



Garden Retail Strategies to Sell in the Current Environment

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Your Michigan State
University Floriculture
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In the Field

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A happy little miracle in dark times: The plant nursery business is booming



In Anne Trapp, co-owner of Two Dog Organic Nursery, is only doing online orders now at her home-based business in Mid-Wilshire, but business is brisk. (Geneva Molina / Los Angeles Times)

By JEANETTE MARIANTOS | STAFF WRITER MARCH 21, 2020 | 6:00 AM

Demand for plants is high and will likely continue. Shopping has changed. That trend is likely to continue through the summer and beyond.

April 6, 2020

MGGC ELSEWHERE



From the Executive Director...

We begin a new week where we ended the last week, no news on when retail sales can begin in Michigan. We have had Senator Daley and Victory working on letters to the Governor and MDARD director on our behalf, while Representatives Alexander and VanSintel have both sent letters to the Governor asking for her to reconsider garden centers as essential. Now is the time to contact your Senator or Representative and ask them to advocate for the greenhouse industry in a letter or email to the Governor and MDARD director. If you have not contacted MDARD on this, you still can at MDARDccovid-19@michigan.gov. Tell the department that garden centers should be essential so people can be growing their own food and this could be the largest number of people in history having a garden and being self-sufficient.

Michigan growers may sell to wholesale to retailers, but retailers are not permitted to sell their plants to end consumers, not even remotely.

Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, AmericanHort, and Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council are working to open IGCs in Michigan.

Thanks to everyone who has reached out with concerns or good news stories about the industry as we try to navigate these untested waters. I have not heard if the Governor has decided to extend the stay at home rule but will keep you informed as soon as I hear anything. We need to keep emailing and contacting the Governor and MDARD Director to make sure they understand how important greenhouses and garden centers are to the Michigan residents physical and mental health.

Blessings for you, your family and your employees during these difficult times.

Goeff

Goeff Hansen
MainStreet@sbam.org | 231-301-4888

Send Support letters for retail / garden centers to remain open:

- Director Gary McDowell, Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development at MDARD.COVID-19@michigan.gov
- The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer, Governor of Michigan at governorsoffice@michigan.gov.

We are meeting in extraordinary times

As we personally and professionally work under changing circumstances, we should keep some things in mind:

- ▶ We must do what is **legal**. Changing daily. Networks like national (AmericanHort's Coronavirus Resource Center) (IGC Talk! FB Group) and state organizations (MI Greenhouse Growers Assn., MI Nursery & Landscape Assn.) are essential!
- ▶ Second, we need to do what is **ethical**. What can be done safely? Online sales? Curbside pick-up? No touch payments? You know your people and your market(s) best. Ethics have optics.
- ▶ Third, what can you do to be **positive** and **helpful**? Online messages, links, and classes. Let good judgement and ethics guide your choices. Know your choices affect others.

Planning and action both are important

- ▶ Reiterate Charlie Hall's message: Develop and enact contingency plans.
- ▶ What if you can open next week? April 15? April 30?
- ▶ Plans made now will help you through much longer than the near term.
- ▶ Cash flow and budgets?
- ▶ Potential new partnerships with a business that is open?



Webinar

A Discussion on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act: Loans, Grants and Business Relief

Brought to you by
AmericanHort and K-Coe Isom

Today! Tuesday, March 31, 2020, 6 PM, EST

[Register Now](#)

Prepare now for re-opening.

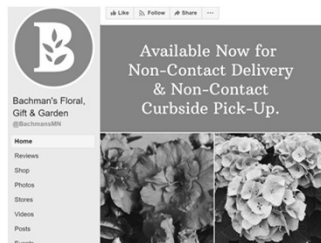
Spring is coming! Renewal of life!
Optimism! Hope!

1. Take care of yourself first (physical and mental health) and your family.
2. Staff next: be frank, honest, have frequent communications.
3. Customers third: Why you are closed and when you will be open. Visible steps to keep them safe.



