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## **Executive Summary**

With the economy being tough right now, it's hard for people to afford healthy food. Spice Up Your Life has an easy way to help you grow plants. We offer handmade wooden planter boxes with seeds and soil included. This product helps people to grow their own gardens without spending too much money. Our plant boxes are 12 inches wide and 5 inches high, so customers can make their own garden in a small space.

While our company targets people with balconies, porches, or patios, our planter boxes can be placed anywhere around the house including next to the windowpanes. Apart from being just a wooden planter box and seed seller, our mission is to promote healthier eating habits and encourage a homesteading lifestyle among families.

Spice Up Your Life is more than just a business; it is a commitment to improving the lives of the community and fostering a stronger connection to nature and food. Through our products, we aim to empower people to take control of their food sources and embrace a healthier, more sustainable way of living.

In conclusion, the work of Spice Up Your Life today, where access to affordable, fresh produce is limited. By providing a gardening solution, we are not only helping people save money but also encouraging healthier lifestyles.



## **Company Description**

Spice Up Your Life will be a local small business based in the Baton Rouge area. Our mission is to inspire families to be more self-sufficient and to enable consumers to cultivate their own produce. This will be accomplished by providing an affordable and convenient approach to gardening which will push individuals and families in the right direction regarding growing their own produce.

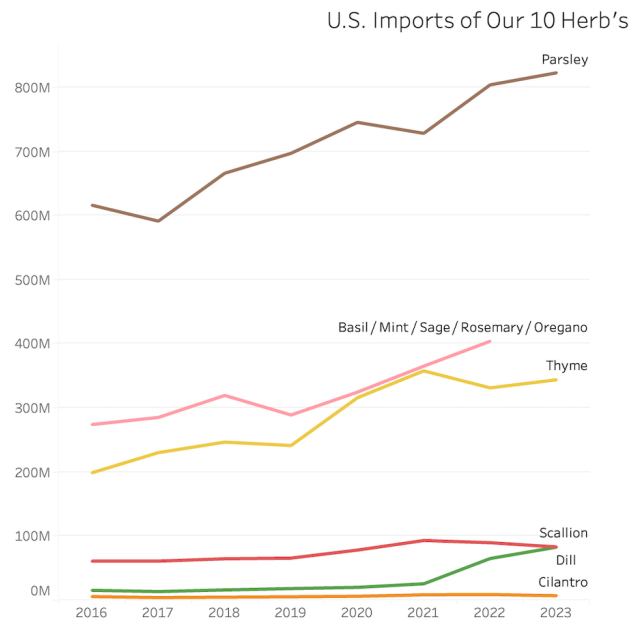
Our business product will be centered around building custom wooden planter boxes that have hooks on the back, giving customers the ability to hang their 12 x 5-inch wooden box on apartment railings, in the backyards of houses, or in their own kitchen. When you purchase a planter box, soil will be included in the purchase. For the seeds, we specialize in providing top 10 of the most common herbs that are used in everyday cooking. These 10 selections will be split into two different bundles. Bundle A will have seeds of cilantro, mint, basil, oregano, and dill while Bundle B will include seeds of scallion, rosemary, sage, parsley, and thyme. Giving consumers the option between two seed bundles was determined to provide consumers with diverse food options and ensuring herbs from these bundles cover a wide range of food.

With the combination of fresh herbs and custom ready wooden planter boxes, all the consumer has to do is find a suitable location to place the box. We will accomplish this by targeting gardeners in the Baton Rouge area who have a small area to plant a garden but just don't have the space to do so. The market we are entering has many competitors from large supermarkets who sell low price herbs to small ETSY sellers who create custom planter boxes. With our business, we aim to create an all-in-one product that combines all of the features together to provide a more seamless process when starting your own small garden.



## Market Analysis

Globally, the fresh herb market was valued at \$142.1 billion in 2022 and is expected to reach an evaluation of \$407.9 billion in 2028 (Singh, 2021). Looking at the United States imports of our 10 herbs, we found that parsley is one of the most popular with total imports ranging from \$600 million to \$800 million in the past 7 years.



