



Pampering Your Customers

Your customers work hard to make their gardens beautiful. What are some ways you can pamper them, make them feel special and keep them coming back to your store?

By Catherine Evans

You already know that any time you can bring people into your store it means more money, but have you thought about using more than plants and fertilizer as bait? Many garden centers now carry home décor and gift items as a regular part of their offering. What about other items? What about products that are not usually considered garden products...things like pet supplies and gourmet food? These kinds of ancillary categories are proving profitable for garden centers around the country.

"Developing Markets," a monthly series that will appear in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer, will profile eight of these potential new markets, giving insight into the health of the market, relating how other garden centers have mastered the category and profiling some of the best new products in the category.

January: Pet Supplies
February: Gourmet Food
March: Tabletop
April: Linens
June: Stationery
July: Personal Care
August: Jewelry
November: Collectables

Picture this: Spring is over, summer is coming to a close and all you can think about are your aching bones, dirty finger nails, sun-scorched face and cracked/blistered feet. One day, as you are sitting in your office crunching the numbers, hoping and praying that there is one more zero to be found on the end of that spring total, in walks your best, most wealthy customer. They walk up to you and present you with a certificate for a day at the spa (because they wanted you to know how much they appreciate that you have the best quality plant material, most exciting merchandise and best customer service around), you suddenly get whisked away and spend the day getting pampered with a massage, facial, pedicure, manicure, hair cut, makeover, and the list goes on and on (yes, guys this can be you too; we women aren't obsessed with spas just to get out of doing the dishes). Suddenly you realize, "wait, why I am here getting this done at a luxurious spa when I have all of the products in my own store to do this at home?"

Ok, so that thought would not really have entered your mind as you were getting a heavenly massage, but it was a good segway into what I am trying to get to, which is carrying personal care items in your store. Within the last 10 years, bath and body products have become a huge trend in the gift market. Ten years ago, these products were considered a luxury or a



treat — something you got for special occasions (because they were so expensive). Suddenly, personal care has become affordable and a hot new item. Sure, there have always been basic hand lotions and soaps, but nothing like what we see today; it's on almost every street corner. Stores such as Bath & Body Works, The Body Shop, Crabtree and Evelyn, and more have become pampering powerhouses. There are products out there that make you smell good, add extra moisture, soothe you to sleep at night, keep your hands from cracking, anything and everything to make your body a glowing haven of youth and serenity.

BRING THE SPA HOME

Last year, sales of personal care

products (e.g., soaps, cosmetics, lotions and potions) totaled \$20.7 billion, up about 4 percent from \$19.9 billion from 2003, and there are no signs that the growth is going to slow down, according to a study done by Unity Marketing. Garden centers all across the country are adding lotions, soaps, shower gel and more to their gift departments because, plain and simple, it is in such high demand. Ever since the big box vs. independent garden center (IGC) debate became so popular, IGCs have been looking for ways to stand out — to keep the customers coming to them instead of going to the boxes. Adding an extensive gift department was one of the greatest ideas. Most of this merchandise will not only appeal to the cus-



tomer visually but physically as well. That is where personal care items come into play.

Garden centers are looking to offer the home gardener the whole experience of gardening, not just the materials to put the garden in place. There are the garden accents to add ambiance, the outdoor living materials to show it all off, the nick knacks to bring a hint of the garden inside and the luxury personal care items to pamper the customer after spending long hours in the garden trying to make it beautiful.

Manufacturers are making it much easier for garden centers to add these types of items to their gift departments by adding gardeners' lines of lotions, soaps, sun screen, chap stick, shower gel, etc. Gardeners feel that there is something out there for them; someone cares about all of the hard work they do in the yard to make it look so beautiful, and now they deserve to be pampered because of it.

IMPLEMENTATION

Yes, many garden centers have been housing personal care items for a while now, but not all are using the product line to its full advantage, or worse, some garden centers have not started carrying those items at all. This category has huge potential to add a lot of volume to your gift sales...as long as you do it the right way.

If you are off to a slow start or want to start carrying personal care items, there are some good ways to see if customers are going to bite or not:

Many times just setting up a

small display at the cash register is one way to grab the shopper's attention. Make it an impulse item. Have a sample of some of the items sitting right there so they can try it in line and grab one on the way out.

Personal care companies have tons of product samples and usually don't mind giving them out to show people what their product is all about. Ask the manufacturer for some free samples and use them in a promotion (spend \$10 and get a free lotion sample) or have a day where everyone that walks through the door gets a free sample (this is also a good idea for those off-season times when you are looking for things to bring customers into the store.)

