

New Plants for Amateur Gardeners— a Retailers View

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Jardiland (French garden centre group) is a chain of 70 franchised garden centres which had a turnover of 1.1 billion French Francs—one third of the French garden centre market. The aim of this paper is to discuss the marketing of Jardiland, and how Jardiland markets new plants.

For a long while, marketing attention focused only on the product. We were in an equipment-based market which tended to react to demand, rather than make offers to stimulate it. Today, customers are increasingly selective. Our thoughts are increasingly about the customer, rather than the product, and we are increasingly doing what we call “marketing of the demand.” We no longer content ourselves simply with meeting existing demand, we want to use marketing to actively develop it.

To do this we must get to know the customers, and to realise that they, too, change. Today our customers are more and more aware of ecology, but they know less and less about the techniques of gardening. They do, however, want an activity that requires some acquisition of knowledge, which will give them a sense of purpose and allow them to be creative.

Customers expectations have developed enormously. In the absence of inflation, price comparison is easier and the customer more watchful. In the absence of growth and in a discouraging financial climate, top-of-the-range products are often bought in response to the customers need for compensation.

Our position as a plant specialist leads us to direct our efforts towards the promotion of top-of-the-range products, including, especially, new plants.

For new plants, as for all products, a failure in launching is a result of a failure in one of the following four factors: quality; price; communication (publicity); distribution.

Quality. The conference has already covered aspects of quality of new introductions, as a retailer I would simply say, do ensure the qualities of a new product do not compete with existing qualities, for example do not introduce beauty at the expense of hardiness.

Price. Price is one factor that kills the majority of products at the outset. The added value of a new plant must be justified, and you have to remember the poor botanical or horticultural knowledge of customers is a handicap. Plant breeders, growers and some wholesalers have pricing policies that are dangerous for the products they are trying to promote because they have purely and simply forgotten the customer.

It is impossible to justify to the customer the difference of four-to-one on the prices of two apparently identical roses. The example of the rose can be generalised to cover the other nursery species which may, for the customer, be equally good as substitutes and bring the same degree of satisfaction. Every intermediary in the supply chain must think in terms of the profit margin against value rather than the profit margin alone. It is often more profitable for the retailer to sell a number of items with a reasonable margin than a few with a large one.

The Distribution Chain. It is useless creating new varieties if they are not made available through the distribution chain. This important condition is barely fulfilled today because the promotion of new plants does not only require them to be shown but demonstrated. The distributors are not always able to ensure demonstration and do not always perceive interest in it.

Publicity and Communication. Publicity to the final consumer is often lacking, the main target is usually the growers. The nursery trade and retailers need to work in partnership to promote new products most effectively. The nursery trade's new products should be a priority for retailers too.

Plant introducers must organise the launching of their products directly with retailers because it is the retailer who has the closest knowledge of the final consumer.