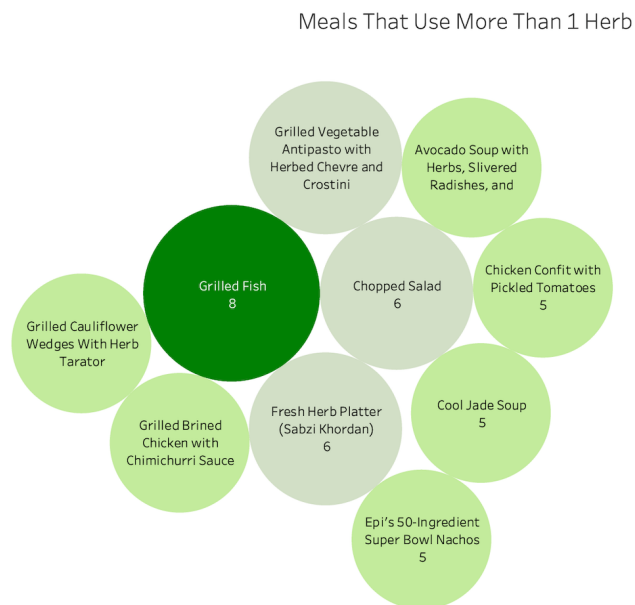
This increase in market valuation is due to people having more awareness of the health benefits of fresh herbs, rising prices of herbs sold at grocery stores, and people's desire to produce their own food in a sustainable manner (Singh, 2021). Along with the increase in consumers' desires to have eco-friendly food options, there is also an increased awareness of the packaging that these foods come in.

Buyers are looking for products that come in recyclable or reusable bags to reduce their waste and carbon footprint. Brands that include these types of packaging appeal to a larger group of customers and for some people, this aspect of eco-friendly behavior is a make-or-break feature of



the product. Examining the balcony or hanging garden market, most products are made from plastic. This can be a major advantage to our company because we will be crafting wooden planter boxes. Adding more to the consumers desire for healthier consumption practices, one survey found that 91% of consumers care about plastic waste disposal (Hodge, 2020), but after research they concluded that consumption habits have not changed. This research is a bit discouraging and could change our business path, but we believe our competitively priced wooden hanging garden will enable us to secure a share of the market based on consumer thoughts toward plastic.

Pertaining to our herbs, people are increasingly more interested in cross-cultural dishes, and in those dishes house many of the herbs we have specialized in. To get a better understanding of what customers would be using our fresh herbs for, we dove deeper into this topic by gathering a dataset of over 13,000 meals spanning from fried catfish to deep fried tacos.



After getting the data, we were able to find keywords in the ingredients and parse them. Our initial findings showed that our 10 main herbs were in over 3,000 meals giving us a lot to work with. Filtering the data to show the top ten results allowed us to see the total number of our 10



herbs in each meal, effectively showing us the top performing meals that could lead to multiple seed purchases. Combining this graph with a graph of all ten herbs, we were able to list which herbs were in each meal. This gives us key insights as to why consumers might be looking for a specific herb and who we might need to market to. Other ways we can use this data is by creating certain seed bundles with those 5 or 6 seeds with an image on the package showing what can be created with our seeds.

As consumers are branching out more into different corners of cuisine, more fresh herbs are being featured in people's grocery lists. Due to the increase in demand for these fresh herbs, grocery stores have been increasing the prices of certain herbs to match the gain in popularity.



(U.S. Inflation Rate)



As the prices continue to increase, consumers are now looking for cheaper alternatives to these fresh herbs which one solution is growing the herbs themselves. As urban living continues to increase across the United States, consumers are having to become savvier when it comes to growing their own fresh herbs. Consumers have found different herbs that are more suitable to be grown in tighter and sometimes indoor spaces. Certain fresh herbs such as basil, chives, cilantro, and parsley are easy to tend to, able to survive indoor conditions, and grow relatively vertical, making them easy to grow in indoor spaces where space is limited such as apartments and dormitories. A simple setup including a pot and some soil is all that is needed for someone to start growing their own fresh herbs.