In Judy Sharpton's article on page 14, she suggests that garden centers should invest in a container gardening department, and in that department there should be an area where the customer can get their hands dirty and pot up some plants. However, that should not be the case unless there is a nice sink right there to clean up with. What better place to put those new personal care products for the customer to try?

Finally, carry the brands that are designed specifically for gardeners. People tend to feel special when a product is made specifically for them, and they are drawn to it. They will stand there and read the package and think, "yes, I get cracked hands after gardening; I do tend to get a little sun burned; I would like some good anti-bacterial soap to clean up with." That connection with the product will often be enough to make the sale.

CATERING TO THE CUSTOMER

There are so many things you can do to help introduce these kinds of products to your customers. But ultimately, who are the customers you want to introduce this type of product line to? We all know that 80 percent of your customer base is women, and who loves to be pampered more than anyone in this world? Women.

Personal care product packaging and POP are usually geared

Personal care items have been in and out of some garden centers for at least a decade now. One garden center has really hit the mark when it comes to successful retailing of these items. I spoke to Avis Jones, garden gift buyer for Peninsula Gardens, Gig Harbor, Wa., to learn about how popular the category is in their garden center; maybe they have a few good ideas for you.

How long have you been stocking personal care items?

For about 10 years.

What made you decide to add personal care items?

Basically, because we have a large percentage of female customers. But, the other reason we carry them, I think, is because we're a garden center, and gardening is about flowers. Flowers definitely are attractive because of their floral scent, so we kind of carry that theme indoors, so when you're not gardening outside you can have it inside.

How much space do you devote to the category?

We probably have 4-6 fixtures full of personal care products.

What kinds of products do you sell?

Our main line is The Thymes, and the reason we selected that is because they have wonderful packaging. It's a product that was originally started by a couple of women in Minnesota. Their fragrances are wonderful. They have some really core ones that are kind of like standards now that people come in and ask for. Customers get hooked on them, and they want them. A couple of the main ones are eucalyptus and lavender. They also have a specialty one called Gold Leaf Hydrangea that's really popular. They also introduce new scents every year; they're usually coming out with a new scent and retiring others based on how it's selling. They've also added a line that is focused on kitchen. It's not just bath care; it's also cleaners for the countertop and some linen-washing products, so it's a nice way to broaden the line and have something more than personal care.

What is your philosophy in choosing products?

I think quality packaging is really important. You can have a great product, but if it's not packaged interestingly enough people are not going to be drawn to it. Also the number of SKUs in the line [is important]. The more interesting lines have

a number of things in the assortment to choose from. I mentioned that The Thymes had the kitchen segment along with the bath segment. They also have candles. Our customers like some core things, but they also like to see some innovation and some change, so I think that's one of the key things that we look for.

What products sell best?

One of our top sellers in almost any line is going to be hand cream. I would say it would be at least 50 percent of our personal care sales. That might be a little high, but it's up there. People will come in and buy just the hand cream. But they like the scent, and all of a sudden, they come in and buy all of the other products.

What kind of margin do you get on personal care items?

We get about 52 percent. One of the things I find that's important is to have lots of testers and samples to give out, and this company [The Thymes] is very good about giving us free testers and samples. They don't charge us for the testers and samples.

Who is responsible for product selection? Helping customers?

I am. We also have a fairly extensive selling staff with the cashiers and sales people as well. We have a floor staff that is on the selling floor working with customers. I'm out there too, but they are the main ones.

Does this category bring people into the store more often or when they wouldn't otherwise be there?

It does. They actually come in because of it, and I think the breadth of the line is important. Sometimes if you have too small of an assortment it does not make a strong statement, and you're not known for carrying that. The Thymes also protects territories fairly well, so if a customer is coming to us they know that we are the key place in the area. If another store in our marketplace is carrying it, they usually have scents we don't have so that we're not crossing over.



