

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Early Spring Jump-Starts the Season

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The arrival of spring is always eagerly anticipated for the greenhouse and garden center industry, and when it comes early, it brings with it an array of benefits for those in the crazy business of growing and selling plants.

As we wait for winter to fade into a distant memory and the first hints of spring color to emerge, we prepare our crops for sales, in hopes of growing our business. An early spring can lead to increased consumer spending, and gardeners feeling optimistic and ready to spend, especially younger consumers and new plant lovers.

Like many in the Midwest, an early spring jump-starts our customers into dusting off their shovels and heading outdoors sooner than expected. This shift in timing has a cascading effect on our business and many others in our area. This also means an

extended period of increased foot traffic and sales, which has seen its uncertainties for several years.

Early spring often goes hand in hand with consumer optimism and excitement. After months of dreary weather, we're eager to enjoy the sunshine and reconnect with nature. I even get the urge to get out early and plant spring items, which I was unable to do last year due to the horrific weather pattern that kept hitting our area. Beautiful spring weather renews our enthusiasm, which translates into higher consumer spending on plants and garden-related products.

One of the most significant advantages to an early spring is the extended growing and selling season it provides. This allows our greenhouse and garden centers the opportunity to have extra turns on the same floors and benches. We all know how hard it is to hold retail-ready plants when the weather doesn't cooperate. Is it more profitable to hold crops until the weather breaks or just cut our losses and dump products to finish another crop?

With warmer temperatures arriving sooner, gardeners have more time to hoe and grow, and enjoy the fruits of their labor. For us, this translates into an extended growing season with an increase in demand for seeds, cuttings and supplies that drives sales for all of us. This surge in demand for plants, shrubs and landscape materials provides a steady stream of customers, which is always welcomed. No matter what the weather is you have your group of diehard gardeners that will plant even if it's raining. The warmer early spring weather will bring out the novices who are seeing all of the color popping up around them and are willing to buy plants due to spring fever.

The popularity of home gardening continues to soar driven by factors like increased interest in sustainability, farm to table, and health and wellness. Many people are turning to gardening as a therapeutic and rewarding hobby, leading to a growing market for organic plants, soils and educational resources. As a greenhouse business, we play a vital

role in catering to this increasing demographic of amateur gardeners, offering expert advice and a large selection of plants to meet their needs.

In recent years, there's been a notable shift towards farm-to-table consumerism with more people prioritizing sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. This trend extends to gardening, where there's a demand for organic, locally sourced and native plants. Many greenhouses and garden centers are adapting to meet this demand by offering an array of eco-friendly products and services. From organic fertilizers and pest-control solutions to native plant species that support local ecosystems, the green industry is aligning with the values of environmentally conscious consumers. By emphasizing sustainability and responsible gardening practices, greenhouse and garden center businesses are not only meeting customer expectations, but also placing themselves as leaders in our industry.

Beyond sales and transactions, greenhouse and garden center businesses play a crucial role in promoting community engagement and connectivity. Events like plant sales, workshops and garden tours provide opportunities for customers to interact with experts, learn new skills and connect with fellow gardening enthusiasts. In addition, they often collaborate with local schools and community organizations, offering environmental initiatives to promote gardening education and environmental stewardship. These partnerships not only benefit the community, but also enhance the reputation and visibility of their business as a valued member of the community.

As the gardening industry continues to thrive, greenhouse and garden centers must adapt to evolving consumer preferences and market dynamics. Embracing technology, expanding your online presence and diversifying your product offerings are key strategies for sustaining growth in a rapidly changing world. Investing in staff training and customer service can enhance the overall shopping experience and raise customer loyalty. By paying attention to market trends and prioritizing customer satisfaction, greenhouses and garden centers can cultivate long-term success and continue to flourish in a weather-driven and trend-based industry.

An early spring brings a bounty of benefits for greenhouse and garden center businesses. They thrive from increased sales and extended growing seasons that offer opportunities for community engagement and sustainability. By capitalizing on seasonal trends, embracing eco-conscious practices and watching over our community connections, greenhouse and garden center businesses can, and will, prosper. **GT**

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