## **Products and Services (Our Solution)**

To create a convenient way for customers to grow their fresh herbs right in the comfort of their home, Spice Up Your Life has created herb kits that have 10 of the most popular herbs. This allows consumers to do as they wish with their herbs, from garnishing dishes to creating meals with them. Our customers will have the option of two herb growing bundles that they can purchase, with each bundle including a wooden planting box, hooks for hanging the planting box, rich soil perfect for growing, and a bundle of five different seeds. Our product is designed to serve customers that may be new to herb growing, lack a large outdoor space for conventional gardening, and those that are looking to save money on the herbs they use to cook dishes with.

Spice Up Your Life offers more services to go with its herb kits to enhance the overall customer experience. One initiative for a service is to offer classes on growing herbs. Customers can learn how to grow herbs, take care of them, and use them in cooking. Moreover, the company can provide subscription boxes so that customers can get a new herb kit or related products on a regular basis. This would give us a steady number of fresh herbs and gardening tools. Another option could be personalized plant kits, where customers can choose the herbs, they want and how much of each. The company might also provide services for planting and taking care of herb gardens at the customers' homes. A skilled gardener would visit and do the work. This will make sure the plants grow well and stay healthy.

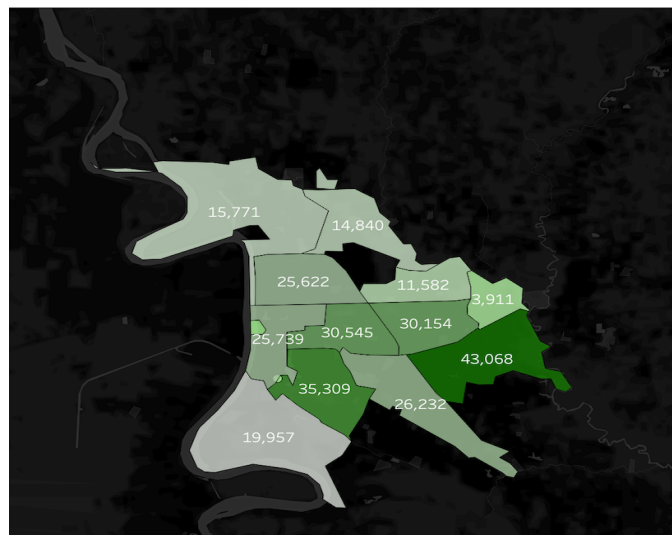
Spice Up Your Life can give your ideas for how to use the herbs in your cooking. They might even suggest some recipes for you to try. In addition, the company could help people gather and dry herbs for later use. Another option is to create herb gardens in the community. Spice Up Your Life would work with local groups to set up these gardens. This would let people in the community grow and give away fresh herbs. Finally, the company could add more herb-related products like oils, vinegars, and cooking tools. This will give customers everything they need to grow and cook with herbs.



## Marketing Plan

Firstly, we wanted to identify our target market. From a general view this would be anyone looking for herbs or looking to create a garden with a small area in the Baton Rouge area. Using census data, we were able to identify the population by zip code in and around Baton Rouge helping us deploy marketing tactics to areas with the most people.

Population by Zip Code



Narrowing down our consumer market, we will be focusing on students and apartment residents who don't have access to land for planting their crops. This is because our solution is focused on providing a small footprint garden that allows for herb planting. These kits are perfect for aspiring home chefs that include an assortment of herbs such as mint, rosemary, dill, and many more. Moreover, we wanted to focus on health-conscious consumers who enjoy growing their own herbs straight from home. With our herbs, it gives consumers a lot of variety with what they can do with it. You can choose from our two seed packet bundles. Bundle one has herbs that are perfect for salads, sauces, seafood dishes, beverages, garnishes for soups, curries, pizza and sandwiches! Bundle two is great for meat lovers as this packet is perfect in soups, stews,



stuffing, meats, seasoning for roasted vegetables and sauce. Combine these packet bundles together to create the most mouthwatering dishes that your guests will want more.

Since all our business owners are current students at LSU, we will be able to use the campus and its resources as a starting point for our advertising. We will plan to advertise our company in the LSU Reveille newspaper, put up promotional signs around campus showcasing our products, and use our connections within the college and student groups to spread our company's reach by word-of-mouth advertising.