DEVELOPING MARKETS

toward women. Give the women a special day at your garden center. Call it women's appreciation day, and use these personal care items to your advantage. We all talk about how we want to sell more plants, we need to make people understand that our quality is better or our customer service is better, right? What better way to do that than by pampering the very people who are going to see those characteristics the most. 🌸

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1. Skin care line

The Gardeners Skin Care Line has been developed for a gardener's skin care needs. Products include: Gardeners Hand Shield for dry, cracked hands; Gardeners Sun Shield with SPF 30 for sun protection; Body Shield for dry elbows, necks, legs; Anti-Aging Shield for fine lines and facial wrinkles; Friction Shield for blisters and calluses; Pain Shield for Burns for sunburn and minor burns; and Pain Shield for Bug Bites for itching and pain from insect bites. All seven products come in a vinyl travel case with a pair of gardening gloves. Stanmar Laboratories. (816) 421-8081. **Write in 1534**

2. Product line

The Mama's line of personal care items includes Mama's Back's All Better, Mama's Feet Are Fine, Mama's Tummy Rub, Mama's Headache's Gone and Mama's Lavender Baby Soap (available with pink or blue label). Cedar Creek Products. (715) 385-9156. **Write in 1529**

3. Soap

AP Soap Gardener's 3.5 oz. in clay green has calendula and comfrey for hardworking hands. The ingredients include palm oil, coconut oil, water, sodium hydroxide, glycerin, honey, comfrey extract, calendula extract, lanolin, fragrance and vegetable color. Baudelaire. (800) 327-2324. **Write in 1528**

4. Soaps

River Soap's long lasting 4.5-oz. French milled soaps are all vegetable based, biodegradable and cruelty free. The colors are derived from natural spices and botanicals. Essential oil scents the soaps and sweet almond oil makes them extra moisturizing. River Soap Company. (415) 552-3322. **Write in 1533**



RESOURCES

Associations

The Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association
www.ctfa.org

Trade Shows

HBA Health & Beauty America
www.hbaexp.org

CTFA Annual Meeting
www.ctfa.org

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Garden Joy product line

De Vroomen developed the Garden Joy concept to help you in presenting the products in a very attractive and professional way. Products can be delivered in packages, quantities and sizes that fit your situation best. A wide range of prepacked bulbs and perennials on wooden displays will fit in any garden center or shop.

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- A wide variety of bulbs and perennials for summer and winter
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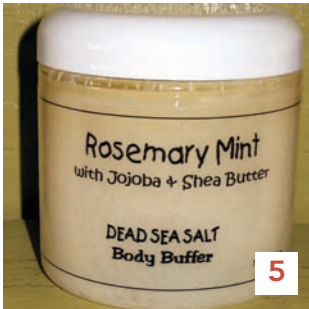
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5. Body buffer

Rosemary Mint Dead Sea Salt Body Buffer exfoliates dry, overworked skin and moisturizes in one easy step. This body buffer has all-natural salt scrub made with Dead Sea salt, exotic African shea butter, and skin softening sweet almond and jojoba oils. Scented with the stimulating essential oils of rosemary and peppermint, this body buffer is an all-body scrub, especially for the soothing of feet and hands. Indian River Soap Co. (321) 723-6464. **Write in 1532**

6. Lotion

Aloe-Comfrey Lotion is light yet moisturizing and rich in the healing powers of the garden. Aloe reduces the effects of sun and windburns, while comfrey increases the skin's regenerative abilities. Suisune. (800) 457-0986. **Write in 1535**

7. Nail care kit

The Manicure in a Jar includes professional grade stainless steel components, including a cuticle trimmer, nail clipper, tweezers, scissors and Nail + Cuticle Care formula, all packaged in a compact, travel-friendly case. Also encased is a Four-sided Filing Block ranging from coarse to super-fine: the coarser side to smooth rough, dry skin and calluses and the finer side to sand down rough edges around the nails. Earth Therapeutics. (800) 789-3579. **Write in 1530**



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8. Moisturizing Scrub

All-natural Creamy Moisturizing Scrub is formulated especially for the gardener to deep clean and exfoliate dry, damaged skin. Creamy Moisturizing Scrub will leave abused hands clean, soft and protected. Natural ingredients like shea butter, aloe and jojoba are not harmful to you or the environment. It's available in several fragrances and is scented using only pure essential oils. Attractively packaged in an easy-to-use, 4-oz., recyclable jar. Wayward Winds Lavender LLC. (503) 662-4488. **Write in 1536**



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9. Hand cream

These antioxidant-rich, restorative hand creams are designed to improve the texture of active hands. The creams contain a blend of pure essential oils that heal and protect the skin, mango seed butter, vitamins A and E, Betaglukan to aid in skin repair, and an herbal infusion to soothe and heal dry hands. EO Products. (800) 570-3775. **Write in 1531**

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