

Branding How-To for Nurseries and Public Gardens[©]

Laurie Scullin
The New Products Group, Lewiston, New York, USA
Email: lscullin@gmail.com

What do you need to know about branding to help your nursery or public garden? You'll learn what a brand is and how to communicate your brand.

As consumers we spend a lifetime buying branded products — from clothing to food to laundry soap and cars most of us are influenced by brand messages. As an industry — we in the ornamental horticulture space have traditionally gotten away with “less marketing.” Many of us on the plant production side lived through decades of year over year growth for ornamental plant products. It has only been in recent years with declining demand for many plant products that many are open to the idea of “marketing” as a tool to sell more plants.

We also now have witnessed the success at retail of programs such as Proven Winners[®], the Knockout[®] rose, and Endless Summer[®] hydrangea. When we conduct surveys asking consumers their awareness of horticulture brands, we see that many recognize brands — with Burpee[®], Scotts[®], and Proven Winners leading the way.

Table 1. Brand awareness.

<u>Un-aided Awareness</u>		<u>Aided Awareness</u>	
Miracle Gro	31%	Burpee	76%
Proven Winners	23%	Scotts Miracle Grow	71%
Burpee	18%	Proven Winners	58%
Scotts	17%	Knockout	48%
Fiskars	10%	Wave	38%
Knockout	6%	All-American Selections	38%
Monrovia	6%	Bonnie's Plants	37%
Espoma Fertilizers	6%	Vigoro	30%
Felco	6%	Endless Summer	24%
Osmocote	6%	Stepables	17%
Ortho	5%	Garden Club Select	11%
Bonnie Plants	4%	Simply Beautiful	10%
Preen	3%	Flower Fields	8%
Roundup	3%	Viva	5%
All-America	3%	Red Fox	2%
Wave	3%		
Endless Summer	3%		

The question for us is no longer should we “brand” — but rather who should own and develop the brand. Is there a role for a nursery in creating their brand?

According to the American Marketing Association a brand is the name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's product distinct from those of other sellers. Typically a “brand” has two parts:

- 1) Brand Identity (ID) is the outward expression of a brand — including its name, trademark, communications, and visual appearance or logo.

2) Brand Message is the words and images and “feelings” we share when we talk about our brand.

We think that a “brand” is an emotional and intellectual relationship your business establishes and nurtures with its customers. Brands are the amalgam of perceptions and knowledge consumers have formed about your company — from its people, products and services, to its traditions and way of doing business. A positive brand identity is vital for sustained growth through new customer attraction and existing customer retention.

Gardening consumers tell us in surveys that they rely heavily on the internet and social media to get information about plants. In creating your brand, some of the costs of social media tools such as YouTube[®] and Facebook[®] are “free,” however putting energy into using social media tools to create a brand will have costs. Time to create good content, time to manage the various social media platforms will all be investments for any brand manager.

For success in the social media content space we suggest that the nursery make their online content both engaging and inspiring. The well-known horticulture brands all have professional marketing staff and frequently hire outside help from ad agencies and other marketing support teams. For the person or company starting a new brand there are a number of choices in creating fresh and engaging content. Having the right person involved in content support is as important as having the right person in charge of pest management or propagation. Companies such as ZRB can support in content creation.