Planning and action both are important

- ▶ Do not reduce your online or electronic (advertising) communications. This is your lifeline to customers.



Bachman's donated and delivered several hundred flowering plants to hospital workers.



Keeping staff safe and healthy

- ▶ Honest and upbeat!
- ▶ Communicate with staff regularly and reinforce what is new protocol.
 - ▶ Mandated to screen workers daily (symptoms)
 - ▶ Reinforce hygiene: cover nose and mouth for cough or sneeze, wash hands
 - ▶ Keep 6-foot distance from everyone
- ▶ Follow CDC guidelines for sanitizing surfaces



Coronavirus Communication Tips

In times of uncertainty communication is more important than ever. We suggest companies consider two important paths of communication and deliver information in as calm a manner possible. The first path is for employees to help alleviate their concerns; and the second path is to connect with your customers and clients. Here are some suggestions on what your messages to these audiences might address.

Employee communication:

- An overall statement that "we value the health and wellbeing of our employees and their families and are here to listen to your concerns"
- Share what the company doing to protect its employees from the virus (handwashing, sanitizing, limiting meetings, limiting in-person contact, etc.)
- Share your remote working/telecommuting options, guidelines (if available)
- Review your processes for how the company will communicate to employees in the event of a mandatory shut down
- Review your HR policies regarding sick time or leave. This may be a time to make some temporary modifications (i.e.: provide an advance on paid time off)



Coronavirus Communication Tips

Client or customer communication:

- Share whether the company open for business, has modified hours operation, offers delivery or order pickup services, etc.
- Share what the company is doing to protect its customers from the virus? (handwashing, sanitizing, adding additional hand-wash stations, limiting visitors, limiting meetings, limiting in person contact, etc.)
- Share the positive fact that plants impact our health, wellness and the environment – "gardening has not been cancelled"
- Ask how the company can help its customers/clients in this time of uncertainty through service, payment terms, or other support



Events & Programs Advocacy Resources Research About Membership

CORONAVIRUS RESOURCE CENTER

WELCOME

GARDEN RETAIL RESOURCES

With much uncertainty in our world right now, we've gathered these resources for the Retail Community with the hope that they will help you navigate today's challenging business environment. Together we strive to keep ourselves, our employees, and our customers healthy and happy.

FEDERAL RELIEF EFFORTS

Keeping Your Message Positive

Now is not a good time to reduce your investment in communications. In fact, online, social media and other communications can be your lifeline to telling customers how they can (and should) continue to do business with you.

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

For additional resources and valuable assets that will help you inspire and connect with your customers, be sure to visit the **Benefits of Plants** section of the AmericanHort Coronavirus Resource Center.

WORKFORCE

The National Garden Bureau has re-launched the inspirational Victory Garden for 2020.

BUSINESS BEST

Keeping Employees Healthy and Safe



Conversations Magazine Popular Topics Podcasts Video Store The Big Idea Visual Library

MARKETING

Ensure That Your Customer Relationships Outlast Coronavirus

by Ted Woldron and James Weatherize
April 01, 2020

Summary Like Share Comment Print



HEART Framework of Crisis Communication:

Humanize your company
Educate about change
Assure stability
Revolutionize offerings
Tackle the future



March 28 at 9:53 AM



It's a spring day and usually, our stores would be busy with customers, but we're entering day 5 with our stores closed. For the greater good of the community, we closed our six stores and landscape operations and had to lay off 200 employees to comply with the Governor's order to stay at home. We wish we could provide you with essential products for your garden right now, but since we can't we're urging everyone to stay safe and stay home. #MakeLifeBeautiful