We will also utilize online advertising, both free and paid for options. For free online advertising, we will plan to create social media accounts for our business on Tik Tok, Instagram, and Facebook. By posting on these social media accounts regularly, we will be able to spread the awareness of our company organically and with minimal cost to the business. For the paid online advertising, we will utilize Google Ads to have advertisements of our business show up on people's internet searches, side bars on websites, and other places that may catch the eye of a potential customer. Using paid ads online in the initial period will help boost our reach immediately and hopefully once our footing on social media becomes firmer, we can shift the percentage of paid versus free advertising in the favor of free advertising and just use our own social media accounts to handle the main promotion of our company.



## **Logistics and Operations Plan**

To maximize cost-efficiency, our group will personally assemble the wooden boxes, utilizing existing tools owned by each member, such as hammers. Inventory will be stored in a temperature-regulated garage, lowering storage costs. We will purchase supplies in bulk to save money and maintain inventory levels to support multiple weekly sales.

For LSU student and faculty customers, we offer the convenience of meeting at the E.J Ourso Rotunda for product pickup. All other customers will be responsible for covering transportation costs, causing Spice Up Your Life to maintain efficient production and reduce overhead.

To maximize convenience for customers, we will host a weekly pop-up shop at the LSU Parade Grounds every Wednesday from noon until 4:30 p.m. This location would attract not only LSU students but also people from the surrounding community. This approach also allows for quick access for both staff and students, enhancing the overall customer experience and increasing sales. We will also have a booth at the Electric Depot Local Pop-Up Shops. These events only happen once at the end of each month.

During cold weather conditions, we will adjust our operations by limiting the number of pop-up shops. If the temperature falls below 50 degrees, customers can make purchases online. All spices will be stored in a temperature-regulated garage to maintain freshness and quality. This plan ensures that our customers can continue to access our products, regardless of weather.



## Financial Plan

In our planning for financial projections, we documented expenses essential for creating our product to give us our cost of goods sold (Appendix A). To provide an overall picture for our financial situation, we've constructed a financial plan in the form of a mock income statement that shows how we would use funds, how many units we would need to sell, and how much funds would be allocated to marketing. Because our business would be based out of our own apartments, we would save money on purchasing or renting a building. This financial plan was important in the process because it gives us a better picture of how many units would have to sell to generate a profit or just to break even. In the model we created, we forecasted a 15% growth rate year over year which is somewhat fair in our market but could be seen as an optimistic estimate.

Income Statement		2025	2026	2027	2028
Figures in USD					
<b>Revenue</b>		\$24,990	\$27,489	\$36,960	\$42,510
<b>Costs of Goods Sold</b>		\$12,000	\$13,200	\$13,552	\$15,587
<b>Gross Profit</b>		\$12,990	\$14,289	\$23,408	\$26,923
<b>Operating Expenses</b>					
Salaries		\$10,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
Marketing		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Loan Interest		\$1,302.36	\$1,302.36	\$1,302.36	\$1,302.36
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>		\$12,302	\$12,302	\$17,302	\$22,302
<b>Earnings Before Tax</b>		\$688	\$1,987	\$6,106	\$4,621
Taxes		\$103.15	\$298.00	\$915.85	\$693.10
<b>Net Profit</b>		\$584	\$1,689	\$5,190	\$3,928
Profit Margin		2.34%	6.14%	14.04%	9.24%
<b>Assumptions</b>					
<b>Revenue</b>					
Number of Orders		1000	1100	1232	1417
Order Growth Rate			10%	12%	15%
Average Order Value		\$24.99	\$24.99	\$30	\$30
<b>Cost of Goods Sold (Per Order)</b>					
Materials (wood, nails, metal)		\$12.00	\$12.00	\$11.00	\$11.00
<b>Taxes</b>		15%	15%	15%	15%

Funding will be in the form of a \$10,000 small business loan to inject funds directly into the business very early. This will help with securing products, securing supplies, and to purchase marketing for the business. After we can finish our payments for the small business loan, we should be operating in a positive cash flow period which will allow us to recirculate funds we earn back into the company to continue its growth. From that point moving forward, if we can sustain a positive cash flow, we will not only be able to grow our business without further

