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There are various methods of promoting products and services in order to entice potential customers into the parking lot. However, customer dollars are won, or lost, by professional salespeople and displays, bearing in mind that first impressions are extremely important.

One goal of a display is to create buying impulses in the mind of the customer by suggesting purchases the customer did not intend to make. A second goal is to inspire customers to buy more than they expected by linking products which complement each other such as snail bait and bedding plants. These are companion, link, tie-in, or associated products. The correct product must be in the correct place at the correct time. In order to facilitate this, all salespeople must be aware of all aspects of the garden center, nursery, or landscape situation; the products to be sold, and the sales promotions in effect.

Impulse Products – All green and dry goods can be classified as either impulse or purpose items. Impulse items are essentially those products purchased which were not intended to be purchased that particular day. Customers may have intended to replace a rose bush with a Mockorange, but only when they saw and smelled the Mockorange in the nursery did they decide to buy it. Other items such as colorful flowering plants provide an even stronger, “instant impulse” reaction.

Obviously, if such items are not visible or are not available without a search, there will be no impulse and no purchase. Impulse items should, therefore, be placed in hot spots, areas of high traffic and at the end of view or vista lines. However, in some situations, the impulse to buy, for example, a large patio plant, may need to include some time to browse while deciding which one to choose. In such situations, a clear sight line will be needed to catch the impulse initially, as well as space for browsing. Consequently, some vista lines should end with browsing areas for

large items, although they must remain attractive and inviting. Surveys show that over 60% of all non-food merchandise bought in the U.S.A. is bought on impulse. Impulse items are usually highly decorative or appear to be a good value. It should be mentioned, however, that if customers are overwhelmed with walls of color and impulse items when they step into the nursery, there is a danger of the higher priced items such as large shrubs, shade trees, and furniture being obscured. If this occurs, the customer will spend less, reducing the dollar sale per customer.

Staple Products – In the supermarket, the staple items are things such as bread, meat, dairy products, produce and breakfast cereals. In the garden center, staple items include chemicals, tools, bedding plants and containers. These items are sought out by customers, but no one wants to shop where there is an obstacle course. To be easily seen and found, such items should be well marked with signs even though not located near the entrance or in a hot spot. By placing staple items at the ends, corners and sides of the sales areas, customer flow is encouraged around a greater portion of the nursery, provided these items are clearly marked and displayed in an attractive manner. Some basic items are very, very price sensitive, wherein the price becomes the main motive for buying. If promotions by the garden center are aimed at creating a price awareness of a certain product line, this line can be used to pull traffic into a quiet or dead spot, but only if the merchandise and its price are very obvious. Impulse items are not nearly as price sensitive. In this respect color, suggested use of the goods, and the attractiveness of the product, not price, should be the central message in displaying staple items.

Browse Products – These are products for which customers do not make a quick decision. Sometimes they need time to read instructions on packets and the supporting literature. These items can be as large as a \$1000 set of patio furniture or as small as a 65 cents packet of seeds. Browse products require space, plus, customers will require time in that space. Browse items should never be placed in areas of high

traffic flow, narrow or busy areas, hot spots, or near the cash register. Such placement will deter customers from shopping and these goods will not sell very well. For example, seeds placed near the cash register for security reasons will not sell as well as when placed in a browse area, which should still be “open” to deter shoplifting. Many garden centers increase browse sales by providing seating so that customers can sit and read through books or seed packets.

Companion, Tie-In or Associate Products – Tie-in products complement each other in the customers' minds, or these products are associated if the display suggests that they are associated. Frequently, a link is created between a hard good or non-plant item, and a plant. This necessitates a flexible approach rather than an approach which determines that hard goods are inside and plants are outside. Companion sales are common in other retail businesses and could be used more often by the nursery business. It is simply a way of increasing the dollars spent per customer. Useful companion or tie-in sales include: Trees: tree stakes, ties, fertilizer, mulch. Foliage Plants: leaf shine, fertilizer, containers. Bird Feeders: bird food, bird books. Bedding Plants: fertilizer, labels.

As a retail business, we want to encourage customer flow around a larger portion of the nursery. Which type of Garden Center products could you clearly mark and display at the ends, corners and sides of the sales floor to promote this type of shopping flow?

- a) Impulse Items
- b) Staple Products
- c) Tie-in Products
- d) Browse Products

Seed packets and books can be referred to as “Browse Products”. Because of the high potential for theft, they should be placed near the cash register or hot spots area for security reasons.

True
False

The most common and effective way to increase the individual sale per customer is by the use of...

- a) Browse Products
- b) Tie-In, Companion, or Associate Products
- c) Staple Products
- d) All of the Above

Answers: b, False, b

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