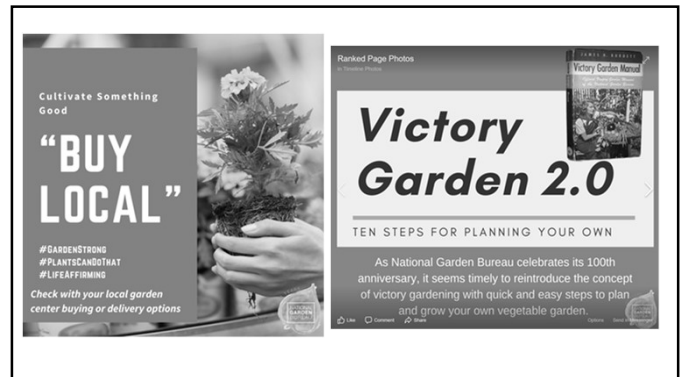


Communicate with customers!

You are closed and that's not your fault. Stay top of mind with the base you've built.

Communication with customers

- ▶ Be positive!
- ▶ Deliver positive messages and images:
 - ▶ Beautiful images of food and flowers with positive messages
 - ▶ Plant benefits (<https://ellisonchair.tamu.edu/health-and-well-being-benefits-of-plants/>)
 - ▶ Activities with kids (<https://beauty.provenwinners.com/diy/kids-projects/>)
 - ▶ #PlantsDoThat infographics (<https://consumerhort.org/plantsdothat/>)
- ▶ Use these on your phone message when people call to hear your hours of operation.



Cooperative Gardens Commission

Many other organizations are encouraging everyone to plant many different plants.



#PlantsDoThat at consumerhort.org/plantsdothat/

An Update of the Literature Supporting the Well-Being Benefits of Plants: A Review of the Emotional and Mental Health Benefits of Plants¹

Charles Hall and Victoria Kautz

Abstract

Consumer hort has historically shown an inclination to purchase plants that enhance their quality of life, meaning they will purchase items that positively influence their social, physical, psychological, cognitive, environmental, and spiritual well-being. Plants as native and improved landscape (and metropolitan) have been documented to influence each of us quality of life outcomes. This report summarizes published literature regarding the emotional and mental health benefits associated with plants, addressing cultural identity and ethnic diversity, digital currency, therapy and mental recovery, decreased depression, enhanced memory retention, greater happiness and life satisfaction, mitigation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), increased creativity, reduced productivity and attention, reduced effects of dementia, reduced effects of dementia, and improved self-esteem. This research should be strategically incorporated into hort industry-wide and fine-specific marketing messages that highlight the quality of life value proposition in order to maintain the industry's value of value and relevance to consumers of the future.

Index words: benefits of plants, emotional health, mental health.

Significance to the Horticulture Industry

This paper is the first of a four-part series that provides a review of the substantial body of peer-reviewed research that has been conducted regarding the economic, environmental, and health and well-being benefits of green industry products and services. This article focuses specifically on the health and well-being benefits. This research should be strategically incorporated into hort industry-wide and fine-specific marketing messages that highlight these quality of life dimensions in order to enhance the perceived value and relevance of green industry products for gardening and landscaping consumers in the future.

Introduction

In 2011, Hall and Dickson published a review article in the *Journal of Environmental Horticulture* (JEH) that summarized the economic, environmental, and health and well-being benefits associated with people-plant interactions. The proposition put forth in that article was that green industry firms needed to focus on these types of

Since 2011, there has been a glut of additional research conducted regarding these emotional plant benefits and these voluntary studies provide compelling evidence that markets thrive attention. Thus, this new series of feature articles attempts to update the findings contained in the original article by Hall and Dickson by providing a summary of the research on plant benefits that has been conducted since 2011. The data in this new information provides the basis for future innovative green industry marketing efforts, which now, in turn, positively influence the industry of demand for plants in general. The first topic in the four-part series, *Cultural and Mental Health Benefits of Plants*, is one that has been shown to increase with consumption of all demographic segments (Hall and Dickson, 2011). These benefits are segmented and discussed using the following categories: anxiety and stress reduction, attention deficit recovery, financial and visual responses, decreased depression, enhanced memory retention, greater happiness and life satisfaction, mitigation of PTSD, increased creativity, enhanced productivity and attention, reduced effects of dementia, and improved self-esteem.