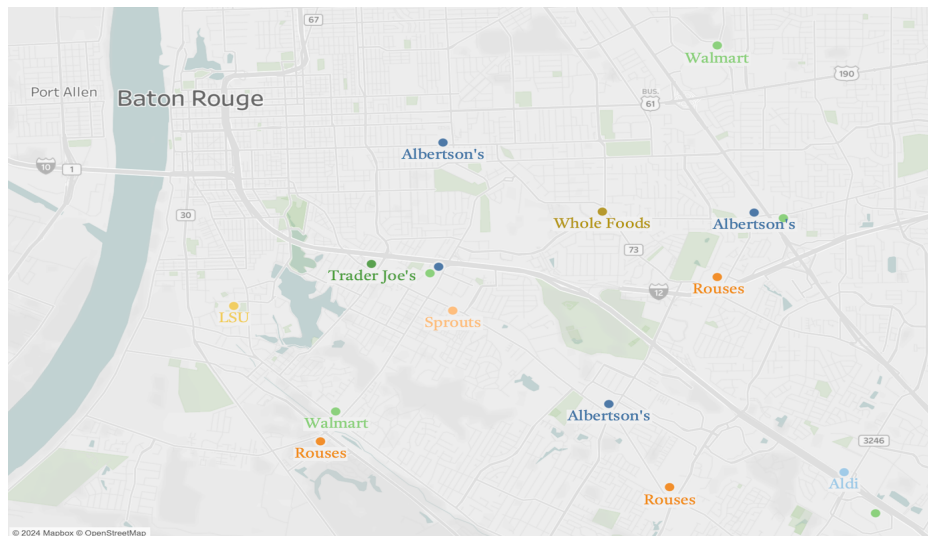


assistance with funding, but we will be able to pay ourselves as business owners. If we find ourselves in a situation where we are looking for more funding from outside sources, we will have the options of either taking on another business loan or giving up some equity of our company to an investor that believes in our company as a viable business.



## Competitive Analysis

As a small business, Spice Up Your Life has to compete with many competitors of big name chain grocery stores such as Walmart, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Aldi, Sprouts, Rouses and Albertsons for herb purchases.



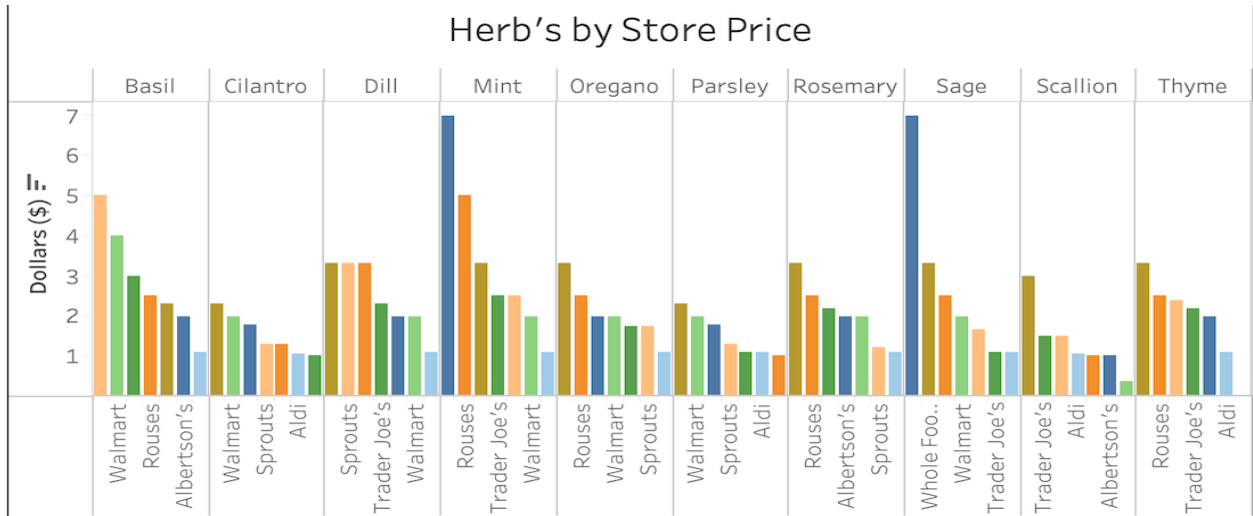
Although we would be LSU area based, those listed brands have solidified themselves with target consumers. After visualizing the competition, we noticed most major chains are located far from LSU, giving us a leg up on local herb buying customers. Next, we wanted to analyze each individual store. In the competitive landscape of the produce section, Walmart stands out for its wide outreach and presence by offering a diverse range of herbs at competitive prices. However, it faces criticism for the quality of its products and produce, which could be a weakness. Walmart has opportunities to expand into new markets and enhance its online shopping experience but must be aware of the threat posed by online retailers. Trader Joe's, known for its unique product offerings and strong brand loyalty, has a more limited selection compared to larger stores and faces challenges with higher prices for some products. Expanding into new regions and introducing new products could be key opportunities for Trader Joe's, but it needs to be mindful of competition with larger grocery stores.



