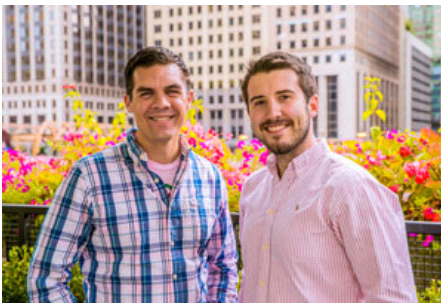


Guest Column

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Why IGCs

Mason Day



We live in a world where mergers, consolidation and Amazon dominate the headlines of the morning newsletters. We hear rumors and speculation. In all of that it's easy for companies to forget where they came from. It's easy to forget why we got into this industry in the first place. It happens to all of us, but if you're like (GrowIt! co-founder) Seth Reed and myself, that all rushes back to you the moment you step into a garden center.

If you were to walk into a room full of people from this industry and pose the question: "Who here got their start on the floor of a local garden center," you'd see a lot of hands go into the air. For many, they were born into a family business; for others, it was a weekend job as a teenager.

It's been almost a year since we launched GrowIt!'s Garden Shops program, where independent garden centers can sign up to be listed on the app and post pictures of plants they have in stock, or plants they strongly believe are great performers for their specific area. It's a way to help people close the loop from inspiration to purchase.

Since we kicked off the program, people have asked Seth and me, "Why IGCs?"

The question we'd like to ask in return is: "WHY NOT?!"

Seth and I have been working in and around independent garden centers for the majority of our careers. It's where both of us got our start in this industry. A Christmas gift of a tagless plant led Seth into his first garden center at the age of 14. He went looking for information. When he got there, he was amazed by all of the different plants the garden center had to offer. Four months later when Seth turned 15, and his parents told him to get a job, Seth walked back in that garden center and never really walked out.

I had less of a choice. For me, it was the family business. My parents still own a small retail greenhouse in Eastern Michigan. My Saturday morning cartoons were replaced by petunias and geraniums—and I don't regret that for a second. I still go back to help out on the busiest weekends, and every time I do, I'm reminded of why I chose this career.

To Seth and me, independent garden centers are the heart and voice of the industry, and more companies should be looking to work with the IGC marketplace. Why?

- **Unrivaled Knowledge**—When there's something strange in your neighborhood, you call the Ghostbusters. When there's something strange happening to your fiddle-leaf fig, you call your local garden center. Garden centers have

both the knowledge and products to fix the worst garden nightmares. Their knowledge is also local, which is important. Microclimates abound!

- **Inspiration**—Garden centers realize that it isn't just about selling someone the plants they need today, but that it's about showing people the bigger picture. They understand that they're in the "experience" business. Inspiration paired with the aforementioned knowledge leads to years of successful plantings and lays the groundwork for a future for this industry.

- **Passion**—Without a doubt, garden center people are some of the most passionate people in this industry. They're passionate about plants and people. They want to personally help customers succeed in their planting journeys. They're invested in the community.

It was a clear choice for us to make our Garden Shops program exclusive to independent garden centers. It wouldn't have made sense to go about it any other way. It's time that as an industry we take a look at these garden centers and support them.

To all those garden center employees, managers and owners out there: you're an elite group with the potential to shape the future. We stand with you and encourage others to do the same. **GP**

Pictured: GrowIt! co-founders Seth Redd and Mason Day

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