Free download of article at <https://ellisonchair.tamu.edu/benefitsofplants/>

Stay calm and garden on! Did you know that increased access to green spaces reduces psychological distress, depression symptoms, clinical anxiety, and mood disorders in adults? It's true! Take a break and enjoy your outdoor plants.



Keep your distance, but not from plants. Did you know that time spent in natural settings can help reduce mental fatigue recovery time and improve concentration levels?



Did you know that having 10 or more trees in a city block, on average, improves personal health perceptions in ways comparable to a \$10,000 increase in annual personal income or being 7 years younger?



Experiencing indoor and outdoor natural environments helps transition individuals from a state of stress towards a state of relaxation and subconscious activity enabling better sleep?



Did you know that recent studies show that immunity from illnesses can be enhanced by viewing, interacting with, or even being in the vicinity of plants?

When you are open, what can I buy?

- ▶ Basics are selling fast: mulch (great exercise for kids), top soil, amendments
- ▶ Vegetables selling very fast (food security and fun activity)
- ▶ Colorful still is important as people spend time at home
- ▶ Communicating purchase options
 - ▶ Take some pictures of key products
 - ▶ Email a newsletter with your (planned) options (but check website).
 - ▶ Social Media: work your existing network
- ▶ What can be featured? Think solutions. Think packages.



Integration of plants to make "packages". Containers, seeds, potting mix, plants, fertilizer. Marigolds, nasturtium?





Haskins, England



Stewarts, England



Squires, England

Selection by color will still drive many choices.
Opportunities to integrate across botanical lines.



Not just color but the integration of plants to make "packages" that have direct contrast as well as subtle contrast.

Products: Think Bundles & Packages



- Demand for both food and pretty; combine them
- Incorporate lower margin items as part of packages to move inventory
- Incorporate shrubs in some larger mixed containers
- Excellent examples from IGC Talk! and other FB groups
- Communicate, communicate, communicate! Show and tell worked well in kindergarten and works now (camera phone and social media are your best friends)

What does your take-out menu look like?

- ▶ Pizza pot: grape tomato, basil, marigold, spicy pepper
- ▶ Pasta package: Roma tomato, parsley, green pepper
- ▶ Salad bowl: greens and seeds and nasturtium (now, seeds for later)
- ▶ Beginner's beauty: Easy-peasy (marigolds? Sunflower?)
- ▶ What's your favorite color? Red, yellow, green, blue, white



Ordering

- ▶ Online options
 - ▶ Inventory up on google docs or email a take-out menu they can call you, place order, and have cashless transaction
- ▶ Telephone
 - ▶ Take their number and call them back on another line
 - ▶ Limited on phone lines? Buy some burner phones if needed



Online store

- ▶ Work your network (or your IT person) for simple steps to get up and going in the short term
- ▶ Weebly, Bigcommerce, Shopify, Lightspeed, Woocommerce (online stores)
- ▶ Facebook and telephone? Newsletter and call with credit card?
- ▶ Add means for electronic payment: Paypal or Stripe or Venmo or Square



Video concierge

- ▶ Make an appointment (scheduling software)
- ▶ Minimum order \$\$ and/or add \$25 or a percentage
- ▶ Walk around with video chat
- ▶ Place order
- ▶ Pick order and place on cart (number cart)
- ▶ Text or call with stall number
- ▶ Load in trunk
- ▶ Delivery? Give a free flower/seed pack/plant but consider charging for delivery. Leave on porch, call or text.



Now, how can I get it?

- ▶ What is possible? What can be implemented in the short-term and longer?
- ▶ Delivery options
- ▶ Curb-side pick up
- ▶ Concierge (personal shopper via Facetime or video-chat).
- ▶ What does that look like through the entire system from selection, through payment, through delivery/pick-up? Walk it through in detail.

