

5/1/2020

Best Practices for COVID-19 Era Retailing

Ball Publishing Staff

COVID-19 Updates

The key phrase for this entire news section will be, “as of press time.” It’s mid-April and this is where we are at the moment. However, as you’re very well aware, the status of garden retail changes hourly in the COVID-19 era. For now, this is what we’ve seen as best practices.

Safety & Sanitation

- Disinfect carts for customers and have a section of “clean” and “dirty” carts
- Provide hand-washing and/or sanitizing stations for customers
- Have a temporal thermometer on hand to take the temperature of employees at the beginning of their shift
- Mark 6-ft. distances within the store around heavy traffic areas
- Install plexiglass guards at registers
- Turn stock areas and other spots around the operation into additional retail displays so they’re more spread out
- Tape arrows or use signage pointing to one-way aisles
- Widen aisles
- Station a register or two outside for nursery and bagged/bulk purchases so customers don’t have to go inside

Curbside Pickup & Low-Touch Retailing

- Create numbered parking spots that have timed pickup slots
- Consider extended hours in the morning and evening for pickup
- Create a simple Google Form to take orders—do NOT accept credit card payment through this
- Dedicate employees to taking pickup orders, either online, over the phone or via text or email, as well as employees for pulling orders
- Have designated “picking” times for employees and cut off curbside pickups at a certain time (all orders must be in by noon for same-day pickup)
- Another option to curbside is drive-through shopping, or point-and-purchase through the car window
- Consider offering pre-made packages of high demand, high-margin items

Other Creative Retailing Notes

- County Line Nursery in Pennsylvania was still able to feed the need for houseplants by hosting live auctions on Facebook. They would present a plant, provide some details about benefits and care, and tell customers how many

were available. The first person or people to comment “me” on the post got the plant, to be picked up when the store reopened.

- The Garden Barn Nursery & Landscape in Vernon, Connecticut, quickly posted its available services on its website in the aftermath of COVID-19 restrictions. Check out how they inform customers in a simple, easy-to-understand Q&A format: gardenbarn.com/content/new-safety-policies. **GP**