

sold on eating, better

Next month, I'll be getting married to a life-long vegetarian-turned-vegan. Needless to say, my eating habits have changed dramatically — and for the better — in recent years.

I remember days when I'd drive four hours with friends to enter some hamburger eating contest or when I'd buy 10 hot dogs (for myself) on "dollar dog night" at a Cleveland Indians game. Those days are long gone.

While a cheeseburger off the grill is still my all-time favorite food, now I'm learning to find protein in things other than red meat. Lentils and quinoa are staples in our kitchen and I actually prefer coconut milk for my cereal.

What it comes down to is I've just become more aware of what I eat; I read labels; I buy more produce ... all good things. It looks like many of your customers are doing much of the same.

gourmet gardeners

In this month's issue of *Lawn & Garden Retailer*, you'll see that we've focused much of our content on and around a healthy and topical theme — edible gardening.

Wasn't it about three or four years ago when all this fuss about an edible gardening renaissance got started? IGCs around the country were selling seed packets like hotcakes and, by season's end, some retailers were seeing 100 and even 200 percent increases in sales seemingly for anything herb and vegetable related.

Did this come out of left field? Was this a flash in the pan? A one-season Sally?

According to the experts in this issue, nope.

Jeanne Pinsoff Nolan, founder of The Organic Gardener, Ltd., says the issues of global climate change, childhood obesity and

diabetes, food deserts and disconnection from nature are not going away anytime soon. On page 29, Nolan talks consumers and their misconceptions as new vegetable gardeners.

slow food and frequent returns

In addition to sending off new gardeners with the right amount of knowledge to have vegetable gardens that actually yield vegetables, trusted industry consultant Sid Raisch emphasizes the repeat business a prominent herb and vegetable department can bring to your store.

In his article "The Consumable Consumable" on page 18, he says, "The people who grow [edibles] come early and they come often. This is more than a product category, it is the most important category available. Recognize and take advantage of it as such."

look at you

Okay, so it's May. Things are warmer; things are busier. There's no doubt you've put in the work to create some engaging displays with your edibles, annuals, pottery, etc.

If that's true, we want to see some proof. Grab your camera, take a few pictures of your best merchandising efforts and send them to me to enter the 2012 Merchandiser of the Year contest! The contest's returning sponsor, Braun Horticulture, has provided an even bigger prize this year.

With past winners Smith's Acres, Beaver Bark Nursery, Calloway's Nursery and Rutgers Landscape & Nursery, it's your turn to join an elite group of merchandisers. Check out the next page for contest details. **LGR**




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Pete Mihalek, managing editor
Phone: (847) 391-1050 | E-mail: pmihalek@sgcmail.com



EDITORIAL

Editorial Office	847.391.1019
Tim Hodson	Editorial Director thodson@sgcmail.com
Pete Mihalek	Managing Editor pmihalek@sgcmail.com
Jasmina Radjevic	Green Goods Editor jradjevic@sgcmail.com
Jason Kenny	Designer jkenny@sgcmail.com

ADVERTISING

Sales Office	817.731.9352
Bob Bellew	Vice President, Group Publisher bbellew@sgcmail.com
Felix Schilling	Account Manager felixschilling@sbcglobal.net
Amanda McAdam	Integrated Media Consultant amcadam@sgcmail.com
Kim Sammartino	Integrated Media Consultant ksammartino@sgcmail.com
Jill Smith	Sales & Marketing Associate jsmith@sgcmail.com
Donna Aly	Classified Advertising Manager daly@sgcmail.com

STAFF

Circulation Office	847.391.1042
Doug Riemer	Director of Audience Development driemer@sgcmail.com

For list rental information, call John Ganis at 914.368.1024.

Sandi Stevenson	Director of Creative Services & Promotions sstevenson@sgcmail.com
Todd Loesch	Custom Media Manager tloesch@sgcmail.com
Erica Rivera	Print Media Supervisor erivera@sgcmail.com

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