

Nursery Papers

November 2004
Issue no. 10



Retailing is getting harder and harder. So what are the marketing ideas that have been successfully used by garden centres across Australia to maintain and grow their retail market?

In this *Nursery Paper*, eight different marketing ideas are explored, including:

- Tapping into the Open Garden Scheme
- A regular newsletter, email or paper based?
- A garden walk
- Creating a garden club
- A kids day out
- A garden centre website
- Beach house gardens – a garden theme
- An annual garden party.

Simple tips for each of these marketing ideas are highlighted. Which ones could you use in your business?

• Your Levy at Work •

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Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia



Know-how for Horticulture™

Marketing programs: ideas from garden centres

The annual Australian Garden Industry Awards recognises excellence, innovation and outstanding businesses with a variety of award categories. The Best Marketing Project Award for Garden Centres is always keenly contested and was won in 2004 by Gardens R Us from Bowral (NSW) for their '10th Birthday and Charity Gala Day'.

This *Nursery Paper* highlights the variety of marketing initiatives from garden centres around Australia submitted for the 2004 Awards.

Tapping into the Open Garden Scheme

The Open Garden Scheme is an excellent way to create community interest in gardens and gardening. **Nielsen's Native Nursery at Loganholme, Queensland** has been able to work in with the scheme and develop a successful marketing initiative.

"Our aim was to display how native plants can be used in a suburban situation and to demonstrate to our garden centre customers that we know how to garden, not just sell plants," said Dennis Nielsen.



Garden visitors were offered free samples of allied trader product and a 'at cost' barbeque at the Nielsen's open garden weekend, Queensland.

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“So we decided to include our own private gardens in the Open Garden Scheme. We handed out brochures with maps on them to our customers and did a letterbox drop in the weeks leading up to the Open Garden Scheme weekend. In total we ended up with 1,500 visitors at the two private gardens.”

There is a mandatory \$4.50 per person entry fee for gardens in the Open Garden Scheme. However, garden centre owners Dennis and Christine Nielsen and manager Brad Nielsen made sure all visitors got value for their money. These included:

- Free samples of allied trader product
- A sausage sizzle (at cost)
- A raffle ticket to win a gift voucher from the nursery
- A voucher to use at the nursery coffee shop, and
- A small area was set up for discounted plant sales.

At both gardens, visitors were given a plant list and all plants in the gardens were numbered. This made it easy for visitors to identify the plants they liked and to know what they were looking for when they came to the garden centre.

“The plant list also helps to slow the visitors down so they really look at and consider the plants. It also helps to stop repetitive questions. We still get people coming in with the plant list asking for particular plants,” said Brad Nielsen.

Marketing tips

- Promote local Open Garden Scheme participants to your customers
- Ensure garden visitors are provided with a plant list
- Give garden visitors a map showing how to find your garden centre and reasons to visit your business.

Bush Telegraph
No 63 Spring 2004
Zanthorrea nursery

Welcome

What's on at Zanthorrea?

2004 Wildflower Society Award
Zanthorrea Nursery was recently presented with the 'Wildflower Society Award' for 2004, in recognition of our contribution to the conservation and preservation of Australia native plants. We were surprised and thrilled to receive this recognition. The plaque, pictured below, features a beautiful painting by Margaret Pieroni.

Zanthorrea Garden Walk
Saturday 2nd October 10am
Join Alec for a stroll through the Zanthorrea display gardens to view the spring-flowering native plants. Stay for a chat and a cuppa.
RSVP 94546260

Mini boasts in your garden
Saturday 23rd October 10am
Eric McCrum, our local naturalist, is always entertaining and a fountain of knowledge. Eric's talk will feature the creatures that live, often unseen, in our garden.
RSVP 94546260

Perfect potting using Aus plants
Saturday 20th November 10am
Find out how to pot up spectacular wildflowers as gifts or to brighten up your patio.
RSVP 94546260

Sustainable Gardening Australia
SCA was formed to encourage and educate about gardening methods which are environmentally sound. Gardeners can join for a small fee, and receive a regular newsletter. The pilot programme in Melbourne aims to accredit garden centres as places to go for information. Jackie has had talks with Mary Trigger, SCA CEO, to investigate the possibility of bringing this programme to WA. The website has more information: <http://www.sgeonline.org.au>

This regular and informative newsletter is available on the Zanthorrea website www.zanthorrea.com.au or as a paper version via the post.

A regular newsletter, email or paper based?

