

Front Lines

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Who's Buying Veggies & Herbs (and Why)

Ellen C. Wells

I received an interesting press release from the PR firm that handles the consumer-focused end of things for Bonnie Plants. It covered some general survey results that Bonnie had collected since the COVID-19 crisis began back on March 13. It stated that 30% of those who plan to grow their own vegetables and herbs are gardening for the first time, with 65% listing COVID-19 as the number one reason they chose to start a garden.

Interesting stats, but I wanted to know more, so I reached out to my friend Michael Pierce, director of marketing for live goods for Scotts Miracle-Gro. Here are some of the results that Michael found most interesting:

- The first-time V&H (vegetable and herb) consumer heavily skews toward Millennial (and Gen X) males with higher household incomes and children in the home
- The re-engaged lapsed consumer skews female, but otherwise isn't all that distinguishable from the average V&H consumer
- Over 60% of Single Family Detached Homeowners (SFDH) are expected to participate in V&H gardening this year
- E-commerce, including BOPIS (Buy Online Pickup In Store), has seen a significant uptick in interest

A few additional notes from Michael: They launched a brand-new direct-to-consumer site on March 12, one day before portions of the country started shelter-in-place recommendations. It's helped increase their overall e-commerce sales 400% for the year. Also, they've embraced a "digital first" approach to marketing, which he says is "paying huge dividends" especially with younger consumers. "We have a dynamic advertising approach in which we optimize creative in real time to hone in on messaging that appeals to specific consumer audiences."

This may be Bonnie Plants' data, but they are results we can all use to understand why people are gardening and maybe even guess at what it'll take to keep them engaged. **GP**