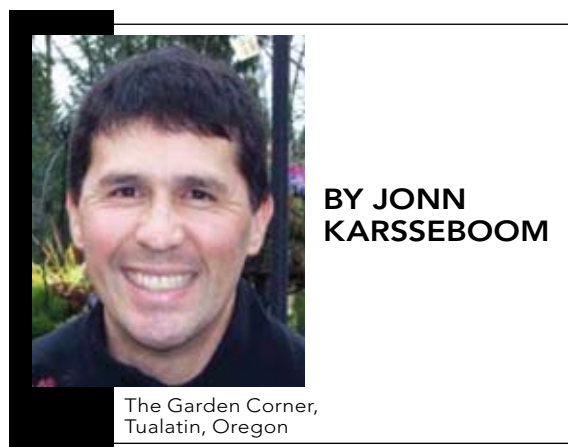


Let me explain...

...why The Garden Corner decided to grow its own nursery stock and why some of its customers might be interested in doing the same.



We call it “Grow Your Own!” The idea is simple enough though completely experimental — and not quite thoroughly tested. It all started with a garden center owner (me) who was very interested in growing some of his own nursery stock, yet wasn’t willing (or able) to hire an expert crew, rent or buy land, or build the necessary greenhouse structures to begin properly.

Instead, with help and good information from wiser staff persons, The Garden Corner team bought in the latest and greatest in new plant introductions, which arrived fairly promptly in large plug trays. After purchasing a few truckloads of special soil mix and gallon pots, we then began potting the plugs in a quiet, dry corner of the garden center. And so the empty, off-season sales tables began to fill.

We only wanted to handle the pots once, so we priced the newly planted pots as if they were fully grown, in-bloom, perennials (more on that later).

What About...?

Considering the times, what would a customer choose if they were offered a beautiful plant in a pot (with an equally beautiful price) or the same plant only a lot smaller and younger in the same

sized pot but at a fraction of the price? Hence the name, “Grow Your Own!”

What if we offered the same, no-fail, plant guarantee on either of their choices?

It was a question I couldn’t answer with the information I currently had — thus our experiment is currently underway.

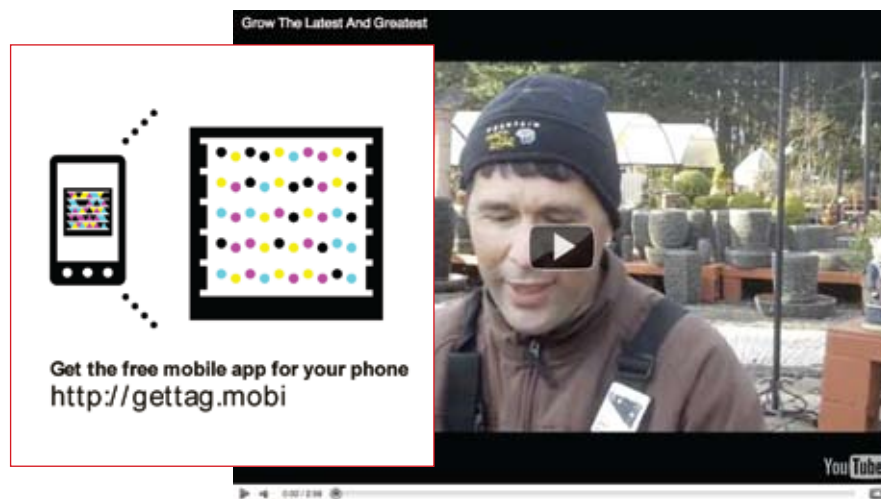
Here are a few things I’ve learned so far: It’s easy to price our newly planted perennials as if it were fully grown and in bloom. Luckily, it’s equally easy for the system to scan at our checkout an attractive discounted price. It’s also possible in our point-of-sale system to set a target date that we think each variety of perennial will have “earned” its full value. So on that date it scans at a regular price.

Signage, I’ve discovered, has been vitally important, too. Without it, what we essentially have are full-priced plants that are small and unattractive — not to mention, insulting to a customer.

I’ve also discovered that most of our “Grow Your Own!” varieties, do not have a fully grown equivalent for customers to compare. Thus, in addition to a picture tag, we wanted to have additional information that was interesting and told in almost a mini-story that could give some emotional meaning to these growing younglings. One such story example could be: “This variety was discovered by plant breeder and Portland local Dan Heims on a trip to the Far East on a far flung hill in a remote village...”

Transplant Transparency

An important point that we try to make in our experiment is of complete transparency. We tell our customers (in person and in signage) that this is truly a young plant that’s been transplanted



Scan the tag above or visit www.thegardencorner.com to watch Jonn “J-Dog” Karsseboom talk about The Garden Corner’s new “Grow Your Own!” plants.

into a bigger container. We inform them the plants have the needed nutrients, but still require regular watering, some sunshine and then a final transplant into their garden when it’s ready. By making the signage easy to read and understand, it may also have an unintended consequence, though, real results are still coming in.

Price, I’ve always believed, is just a perception. “Grow Your Own!” may offer some real value and actually help give our garden center a favorable boost with a wonderful price perception. It’s important to note that without the added growing time, these perennials still earn a full margin.

Finally, for customers who enjoy nurturing and growing — you know the ones who buy seed packets and fill their carts with plants I was just about to throw out — this new program of ours gives them a chance with a future star in their garden. It perhaps may fill a niche for them and at the same time be more agreeable with their pocket book. 🌱

Jonn “J-Dog” Karsseboom is the owner of The Garden Corner in Tualatin, Ore. You can reach Jonn at jonn@thegardencorner.com.