Continually communicating with your customers is important, but working out the best way(s) of doing that may not be so simple. **Zanthorrea Nursery in WA** has been producing an informative newsletter for over 15 years. And with over 3,500 on the mailing list, it has been a big success.

The colourful and informative newsletter:

- Provides information on core products
- Encourages visits to the garden centre via special offers
- Widens the market base and encourages mail orders
- Presents a professional image to clients

So what was the reaction to making it available via email?

Jackie Hooper said Zanthorrea's newsletter 'The Bush Telegraph' is still preferred in a paper version by the majority. "The Bush Telegraph contains lots of colourful and informative pictures and the file can be rejected by hotmail accounts as it is quite large. However, for those 300 or so who do want it

electronically, we send them a brief chatty email letter with a direct link to the latest newsletter located on the Zanthorrea website, www.zanthorrea.com.au."

Jackie believes the website can play an important role and as a result the Zanthorrea website is about to be revamped to include an online plant database. This will enable customers to enter desired plant characteristics (such as flower colour, height, growing conditions, etc) and the database will then provide a list of plants with those characteristics.

Marketing tips

- Collect useful information on products, services and special offers for your customers
- Present this information in a colourful and easy to read manner
- Provide this information regularly in a paper format and/or on your website.

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A Garden Walk



The garden walk at Springhill Nursery, Victoria, has become a local tourist attraction.

Springhill Nursery at Tylden, Victoria has benefited greatly from a garden walk that displays a wide variety of plants and can inspire anyone from a beginner gardener to an experienced green thumb.

The Garden Walk and nursery is spread over two acres (almost a hectare) and 23 different garden beds are featured. Owner/manager Sandy Mitchell said the idea for creating the garden walk came from customers continually wanting to see plants in a garden situation.

“Our own garden started off being an unofficial selling tool. Then we realised how well it worked, so we set up an informative garden walk that features 23 different garden beds.”

“Winning the Display Gardens Awards in the 2004 Australian Garden Industry Awards also gave us a national stamp of approval and a lot more publicity. As a result, people who have been driving past for 10 years have now finally dropped in to see what all the fuss is about.”

Located in a tourist area, The Garden Walk has become a key tourist attraction

and is promoted by local tourism information centres. Tourism information centre staff have visited to get first hand knowledge of the garden walk and nursery. The centres also have detailed information in the form of brochures and colourful pictures.

“Sales in the garden centre have increased since the garden walk was opened and we now have a gift shop, which we will expand even further. It has been one of the most rewarding and important projects we have undertaken in the continual development of our garden centre,” said Sandy.

Marketing tips

- Develop a garden walk onsite, or utilise a nearby garden
- Work with local tourism operators to promote your garden centre
- Enter into the Australian Garden Industry Awards, and promote your success.

Creating a Garden Club

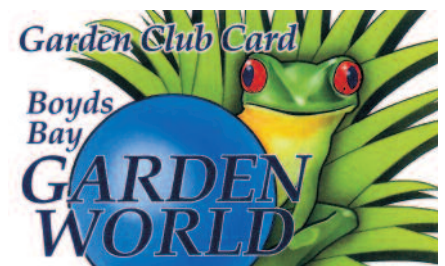
Boyd's Bay Garden World at Tweed Heads West, NSW has enjoyed considerable success with its Garden Club initiative.

Currently with over 17,000 members, the clubs success continues with 50-100 new members every week. And these numbers are not inflated by an outdated membership list as members are deleted after 12 months of inactivity. Eight hundred of the members are on email and referred to as 'Gold Members'. Gold members get notification of gold member specials via email.

Club membership is offered free and members receive a six page colour newsletter four times a year containing handy hints, information on new plant varieties and associated business offers. The publication is a trigger to engender customer loyalty.



Stacey Nosworthy from Boyd's Bay Garden World said that every time a club member buys something, a tear off vouchers provide an incentive to return. “The more you spend, the bigger the voucher.”



Boyd's Bay Garden Club membership is free and membership includes a regular newsletter.

Marketing tips

- Ask for preferred contact details from your customers
- Offer regular information and benefits
- Work with other local businesses to provide special offers.

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A Kids Day Out

There is one sure way to attract parents to a garden centre, and that is through their children. **Acorn Nursery in Victoria** has run an annual Kids Day over the last three years. Each had a different theme and all were very successful in creating interest and getting people into the nursery and café.

John Van Der Horst, owner/operator of Acorn Nursery and Oaks Café, said the most successful theme was 'baby animals'.

"It was easy. From the Yellow Pages we organised a mobile baby animal farm and a van pulled up full of baby animals. The animals just kept coming, rabbits, ducks, puppies, guinea pigs, a lamb, a goat and even a pig. All we had to do was provide space and the handlers took care of everything else. We also provided face painting on the day."

