



The addition of premium packaging can make a small purchase go a long way.

By Catherine Evans

When it is time for a customer who has just spent a fair amount of money in your store to check out, what kind of bag or box should you give them? Something that small seems pointless to think about, right? Wrong, packaging is one of the few things that can make a lasting impression on your customer in many ways.

By the right packaging, I mean a nice bag with a handle and your logo printed on it, something that people can walk out of the store holding and carry with pride. Thin, plastic bags are fine for groceries but not for upscale plant material or high-end gifts.

Look at places like Bloomingdale's with its "Big Brown Bag." Bloomingdale's has become so known for its packaging that some people say it shows status if you carry your lunch in the bag. Most major retail companies have jumped on this bandwagon. Many women can spot a Victoria's Secret bag a mile away, and the same is true of Nordstrom or Neiman Marcus. Not only do people see the bag as a status symbol, it makes them wonder what's new at the store and might even draw them inside. Amazing, but a little thing like packaging goes a long way when it comes to customer satisfaction.

BENEFITS

Status. All independent garden centers try to be different from the big box stores, and you are. You are much more upscale, tend to carry better plant material and many of you have high-end gifts as well. Basically, you are an upscale store that caters to mostly higher-end clientele. Imagine what impression you are giving your customer when you roughly package their expensive trinket in a plastic thank you bag. Aren't you subtly devaluing the product?

Aren't you telling the customer you don't care if they don't get their purchase home safely, because it's not worth the effort and expense nor is the customer going to forget about making small customers feel better? You go a long way toward doing that.

You put yourself out there as a unique upscale store. Use the packaging to prove it. Put your logo on a nice, handled, heavy-weight paper bag, and your customers will respond. You will be surprised to hear from your customers about the bags. It will make them feel better. They would put their small purchase of \$2.99 in a bag.

Marketing. When better packaging is used, customers will use the bags over again. People reuse nice bags to transport things to work, parties and weekend get-togethers. The bag then becomes a walking billboard, spreading your name on the street for you.

Something else to think about when it comes to having bags that are suitable for gifts. If your packaging is nice enough, the customer may not even gift wrap what they bought; all they have to do is just add some tissue paper, and they will have a good gift bag.

Carrying your own custom boxes holds the same benefit. Have a simple box with your logo on it, in case the item the customer chooses needs to be wrapped. If it is a gift then the person opening it will see where it came from and since they liked the gift so much, they just might start shopping in your store.



These Distribution and Display Carts are designed to reduce physical labor and cut packaging costs for work-in-process inventories, order picking and physical distribution, multiple-temperature trailer shipments, just-in-time delivery, backhaul transit, direct store deliveries, cross-docking, backroom storage and handling, retail stocking and display merchandising. Cannon Equipment. (800) 533-2071. **Write in 1563**

MAKING A STATEMENT

There are a number of your peers out there right now using fancy bags and boxes. Companies such as Molbaks in Washington, Bordine Nursery in Michigan and Ravenna Gardens in Washington, just to name a few, have already spotted this trend. They have been successful, and people have noticed their higher quality bags.

This might seem like a miniscule idea to implement in your garden center, but think about all of the small things you have done in the past that seemed unimportant at the time and are now a big hit. Some garden centers offer free samples (see page 90 for more details); other places do small things like offer to help customers take their purchases to their cars. Customers notice and appreciate those types of things. Ideas do not have to be big in order to make a difference. Do a trial run; there are a number of packaging manufacturers out there that would most likely be willing to work with you if there is a possible large sale on the horizon. If you are looking for some advice in the matter, the Retail Packaging Association is a good resource, www.retailpackaging.org.

Just remember, you are in this business to make money, but you can't make money in this business if the customer is not wowed by what you have to offer. Just because it is a bag or a box does not mean that it is insignificant. Walking billboards, customers who feel special and nice recognizable gift wrapping are just some ways to make something insignificant not so insignificant in the end. 🌸

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Wrapping

Papel Saffron Monza with Red Clearphane Extended Tesseras is shown here. These are a few of many choices from the Monza and Tessera Plant Wrapping Sheets line. This is a two-sheet, four-point look. Highland Supply Corporation. (800) 472-3645. **Write in 1566**



Cart

Met-6PR La includes two shelves that can be pulled out to allow two rows of plants in order to maximize shipping weight. 59 x 58 in. **Write in 1567**

Container

Pressure forming represents the newest technology in the manufacturing of plant containers. The bottom-drain design encourages more effective irrigation, a healthier root structure and a more attractive plant. Every pot has the same smooth finish, is free of excess trim material and has no blemishes. To ensure strength, the right amount of material always goes to the container lip and the bottom corners. Myers Industries, Inc. (330) 253-5592. **Write in 1556** ▶





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The shelf display measures 34 x 70 x 18 inches and weighs 37 lbs. Sterling Forest Designs. (315) 253-7911. Write in 1557



Display

New this year, the FB3200 gives you the ability to merchandise and display a greater range of product types and sizes. Quickly adjust shelves to different heights and angles as your merchandise mix changes. This display includes hanging basket purlins, casters, 14-gauge flattened expanded metal bench tops and your choice of black, green or white powder coating. Poly Tex. (800) 852-3443. Write in 1558



Tag and

Gardenware or plant description signs. Water are available. Gardenware. (



Display
The Benchmark Three-tiered Round Display is a fixture that works for merchandising perennials, pumpkins or poinsettias. A cascading look is possible with this display. Structural Plastics Corporation. (800) 523-6899. **Write in 1559**



Portico Merchandising. (888) 523-9677. **Write in 1568**

Sign holder

This A-frame sign holder made of UV-stabilized, weatherproof plastic holds two 24x36-inch signs. No assembly is required, and it folds for easy storage. Signs work well with any weatherproof plastic poster or board and are easily attached with durable plastic mounts. Horticultural Printers. (800) 433-8247. **Write in 1553**

Ebb-flo system

This retail watering system, the Overhead Ebb-Flo, is user friendly and allows retailers to quickly and inexpensively change the retail area from season to season without the need for underground piping or drains. Valves allow benches to fill and drain water with only one small overhead hose and one pump. The system can be tailored to fit almost any size or combination of benches. Midwest GROmaster. (847) 888-3558. **Write in 1555**



Bench

The Folding Step Bench frame is hinged for easy assembly. Simply unfold the frame, place the three shelves and your display is ready. Ideal for seasonal displays, home or business, the Folding Step Bench display can be used indoors or out. It is made of 1¼-inch cedar decking and measures 46 x 36 x 35 inches. The Maine Bucket Company. (800) 231-7072. **Write in 1560**



Sign holder

The Galvanized Steel Products offered by the manufacturer include this Stake with Sign Holder. The holder can be angled for easy viewing. The stake is measured from the bottom of the Sign Holder to the end of the stake. Available sizes are 5x4 and 6x4½; 7x5 and 7x5½; 11x7 and 8x10; and 11x7 only. The Fannin Company. (888) 998-1918. **Write in 1567**



Signage

Life Styles posters and their photo borders in color give you a modern retail look. Horizontal Banner signs are 18 inches. New Graphics. (800) 752-3030. **Write in 1562**

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