

Getting Your Customers Excited for Spring

Once winter weather winds down and the end of February nears, a sense of renewal and the spirit of spring will soon emerge within many of us. As temperatures slowly rise, spirits rise too. The following are some thought provoking approaches to help your clients grasp that spirit early on and begin thinking now about springtime landscaping projects ideas.

Ask Essential Questions

Encourage your clients to walk around outside on unusually pleasant weather days and consider the following questions:

- Is there anything they would like to change or revamp in their current garden landscape?
 - Do trees and shrubs look overgrown or lifeless and in need of pruning or replacement? Do they notice limbs or branches that have been broken or damaged over the winter? Discuss trimming, pruning, or replacement options with them.
 - Would they benefit from privacy fencing or screening mechanisms?
 - Would they enjoy an outdoor retreat/living space (patio, courtyard, arbor, or gazebo)?
- Ask them to think outside the box. Provide them with some new and innovative ideas to consider.

Persuade them to know themselves and their home and business environments while generating ideas. Ask them to think of potential project ideas that will create the greatest benefit while fitting effortlessly into their personal and business lifestyles.

Help Develop a Personalized Design Plan

The ideas recommended above are inspirational and exciting. *(cont. page 2)*



An example of "vegitecture" in a commercial application

Predicted Landscape Trends

Clients and landscape enthusiasts are already thinking about spring and what they can plan for. Following are several ideas to think about:

The number of front yard gardens continues to rise. They were 29% in 2011, compared to 27% in 2010, and 25% in 2009, according to the Garden Trends Research Report. Front yards aren't just a pretty face, they have become more function than form. Front gardens include vegetable and fruit gardens, active play space for children, cutting gardens, and even passive retreats from busy streets.

Vertical landscaping (vegitecture) is also on the rise. The practice of growing plants up from the ground instead of planting them off the ground to start with-trellises, arbors, balconies, walls, raised beds on decks, has become especially popular among those residents with small spaces. *(cont. page 2)*

Tidbits, Updates, Etc.

South Carolina Horticulture Industry Trade Show and Seminars

February 2-4, 2012

Myrtle Beach Convention Center www.scla.org

Show Technology Productions 2012

Allen, TX, Feb 17-19; Augusta, GA, Feb 24-26; San Antonio, TX, Feb 24-26; Atlantic City, NJ, March 2-4; Austin, TX, March 2-4; and Reading, PA, March 9-11, 2012.

visit www.showtechnology.com for more dates



(Customers Excited cont.)

But all too often, our clients' aspirations can be diluted with too many big ideas and not enough funds or understanding of their specific landscape environment. You can motivate and empower your customers by educating them about the physical site components (soil types, sun and wind exposure, or deer and pest issues) and cautioning them of any site limitations and economic constraints.

You might recommend they keep a notebook with their favorite landscape ideas. Give examples of common and innovative design concepts that might work for their unique space. Ask them to think about visual enhancements, the relationship of interior and exterior space, privacy issues, active and passive use of space, and other personal preferences. Once they understand the form and function of potential future projects, they will likely feel more comfortable and involved and look forward to continuing the creative process with you to incorporate more specific design concepts, plants, and structures.

Some ideas to discuss might include:

- evergreen plant screenings that are deer and plant resistant;
- softening existing fences by adding color and texture with climbing plants or ornamental grasses;
- cutting gardens devoted specifically for flowers that can be cut to display in their home or business;
- container gardens for attractive accent that can be moved indoor for the winter season; or
- specific structures that create a unique identity for their home or business.

Help to Stay Realistic when Making Final Decisions

Encourage your clients to think big, but also realistically, in the idea creation process referenced above. Help them come up with design objectives that are both desirable and necessary in their space, but remind them to be practical in the end. Their budget, time, and environment constraints will all define their bottom-line. If their goals and aspirations are out of their price range, encourage them to approach these projects in a phase plan that can be assessed year after year. Take on what is necessary now and always keep in mind the possibilities. This approach should not only inspire your clients during cold winter months, but should also help create good will and strengthen existing client relationships.



(Trends cont.)

Green roofs have definitely become a huge trend as well. Green roofs help save on heating and cooling costs and actually protect the roof underneath from the degrading effects of the elements. Cities across the United States are receiving tax incentives for green roof installations. Chicago, for example, is requiring green roofs on some new buildings, based on the square footage.



marble orb fountain with multi-sided stone base

More and more people are moving away from the large ponds and moving towards small water features. People are preferring a cut piece of stone, a boulder, or a beautiful glazed urn with water bubbling out of the top.

