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## Wellness Startups

*Jennifer Polanz*

Houseplants have officially hit the big time. How do I know? Because plant shops—far different from suburban garden centers—have been labeled “wellness startups” in a February 2019 *Fast Company* article.

Wellness startups peddling plants? It’s a piece obviously written by an outsider to our industry—and that is exactly the reason you should read it because the writer clearly brings a different perspective—an entrepreneurial *Fast Company* perspective—to the plants and products you’re dedicated to growing. Here are a few of the major points I pulled out that potentially show how others see the world of tropicals and houseplants:

- The author points to a National Gardening Survey that found that of the 6 million people who started gardening in 2016, 80% of them were aged 18 to 34, a good portion of that age range being Millennials. Eliza Bank, founder of The Sill, says it’s the need to cut the anxiety that Millennials live with—loans and city living, for example—that’s driving houseplant sales. “We position plants and our brand as the break in all this. It’s the antidote to this unfortunate thing that our entire generation suffers from: anxiety. And plants really can be part of the cure.”
- These plant-selling wellness startups are using techniques that other online success stories like Casper (mattresses) and Away (luggage) are using: convenience, branding and experiential retail.
- Since plants are commodities (so says the article, not us), these stores are making their money on “the extras:” pots, pins, T-shirts, totes. Said Eliza Banks, “We could just focus on plants, and every new product launch could be a potted plant, but our customer has other things that are important to her and if we want her to express her love for plants, it shouldn’t just have to happen with the product itself.”
- New York-based Horti, a houseplant subscription service, sends its customers’ first shipment in pieces. Why? So they can learn how to pot a plant. **GP**