Whole Foods is praised for its high-quality and organic products but is criticized for its high prices, presenting an opportunity to introduce more affordable options. The threat from grocery stores offering natural products is something Whole Foods must navigate carefully. Aldi's strengths lie in its low prices and private label products, but it suffers from a limited selection. Aldi could make money from people who want organic and healthy food, but it must compete with other cheap grocery stores. Sprouts differentiates itself with a focus on natural and organic products, leading to strong customer loyalty. Which makes customers really like them. However, having only a few stores could stop the company from growing, so it's important to expand and improve their online presence. Sprouts also must compete with bigger grocery stores in this area. Rouses distinguishes itself by focusing on local products and community engagement, but its limited geographic reach could limit its growth potential. Enhancing online shopping options and in-store pickup could be ways for Rouses to grow. It also faces competition from larger grocers. Albertsons has many products, but people think it's too expensive for a store that is supposed to have lower prices, which is a problem. Improving online shopping and offering store pickup could help Albertsons compete with bigger grocery stores. But it also needs to be careful of other stores trying to beat them.

After analyzing all the stores that we were competing with, we gathered data on each store's price on their ten herbs that we were specializing in.





This gave us a strategic view into the prices for individual herbs and allowed us to get a grasp on our market position.



## **Customer Segmentation**

Spice Up Your Life is targeting customers that are health conscious, enjoy cooking at home, and value the flavor and quality of fresh herbs used for cooking. This type of customer will likely be open to the idea of growing their own fresh herbs as it is more sustainable, they know where their ingredients will be coming from, and it is a more environmentally friendly alternative to buying some herbs from the grocery store.

Spice Up Your Life will be serving urban and suburban residents who have a limited amount or lack of outside space. Our product will give those with space limits the ability to grow their own fresh herbs in a small and simple space using the planting box we will provide in our bundles. College students are another demographic we will be targeting as this group of customers mostly lives in apartments or dorms with limited space. College students are another demographic we will be targeting as this group of customers mostly lives in apartments or dorms with limited space and maybe a limited amount of knowledge when it comes to planting and growing fresh herbs.

Our product is an easy way for younger adults to get into growing their own ingredients as our bundle will come with instructions regarding how to build the planting box, plant their seeds, care for the plants, and when it is time to harvest their herbs. People interested in wanting to start their own home gardening and want to prioritize self-sufficiency



## **Data Analysis**

We gathered multiple datasets to truly explore and research our topic. We wanted to know things like how the global economy for our 10 herb's are doing, how the local economy is doing, how much local big market companies sell their herbs for, what meals these herb's are typically found in, and the population in Baton Rouge and local apartments. These topics are a main point in trying to find out more about our industry and if we would be successful.

