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Garden Pharmacy Merchandising Magic

Katie Gustafson



Plant health products—like fungicides, insecticides and beneficial microbes—are often the most overlooked section of the garden center, which is a shame because these products can boost both your customers' success and your garden center's sales. But then the question becomes, how do you elevate items that are often hard to understand, intimidating and—let's face it—a bit bland-looking?

Well, we suggest starting by nixing the phrase “Chemical Aisle.” It's a common term in the industry, but really doesn't resonate with consumers. Consider using friendlier language like “Plant Health Corner” or “Garden Pharmacy.” These terms are much more approachable to customers and less off-putting than “Chemical.”



However, when it comes to choosing and displaying these garden pharmacy items more effectively to increase sales, we needed to ask the experts. In this interview, Erik Dietl-Friedli and Dave Williams from Garden Center Consultants, LLC share tips and tricks on overcoming the visual challenges of the garden pharmacy.

An example of the “wall of death.”

Magic Gardener: *Why do garden pharmacy products pose such a sales challenge?*

Erik: They're often lined up on what I call the “wall of death.” These are long, flat shelving sitting in poorly lit corners or at the far back of the store with no signage. Customers are unsure whether they're looking at fertilizer, pest control or fungicides. And many shoppers don't want to ask questions. They want to figure it out on their own and it's intimidating.

Dave: Plus, garden centers often carry too many similar products. After a few trade shows, buyers end up with several options that do the same thing. It overwhelms people and tends to sit on the shelf too long. This leads to fading packaging, dusty bottles or labels that have started to peel from the humidity. It becomes a space that isn't welcoming to consumers.

Magic Gardener: *What's the number one thing retailers should do to make these items more appealing?*



Erik: Take them out of that sad corner and display them with the plants and products they're meant to support. For example, take a mycorrhizal product and place it next to your perennials with shovels, wheelbarrows and gardening gloves.

Dave: And choosing products with interesting and visually appealing packaging also goes a long way—even more so if they have easy-to-follow instructions that customers don't have to tear the label to read.

Garden pharmacy products sell best when paired with the plants they're meant to support, like this color-coordinated gardening display and cactus feature.

Magic Gardener: *Are these products more successful when sold as add-ons?*

Dave: Absolutely. The average consumer isn't walking in asking for a product like a biofungicide—many don't know the difference between soil and dirt. You have to position these products as part of the solution. They aren't the reason the customer walked in, but they are the reason their plants are going to thrive.

Erik: And they need to be introduced in a friendly, visible way. Don't hide them. Cross-merchandising is everything. It's about creating a story around the product.



Magic Gardener: *What are some visual merchandising strategies that have worked well?*

Erik: I'll start with color. I once placed mismatched products in a "Pretty in Pink" display. People bought them simply because the colors worked together—it felt like a fun, curated gift set, even though the products were unrelated. Choosing a garden pharmacy product with good colors or visual designs gives you more flexibility when merchandising.

Magic Gardener Fungus Gnat Killer is perfect to add to a houseplant display.

Another strategy is to create displays that match the lifestyle the customer wants. For example, you could make a vignette that looks like a home office scene with houseplants, cute pottery and giftware. Then you add in a garden pharmacy product like a fungus gnat killer to top it off. When people can visualize how the product fits into their real life, they're more likely to buy.

You can also center a display around fun themes. Take the theme of Magic. Pick out products that have something to do with that theme—like the Magic Gardener line of plant health products—or even products that you think "work like magic." Top it all off with a magician's hat and some easy-to-read educational signage.

Dave: Where you merchandise also matters. End caps are huge—they move product fast. You can set them up with high-impact items and supporting merchandise. Just make sure to keep them fresh.

If you really want to increase garden pharmacy add-on sales, place a product near the register and train your cashiers to offer it to the customer as a solution for helping them be more successful with the plants they're

currently buying.

Increase your add-on sales by standout displays like this one, which has all the things a customer needs to be successful with indoor gift plants.



Magic Gardener: *What's one small change a garden center could make today to boost sales of plant health products?*

Dave: I like letting staff take home samples. When they see the difference a product makes in their own garden, they become passionate about it. And passion sells.

Erik: I suggest creating a “planting success kit” and adding them to a display at the front of the store with colorful plants. In the kit include things like compost, granular fertilizer, Neem oil and a mycorrhizal product—everything a customer would need in one place. It's fast, effective and actionable.

Magic Gardener: *Any parting thoughts?*

Erik: If you put these products where people can see them, keep them clean and tell a clear story. They'll sell. If you don't, they won't. It's that simple.

Dave: Exactly. This stuff isn't flashy, but it makes plants and customers succeed. If you frame it that way, it becomes a valuable tool—not just to the customer, but to your bottom line. **GP**

Katie Gustafson is Marketing Communications Manager at Mycorrhizal Applications. Magic Gardener is a new line of biological plant health products perfect for the garden pharmacy shelf (and fun merchandising displays!). Explore the product line and learn more at MagicGardener.com.