

aim for the stars

By the end of 2015, Yelp had more than 95 million reviews. As a website founded in 2004 with the purpose "to connect people with great local businesses," Yelp now lists more than 2 million companies.

We have known for a while that consumers are going online to look up stores or products before shopping.

A survey from Dimensional Research shows positive comments impacted buying decisions for an astounding 90 percent of people who read online reviews.

How do you make sure that your garden center is represented well online?

When I created a Yelp account last year, I promised myself that I would write more good reviews than bad reviews.

There are so many amazing local businesses out there that deserve five stars, but unfortunately, a poor experience oftentimes leads people to their keyboards faster for a subpar report.

I was guilty of this after a recent brunch near my apartment. The food was delicious, but the service was lacking.

On the table they placed a tent card asking diners to limit their meal to less than an hour and a half.

Who is paying whom here?

Catching up with a friend who I hadn't seen in six months, we wanted to take our time, but the server was having none of that.

Everything was rushed and at exactly one hour — 30 minutes earlier than their broadcasted policy — we were asked to leave to open up space for other diners.

This made our table the seventh empty one I counted on my way out the door. Why I ask?

Making people feel comfortable and welcome in your business should be one of the easiest things to accomplish.

doing something right

Customers' experiences with your store don't end when they walk out the door. Flip to page 22 for some ideas about how you can help your customers succeed at home with your products, get them coming back and maybe even have them writing a great review or telling their friends.

This issue is full of ideas for all sides of the garden center. On page 16, you'll find GrowIt! founder Mason Day's "7 Apps to Boost Your Business," with everything from streamlining employee processes to learning Spanish. (And now you can add Yelp to make it eight apps!)

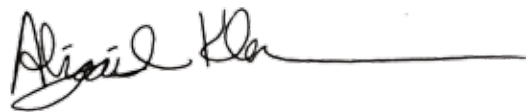
Get a look at what's trending. L.A. garden lifestyle store owner Annette Gutierrez discusses what her customers want now more than ever on page 26 — hint: they don't require a lot of water.

Then, on page 36, Garden Media Group's Katie Dubow will take you through eight gardening and lifestyle trends for 2016.

Also in this issue you'll find some great merchandising ideas (with lots of photos) from North Carolina garden centers.

As my mind was on Yelp, I thought it would be fun to look these six garden centers up and take a scroll through the reviews. They all average 4.5 stars or higher (out of 5)!

Flip to page 48 to discover some of the things they are definitely doing right.




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