Hot fountain items with natural stone and other metals are predicted to be in even bigger demand in 2012. Ball-shaped fountains made of stone (see above) plus copper and other metals designed around the water-flowing stone are landscape fashion statements near entry doors and back patios.

Plants with deep, rich color are going to be in high demand this spring and summer. Deep magentas, rich alizarin reds, warm violets, and strong yellow hues of multi-textured foliage will be in high demand.



Functional Outdoor Spaces

The current and highly charged design trend is to turn the typical backyard into a "Homescape", a well-designed and executed installation that combines the resident's style with the existing architecture. The redefined outdoor home space or Homescape, includes a multi-functional patio, mobile seating, and creative storage.

Kitchens in outdoor spaces are incorporating the traditional lines and usages with more modern flare and contrasts. Ergonomic storage spaces and cabinets of bright high-gloss colors are replacing open storage spaces. Contemporary LED lights and chandeliers are being placed near the cooking areas and outdoor sinks are being enhanced with glass backsplashes and refined faucets.

Homescapes also involve multi-gathering spaces. A fire pit area with hidden firewood storage space, a passive space that offers several swings and fragrant flowering shrubs, and an intimate sitting niche that only offers seating for two can be incorporated into a limited space.



espaliered pear

Functional spaces are also created by the use of plant material. Espaliered evergreens or fruit trees, several contrasting ornamental grasses and columnar trees can form the spaces for the resident. Highly imaginative planted pots elevated off the patio and raised beds of herbs can inspire just about anyone in an active space.

Another trend in creating a homescape is offering comfortable and functional furniture for your newly designed spaces. One highly successful WVNLA member offers this ↗

service to his clients, allowing him to design the space then select the unique furniture which best conforms to the newly created space. As mentioned in previous articles, diversity is a plus in our economy.



Full Report

We will have a full report on the Winter Symposium "Seize Momentum", in the March issue of the newsletter. We'll share photos and our Landscape Award winners, the hottest trends and tips from our "Swap Shop" and a whole lot more. Look for all of that in the March issue - both online and in your mailbox!

Landscape Association on a Social Network



The WVNLA now has a Facebook page! You can visit it on Facebook by searching for WVNLA. "Like" it and visit it often. Add your own posts and photos.

It's a great way for us to communicate quickly with one another and the public at large. The following statistics show how the web has been affected by social networks.
#1: There are now more than 800 million active Facebook users, with over 200 million added in 2011.

#2: Over 80% of all Americans use a social network.

#3: Americans spend more time on Facebook than any other U.S. website.

#4: Approximately 40% of social media users access their accounts through mobile devices.

#5: Nearly 23% of online time is spent on social networks.

#6: Facebook is the top destination among social networks and blogs. U.S. users spend nearly 10x more time on Facebook than Twitter or LinkedIn.

#7: Social media users are more active and influential offline. Social media users are more active offline and have greater influence than their peers (Nielsen). (cont. on page 4)



(social media cont.) #8: More than half of Facebook users log in every day - that's more than 400 million people.

#9: The average user has 130 friends and is connected to 80 pages, events and groups.

#10: There are 900 million objects that people interact with (pages, groups, etc...).

#11: Facebook hosts over 7 million apps, and over 20 million apps are downloaded each day.

#12: Around 75% of Facebook users are outside of North America with accounts available in 70 languages.

#13: Business brands that post at least once every day will reach 22% of their fans in a given week.

#14: It is estimated that 91% of online American adults (approx. 129 million) access some form of social media each month.

#15: And get this: 98% of 18- to 24-year-olds access social accounts monthly.

#16: This confirms their stat that college towns log on to Facebook the most.

#17: The average Facebook user spends 20 minutes on his or her account during each visit.

#18: A majority of Facebook users log in 3-4 times per week.

Email Addresses

We want to make it as easy as is possible to contact your organizational leaders. If you do not have email capabilities, we will be pleased to pass along any letters sent to Board members. Below are email addresses for everyone on the Board.

Patrick Biafore patrick@biafore.com

Bill Mills terraSalis@gmail.com

Mark Springer Mark@lavalette.net

Tim Forren forrensoil@aol.com

Brett Merritt brett@gandgnursery.com

Chris Chanlett ground@hughes.net

Scott Barnitz scott.barnitz@bobsmarket.com

John Jett john.jett@mail.wvu.edu

Bud Cottrill westvirginiagardening@yahoo.com

Beth Loflin, Director wvnlassoc@gmail.com

