

THIS ISSUE IS FRESH

I feel good about this issue. That's not to say I don't feel good about past issues of *Lawn & Garden Retailer*, because I do. It's just sometimes you get this feeling in your gut that you're a part of something pretty cool — and that "something" is this industry.

Prior to working on this June layout, I had a great phone conversation with Amy Cox on healthy living and the responsibility our industry has in promoting a greener and leaner lifestyle to the consumer. A veteran in the cardiology field, Amy is now leading the Slow Food Chicago charge. At the end of our 15-minute phone call, we both agreed garden centers aren't doing enough to exploit all the positives of gardening. "There's a great message out there that's not getting passed on," Cox says.

Those Green Gardeners

On the weekends, I work in the edibles department of a popular Chicago garden center. Despite the cold and soggy spring we've had thus far, I've been impressed by the steady stream of twenty-something shoppers determined to grow vegetables in their limited, urban confines.

They're eager to grow herbs and add them to entrees for summer dinner parties; and grow tomatoes to make their version of grandma's spaghetti sauce. There's definitely some pride in saying, "Oh, that salad? Yeah, I grew the lettuce on my balcony."

While welcoming all of these new soon-to-be gardeners in to shop, there is one thing many of them have in common — a lack of confidence. Introductions like "I kill everything" and "I've never grown anything before" and "I live in an apartment" put these green gardeners at a disadvantage (in their minds) well before they even snap off a tray of Better Boys or Sweet 100s and grab a tomato cage.

How are you building their confidence? How do you turn those "Ummms" and "Maybes" and "We'll sees" into "Yes, I can totally do this"?

See It — Be It

On page 25, you'll find "Gateway Gardening" — a small-space gardening article with some confidence-building ideas. In it, garden celebrity and urban gardener William Moss talks about appealing to new, city-dwelling customers. He reminds retailers, "It's hard to imagine something if you haven't seen it before."

Also in the article, Pawl Hollis, owner of Reno's Rail City Garden Center, shares his experience with this growing gardener demographic. Echoing William, Pawl says, "If they see it, touch it and even get a chance to taste it, they're sold on it. It gives them something to emulate."

Sign Language

Signage can really be an asset when it comes to the confidence building process. Is your signage up to the task, especially on those extremely busy days when the customer-employee ratio is 10 to 1.

Does it answer *all* the questions you hear day in and day out?

While growth habit is important, does your vegetable and herb signage answer harvesting questions, too? Does it suggest ideal companion plants or minimum container size?

Whether you're indeterminate or determinate, these are just a few things to consider. 🌱



Pete Mihalek, managing editor
Phone: (847) 391-1050
E-mail: pmihalek@sgcmail.com
Facebook: facebook.com/LGR.Pete.Mihalek & facebook.com/lawnandgardenretailer
Twitter: @lgrmag

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
Adam Terese Director of Custom Media
aterese@sgcmail.com
Erica Rivera Print Media Supervisor
erivera@sgcmail.com

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