Curb-side pick-up

- ▶ Call/online and place an order
- ▶ Pick order and place on cart (number)
- ▶ Text or call with stall number
- ▶ Leave cart at car/vehicle (do not load in trunk)
- ▶ Wipe down cart and go back inside



No Contact Plant Pick Up

Home | Your Store | Sign Up | About Us | Contact Us

No Contact Plant Pick up

Step 1: Order Plants Online

Step 2: Drive to Pick Up

Step 3: Pop Trunk

Step 4: Order loaded in Trunk

Nocontactplantpickup.com

Delivery

- Call/online and place an order
- Call or text for delivery date
- Leave on front porch
- Call or text that delivery was made



<https://www.gardencentermag.com/article/free-downloadable-covid-19-signs-available/>

Check-out/register good practices

- Safe and healthy is the goal!
- Reinforce hygiene: cover nose and mouth for cough or sneeze
- Clear counter near cash register (Judy Sharpton)
- Space dots at check-out to space customers
- Limit number of customers permitted in store
- No cash: tap or sanitize credit card machine
- Follow CDC guidelines for sanitizing surfaces



Online classes

- What can be converted?
- Think about a package (and price point) for the materials.
- Pick-up or delivery?
- Use interactive software so attendees can ask questions and interact.
- Live (FB live) stream? Future uses of recorded seminars?

Lettuce Bowl Workshop "Make It & Take It"

When: Saturday, May 20th @ 2 PM

Where: Hanson Park

38 Springfield Ave, Cranford, NJ

Cost: \$10 (members of Hanson Park Conservancy)

\$15 (non-members)

Using a selection of lettuce, herb and garnish plants, participants will create a delicious garden to bring home. During the program, all the members of the Lettuce Bowl Garden Club of Cranford, who will also provide instructions for care and harvesting of your lettuce garden, will assist with the program. Participants are requested to bring their garden gloves.

Sign up now on our website: www.hansonparkconservancy.com as registration is limited to the first 25 participants. The cost is \$10 for members of the Hanson Park Conservancy (\$15 for non-members). In case of rain, the workshop will take place at the Cranford Conservancy Center, 38 Springfield Ave, Cranford, NJ.

Please register for this event on the Hanson Park Conservancy's website: www.hansonparkconservancy.com



Here are Top 10 Recommended Kids Gardening Activities

1. Kitchen Scrap Gardening: Help the planet and clean up your kitchen, this one is a great way to think about where your food comes from.
2. Seed Viewer: There are many different ways to explore plants with simple dried beans from the soup grocery store aisle.
3. Plant People: Create your own 'chia pet' family.
4. Grow Your Own Salad: We bet you won't stop doing this activity as kids who grow edibles are more likely to eat them. Adults too!
5. Pressed Flowers: Save beautiful spring blooms for future crafts. Pressed flowers provide a base for numerous projects and gifts.
6. Leaf and Flower Prints: Engage those high energy kids with this fun craft that uses a mallet.
7. Make More Plants from Houseplants: Houseplants make great gifts and what a great 'giving' activity or to ensure more rooms have the benefit of houseplants.
8. Hydroponics: Ever wonder how hydroponics really work? All that's needed is a cup with a cover, water, and seeds.
9. Garden Scavenger Hunt: Turn garden exploration into a game! You can even have prizes for those competitive family members.
10. Soil Art: No paint on hand, no problem. With a little glue and water, soil can inspire creative artwork.



Plant trucks?

Resources

AmericanHort Events & Programs Advocacy Resources Research About Membership

CORONAVIRUS RESOURCE CENTER

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SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE **For additional resources and valuable assets that will help you inspire and connect with your customers, be sure to visit the Benefits of Plants section of the AmericanHort Coronavirus Resource Center.**

WORK/OFICE **The National Garden Bureau has re-launched the Inspirational Victory Garden for 2020.**

BUSINESS BEST PRACTICES **Keeping Employees Healthy and Safe**

AMERICA'S SBDC Home - Blog - Resources - About Us - Conference - News - Members

COVID-19 Small Business Resources

America's SBDCs are working to help small businesses address the business challenges of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

On this page we have gathered information and resources to help small businesses plan for and respond to the pandemic.

