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Features

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Adapt or Die: Reconnect Your Website

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Think of your website like your front door. If it's hard to find, hard to open or doesn't look like anyone lives there—people walk away. And today, most customers knock on your digital front door before they ever pull into your parking lot.

Most garden center websites were built for a customer who no longer exists. Today's customer is a 34-year-old woman on her phone Saturday morning, wondering what to do with a shady corner of her backyard. You have about eight seconds to convince her you're the answer.
Here's how to reconnect.

1. Capture Permission for Text/SMS and Email
Your social media followers are camping out on someone else's platform; your email and text list is land you own. Offer something worth trading for—a plant care guide, a planting calendar, early access to a sale. Brands like Anthropologie built entire loyalty engines by giving women a reason to hand over their email on day one. Do the same.

2. Make it Mobile or it's Still Invisible
Over 70% of retail web traffic comes from a smartphone. If your site loads slowly or buries your store hours three clicks deep, she's already gone. Test your site on your own phone right now. If you have to pinch and zoom to read it, so does she, but she won't.

3. Every Page is a Landing Page—and Every Landing Page Should Sell
Every page on your website is a destination where emails, texts and social posts bring readers to learn more. But learning more isn't enough. You're a store. Sell something.

If your text says, "Deer driving you crazy? We have the solution," that link should land on a page about deer-resistant plants with a photo, a short story about why it works and a "Buy Now for In-Store Pickup" button right there. One tap from reading to buying. The Sill and Bloomscape built their businesses on exactly this model. You have something they don't—a local store where customers pick it up today.

4. AI is Now a Salesperson—Make Sure You're on its List
Here's the newest reality: AI tools like ChatGPT, Google's AI search and Perplexity are now actively recommending products to shoppers. When someone asks, "What's the best deer-resistant plant for a shady yard?" AI scans the

web for answers and sends buyers to the businesses that look like the right solution.

If your website doesn't clearly show you carry the product, describe what it solves and make it available to purchase, you won't be its preferred solution and it'll send that customer somewhere else. Your website content is now your audition. Make it count.

5. Speak Her Language

Millennial and Gen Z shoppers don't just buy plants, they buy a lifestyle. Forget "Annuals starting at $4.99" and instead inspire with "Ready to make your porch the envy of the neighborhood?" Then show her exactly what to buy to get there.

6. Show What's Possible, Then Make it Shoppable

Use before and after photos, simple project ideas, and garden vignettes. Then link every plant in that photo to its product page. Think of the way IKEA sells a room, making every piece in it accessible right there.

7. Give Them a Reason to Come Back

Rotate seasonal content tied to what's in stock right now. A website that never changes gets forgotten. A website that never sells anything is functionally irrelevant to a consumer—remember, you are a store.

Your website isn't a brochure; it's your store open 24 hours a day and now it's also your application for AI recommendation. Most importantly, begin with connecting your email, text and every other marketing effort to the customer with the invitation to learn, be inspired and buy.

If your customers are arriving at dead ends on your website right now, fix them and make it easy to click to send you money. **GP**

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