To find out more about local markets we gathered the price of herbs from various markets, including Walmart, Sprouts, Trader Joe's, Aldi, Whole Foods, Albertsons, and Rouses, which are popular destinations for the general population. These markets offer a range of fresh herbs such as Cilantro, Parsley, Dill, Basil, Oregano, Rosemary, Chives, Sage, etc. Lilly Lebold and Madahi Louis gathered the data from each store to analyze which fresh herbs would provide the best value, aligning with our business plan of establishing a herb garden. The variables in each dataset include retail price, unit price, and ounces (Oz). Retail price represents the cost to consumers, unit price is the price at which the store purchases the spice, and ounces (Oz) is the unit of measurement used. Although our dataset is relatively small due to restrictions on the number of herbs and stores included, each dataset contains approximately 20 rows and 5-7 columns. This data will help us achieve our goal by revealing that well-known stores may not offer the best prices for herbs. By identifying the markup on herbs at each store, Spice Up Your Life aims to revolutionize the herb market, by crafting high-quality build-your-own herb kits, which would be affordable for consumers.

After gathering this important data, we wanted to visualize all of the stores in the Baton Rouge area on a map because our business would be based locally. This information is important because we will be able to see where people are willing to drive to get their fresh herbs and after seeing a map of their locations, we can identify hot spots where it would be more beneficial for a consumer to drive to us instead. For gathering the location data, we gathered every address of stores in the Baton Rouge area and converted them to longitude and latitude using an extension



on Google sheets, effectively geocoding the location for us and allowing us to plot on a tableau map. We were then able to connect these tables using a StoreID and HerbID key making a great database that shows per price of our main 10 herbs and the location of sample stores in the Baton Rouge area.

For gathering the global market data dealing with our 10 herbs we located important food and sourcing of farming data on Tridge. The represented data shows the seed, leaves, stems, or any other product the herb is used for. On this website we were able to find specific data about our herbs like imports and exports from specific countries, who imports the most of a certain herb, how much the United States imports, and much more. The variables we decided to gather were the export country, the importer, which is always the United States, and how much the United States spent on those imports from that select country. These graphs will be helpful to show the size of the market we are entering and how much is truly spent on these products. Some drawbacks of the data were that HS codes were sometimes grouped together, and we found that 5 of our herbs were grouped into 1 HS code. Tridge can get their data through direct relationships with their suppliers who give them information which adds validity to the data.



## **Timeline and Metrics to Measure Success**

Spice Up Your Life Has a one-year timeline to meet its deadline in order to determine whether we should start mass producing our products. For the First 5 months we have developed prototypes for our wooden boxes. We needed to test which type of wood would be most durable for all weather conditions. Then we needed to determine a proper length for the boxes. Within those 5 months we also planted different brands of herb seeds to see which brand was the best. We needed to figure out the best soil that should be used, the space needed for the plant to grow, and about the duration needed for the herbs to be ready to be harvested. Most of the herbs only needed a few weeks to grow. We also determined that 5 inches of space for the herbs to grow is perfect. They also need to be spaced by 1 inch. After thorough research, we decided that Home Depot will be our supplier for wood, nails, bracket hangers, and soil. Our main supplier for our seeds is from Amazon. The beginning phase of our pre-launch of our products, we have the funds and resources necessary. The four members of our group (Matt, Josh, Madahi, and Lilly) have each assembled 3,200 boxes within 5 months. Since there are 20 weeks in 5 months, each week 40 boxes were assembled by each member.

For the next 3 months, we began our first launch of our products. We took the time to market our products to healthy lifestyle enthusiasts, limited outdoor spacing residents, eco conscious consumers, and gardening communities. We gathered feedback from early customers and took in considerations of what we could do better. We also improved on our marketing strategies. Since our products are selling out faster than we can assemble the boxes, we are now entering our growth and expansion phase.

We are currently in month 8 - 12. We are setting up a manufacturing place that can assemble our boxes together. We managed to gain enough profit that we didn't even need a loan from the bank. We have successfully met our metrics and are mass producing our wooden planter boxes complete with seeds. We are now creating a new goal for the coming year. From the feedback



we've gathered from our loyal customers, we also realized that they are wanting botanical scents, soaps, and air fresheners. We are now trying to reach a broader audience.