We encourage you to contact your local SBDC for assistance with questions and challenges your business might face as a result of the current situation.

Please be aware that some SBDCs are providing services through online communications only or have closed centers as a result of the pandemic. We will do our very best to assist you. For the contact information of your nearest SBDC, click here.

PennState Extension MENU SEARCH ACCOUNT CART

LEARN HOW TO STOP THE INVASIVE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY >
CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19: UPDATE FOR EVENT ATTENDEES >

HOME > RAMP UP YOUR ONLINE ORDERING FOR EXPANDED DELIVERY OR CURB-SIDE PICKUP


Ramp Up Your Online Ordering for Expanded Delivery or Curb-Side Pickup

Learn about online ordering and delivery or curb-side pick-up from a panel of farms successfully using these options.

WEBINARS

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner, Intermediate
LENGTH: 1 hour, 30 minutes
LANGUAGE: English

RECORDED WEBINARS
Ramp Up Your Online Order...
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ALL ARTICLES

MORE Low-Cost Service Tips

*By Ari Weinzeig, Zingerman's Co-Founding Partner
written for Specialty Food Magazine*

Great service is about getting the big and small things right—and in this tough economy, keeping customers happy has even greater significance. Therefore, here is the second installment of basic but useful service strategies that we put into practice at Zingerman's. Some of these can be implemented one at a time, starting tomorrow morning if you're feeling inspired. Some may seem obvious and some I've talked about before in past columns. But as we strive to be our best, it's important to make sure we are keeping service standards high. And best of all, these strategies cost next to nothing to execute other than some time and a fair bit of stubbornness to make sure they get

Marketing Munchies Podcasts:

Season 1 (2018)

Episode 16: Pricing and Perceived Value

Episode 29: 5 Tips to Build Better Signs

Episodes 38, 38: Charlie Hall on Plant Benefits

Season 2 (2019)

Episode 7: Good, Better, Best Pricing

Episode 12: Sales and Selling

Episodes 36, 37: Trey Malone on Social Media Best Practices

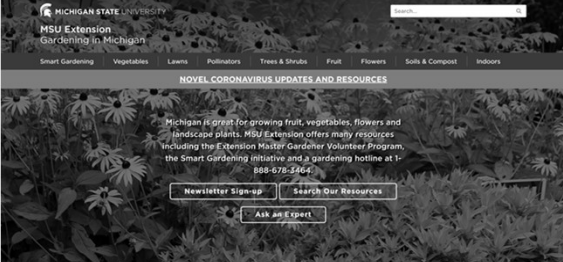
Season 3 (2020)

Episode 102: Pat Huddleston on Customer Service Isn't Rocket Science



www.connect-2-consumer.com

Help them be successful at home with your help and other professionals.
Don't sell and socially distance, keep in touch virtually!



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MSU Extension
Gardening in Michigan

Smart Gardening Vegetables Lawns Pollinators Trees & Shrubs Fruit Flowers Soils & Compost Indoors

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS UPDATES AND RESOURCES

Michigan is great for growing fruit, vegetables, flowers and landscape plants. MSU Extension offers many resources including the Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program, the Smart Gardening initiative and a gardening hotline at 1-888-678-5464.

Newsletter Sign-up Search Our Resources Ask an Expert

Summary

- ▶ Reset to a new "normal" as shopping has fundamentally changed (likely be this way for months).
- ▶ Be positive, communicate positively.
- ▶ Safety and health are priorities (choices)
- ▶ What is possible soon, should be continued and developed (curb-side, online, remote shopping)
- ▶ Importance of networks, use the information
- ▶ Please stay well and let us know how we can help.

Thanks for your attention!
Questions?



www.connect-2-consumer.com



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