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2027: Will This Be the Year of Amazing Opportunity for You?

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Doubts about AI's impact on society are fading as breakthroughs become reality. What was once speculation is now demonstrated fact, with technology experts agreeing on the transformation ahead.

Meanwhile, a parallel revolution is unfolding in how consumers view plants. Younger generations, educated about sustainability their entire lives, understand that plants are essential to our future. Consumers are transforming traditional lawns into pollinator gardens, butterfly sanctuaries and rain gardens, seeking native plants that support local ecosystems while enjoying psychological and physical health benefits.

The shift in customer desire is profound. Yesterday's customer wanted a specific perennial for its color; today's customer wants the outcome—a thriving ecosystem. Where we once emphasized flower color, today we whisper one word—pollinator, sustainable, butterfly or wildlife—and the product sells.

Research proves these instincts correct. The Green Heart Louisville Project, a groundbreaking study, demonstrates clinical health benefits from strategic tree planting. This is documented medical science showing measurable improvements in human health.

Then there's the downside of AI's effect on employment to consider. What about the time more people will have to fill? Could this bring on another COVID-like effect with increased demand for plants and gardens?

We've seen this type of surge before. During COVID's peak in 2020 and 2021, horticulture experienced explosive growth exceeding 20% year-over-year. But what many miss is that the industry couldn't capture the full opportunity. Garden centers ran out of inventory, nurseries couldn't ship quickly enough and landscape companies couldn't hire enough crews. Industry veterans estimate actual demand could have been 100% higher if capacity had existed to serve it.

Now consider what's ahead. AI will transform society even more profoundly than the internet. Jobs will change, work schedules will shift and people will have more time at home. When that happens, will they seek food security through gardens like they did during COVID? Will awareness of "plants as medicine" accelerate? Will the desire for functional outdoor spaces shift even more sharply toward creating sustainable habitats?

The critical question: Will our industry prepare this time?

During COVID, we were caught off guard. We can't use that excuse again. We know demand surges are possible. We understand consumer values are shifting toward sustainability. We have evidence that plants provide measurable health benefits. We see the AI transformation approaching.

Yet many in our industry still think small. Some businesses are struggling to regain traction, focused on scarcity and fear. Others recognized COVID wasn't an anomaly, but a preview. They maintained higher capacity through strategic investments in people, technology and facilities. They're positioned for the next surge while competitors contract.

The uncomfortable truth is that the opportunity ahead may be larger than COVID's surge, but it won't wait for the unprepared. Markets reward those who anticipate and act.

What smart preparation looks like:

Start conversations now with your supply chain—growers, soil suppliers and manufacturers. Discuss scenarios: What if demand increases 30%, 50% or 100%? How quickly could you scale? What are your constraints?

Use AI tools to model different futures. Analyze your capacity, staffing needs, inventory turns and cash flow under various demand scenarios. Technology exists today to run these projections in hours, empowering planning, optimizing resources, lowering costs and capturing profit.

Consider permanent infrastructure investments. If demand reaches a new plateau, temporary solutions won't sustain growth. Think about expanded growing space, improved logistics, training programs that create skilled teams quickly and systems that can scale.

Most importantly, shift your mindset from "Will this happen?" to "When this happens, will I be ready?"

The garden industry serves an essential human need—our connection to living things, to growing our own food, to creating beauty, and to improving our health and environment. These needs are intensifying as society becomes more digital and automated.

The next surge is coming. The only question is whether you'll capture it or watch others grow while you struggle to keep up.

Which future do you choose this time?

The time to prepare is now, while others hesitate. AI experts agree: AI advancement is happening sooner than predicted—every time. In 12 to 18 months, it may be too late. A future opportunity like this is a terrible thing to waste.

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