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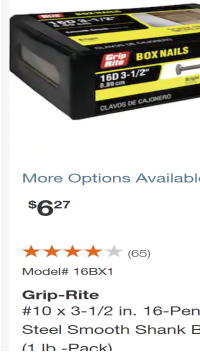


## Appendix A

	Cost To Buy	How Much Do I Need?	How much does it cost?
<p>28 ft of wood = 336 inches</p> 	<p>\$36.64 each plank = .109 per inch</p>	<p>29 inches</p>	<p>\$3.16</p>
<p>Soil</p>  <p>\$8<sup>97</sup></p> <p>★★★★★ (4108)</p> <p>Model# 6850</p> <p><b>Kellogg Garden Organics</b> 2 cu. ft. All Natural Garden Soil for Flowers and Vegetables</p>	<p>1 cubic foot of dry loose dirt weighs about 76lbs (x2) = 152 lbs =</p> <p>6 cents per pound for \$9 bag of soil</p>	<p>2lbs</p>	<p>12 cents</p>
 <p>10 Pack Window Partner Black Powder-Coated Steel Heavy Duty Window Partner For Windows, Doors, and More Easy to Install 100% Satisfaction Guarantee 10 Year Warranty 100% Satisfaction Guarantee 10 Year Warranty</p>	<p>\$51 for 10 bracket pairs</p>	<p>1 bracket pair</p>	<p>\$5.1</p>





 <p>6.27 = 65 nails</p> <p>1 nail = .096 cents about 10 cents</p>	12 nails	\$1.20
Total	\$102.91	9.58 + tax

#### Seed Packet Bundle #1

Seed Packet	Cost To Buy	Packet Purchase Cost (Amount of seeds per pack)	Purchase Cost per Seed	How many seeds per pot (total seed cost per pot)	Earliest Harvest
Cilantro	Data Comes from Tableau	\$6 (300)	\$0.02 per seed <a href="#">Amazon Cilantro</a>	10 seeds per 6 inches (\$0.20)	45
Spearmint		\$6 (5000)	\$0.0012 per seed <a href="#">Amazon Spearmint</a>	1-3 seeds per pot (\$0.0012-\$0.0036)	56



Basil		\$5 (400)	\$0.0125 per seed <u>Amazon</u> <u>Basil</u>	5 seeds per pot (\$0.0625)	28
Parsley		\$4 (250)	\$0.016 per seed <u>Amazon</u> <u>Parsley</u>	12 seeds per pot (\$0.192)	70
Dill		\$7 (750)	\$0.0093 per seed <u>Amazon Dill</u>	9 seeds per pot (\$0.0837)	56
Total Cost	\$	\$28		.5418 $\approx$ 54 cents	



## Seed Packet Bundle #2

Seed Packet	Cost To Buy	Packet Purchase Cost (Amount of seeds per pack)	Purchase Cost per Seed	How many seeds per pot (total seed cost per pot)	Earliest Harvest (Days)
Scallion	Data Comes from Tableau	\$5 (250)	\$0.02 per seed <a href="#">Amazon Scallion</a>	60 seeds per pot (\$1.20)	56 weeks
Rosemary		\$8 (1000)	\$0.008 per seed <a href="#">Amazon Rosemary</a>	4 seeds per pot (\$0.032)	182
Sage		\$2 (100)	\$0.02 per seed <a href="#">Amazon Sage</a>	10 seeds per pot (\$0.20)	75
Oregano		\$2 (500)	\$0.004 per seed <a href="#">Amazon Oregano</a>	3 seeds per pot (\$0.012)	80
Thyme		\$6 (150)	\$0.0375 per seed <a href="#">Amazon</a>	4 seeds per pot (\$0.15)	75



			<u>Thyme</u>		
Total Cost	\$	\$23		1.594≈ \$1.6	

#### Financial Plan

	Pack Bundle 1	Pack Bundle 2
Total Cost (\$)	$102.91 + 28 = 130.91$	$102.91 + 23 = 125.91$
Unit Cost (\$)	$9.58 + .54 = 10.12$	$9.58 + 1.6 = 11.18$
Selling Cost of Product (\$)	\$25.99	\$25.99