"In the year before that we organised children's entertainer Paul Jameson known as the 'The music man'. The children were able to make noise (music) with tambourines, maracas, drums, etc. Face painting was also provided."



Entertainer Paul Jameson, known as 'The Music Man', provided families with a fun and memorable event at Acorn Nursery, Vic.

In the first year a jumping castle was set up in the car park. While this proved popular with the kids, it was more expensive and took up a lot of space.

To help promote the event, a key staff member worked with a local school and organised a colouring in competition. Entries needed to be dropped off at the nursery prior to the Kids Day Out and prizes were given to as many entrants as possible on the day. The net effect was the nursery was seen as a fun place that is involved in the community and the event stayed in kids memories for a long time.

A sausage sizzle was also provided and all proceeds went to charity.



The Baby Farm Animals Day at Acorn Nursery was a huge success and easy to organise.

Marketing tips

- Consider organising a 'kids day' with a theme
- Provide activities, competitions and prizes
- Work with local school(s).

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A Garden Centre Website

Rast Bros. Nursery in NSW has been able to target a different audience through its new website. While the younger generation in Sydney's North predominately have smaller gardens, patios or courtyards, many have a high level of disposable income.

The website www.rastbros.com.au was designed with four key principles in mind:

- Crisp
- Clear
- Clean
- Classy.

Peter Whitehead from Rast Bros. said the website has been up and running for just over a year and has been moderately successful. "Many people have downloaded information, printed it out and then bring it to the nursery asking questions."

"While we advertise our website on all Rast Bros literature (local paper columns, advertisements and mail-outs), use of the website could be increased by creating links between other local or gardening related websites."

Marketing tips

- Decide who your target audience is
- Develop a website based on key principles
- Continually update your website with new information, functions and links.



The 'Beach House' garden theme at Seaview Garden Centre suits the coastal location at Victor Harbour, South Australia.

Beach House Gardens – a garden theme

Giving your garden centre a theme that relates to your local community is a good way to ensure you attract and maintain customers. **Seaview Garden Centre in SA** has done this with their 'Beach House Garden' theme.

Located in Victor Harbour, one of SA premier tourist spots, the beach house theme suits the local community and its regular visitors.

"The population in summer swells from about 10,000 to about 30,000 and there

are lots of rented houses with a poor garden maintenance. So by providing low maintenance options, such as coastal hardy plants complete in glazed or terracotta pots, we have been able to increase sales," claimed Colin Wood.

"We have a café, which attracts locals and tourists. And we found the theme adds a new interest, promotes easy garden care and the value of waterwise plants and water conservation. It has given us a 'Wow' factor, which we also promote at local tourist information centres.

Marketing tips

- Determine a suitable theme for your community
- Allocate an area to develop your theme
- Inform your community what you now provide.



The Rast Bros. website, www.rastbros.com.au is full of gardening tips, ideas and answers to frequently asked questions.

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The 'Bouncy Castle' and face painting are big drawcards for kids, and their parents, at the Vadoulis Garden Centre Annual Garden Party.

An Annual Garden Party

Vadoulis Garden Centre in South Australia showcases itself by providing a two-day community event every year.

"Retailing is getting harder and harder, and having an annual garden party really does help. The garden party is all about fun," said Milton Vadoulis.

Usually held on the 1st weekend of November, the annual garden party enables staff to be creative and have fun. "It is a big job, but great for moral. It will be in its 12th year this year," said Milton.

The event is widely promoted through local papers and statewide radio advertising ensures the public is well aware of the garden party.

With kids jumping on the bouncy castle, sausages sizzling in the car park, free face painting, musicians and expert gardening advice, Vadoulis Garden Centre's Annual Garden Party continues to build customer relationships.

Marketing tips

- Consider allocating a weekend every year to a fun event
- Get your staff to come up with fun ideas, and let them run with them
- Include a donation component to a local charity.

What are the Australian Garden Industry Awards?

Across Australia's nursery and garden industry, entrepreneurial men and women are dedicated to delivering exceptional products and services to millions of Australians.

The 2004 Marketing Excellence Award assessed the aims and methods used to market and promote the garden centres and the benefits of the project.

In 2005, the Australian Garden Industry Awards will recognise and reward excellence across the industry with categories for production nurseries included for the very first along with garden centres.

The Australian Garden Industry Awards are presented by Nursery & Garden Industry Australia and Garden Centres of Australia.



Acknowledgments

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