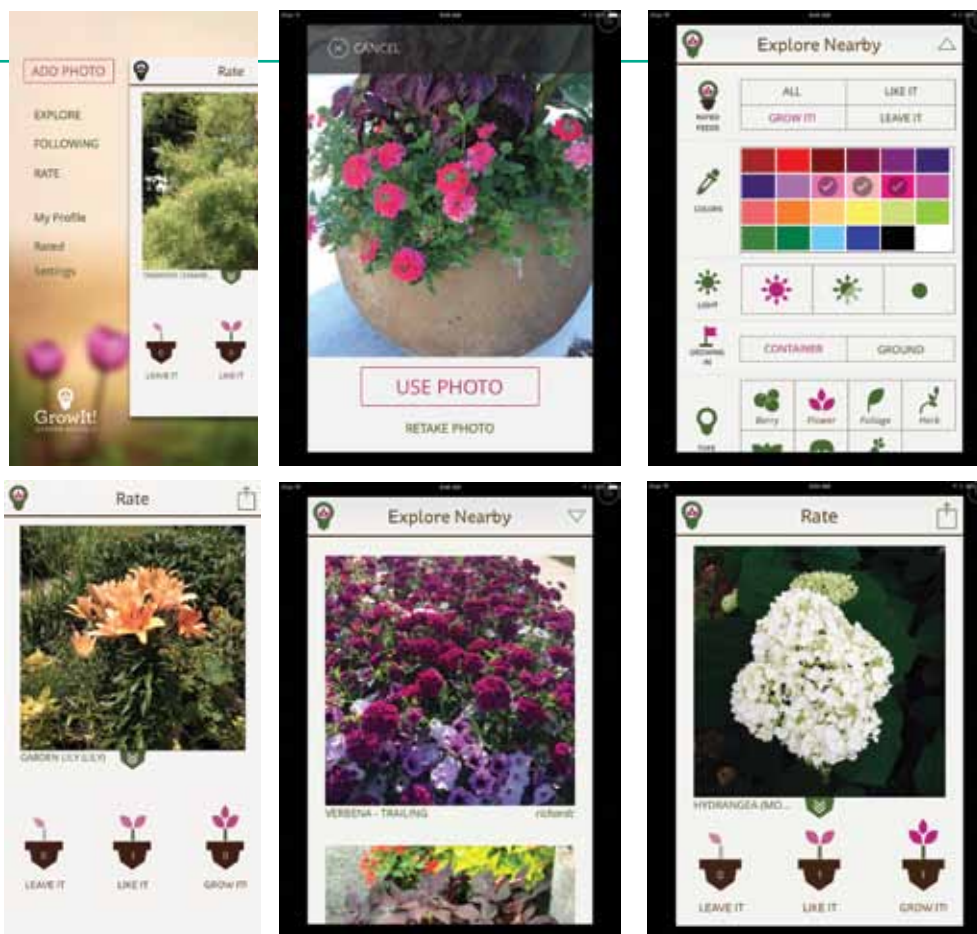
"Garden centers are posting a ton of pictures from their display gardens or what they're planting outside to become an expert in their area," Day says. "When consumers log on, they see photos that are from your garden center."

This spurs a number of questions for the consumer to ask in your business: Do you have this in stock? When will it become available? How did you get that plant to look like that?

"You can become a resource for your customer," Day says, "And it's all local so you know that it's in your reach."

The photos can be found when someone searches nearby or explores by category: color, light, growing location, type of plant and class. App users can then rate a plant either 1) Grow It!, 2) Like It or 3) Leave It.

Although a major consumer push recently started in the first quarter of 2015, GrowIt! already has a large bank of photos from garden centers, horticulture students and other users across the country.



*bring joy inside.*

