

Front Lines

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B(u)y The Book

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Gardening books are in hot demand, as customers want to learn as much as they can about the plants they buy (and aspire to buy). So we asked Addison Gregory, Chief Operating Officer at Watson's Greenhouse in Puyallup and Federal Way, Washington, about their book sales.

Q: Can you talk about the best way you've found to display books (i.e., in one place, within a variety of displays, by topic, etc)?

AG: A mix of both. At our Puyallup store, we have a dedicated space for books and the titles in that space get cycled out and re-merchandised frequently to highlight season-specific books. At the same time we also farm books out to other displays where they would coordinate well with the other product, i.e., bird feeders, bird accessories and seed display with books that apply to birds.

At our Federal way store we farm books out to multiple displays because the space is much smaller, i.e., houseplants books with indoor pottery and houseplant giftware that is then located right next to a houseplant display.

Q: What advice can you give a retailer looking to offer gardening books?

AG: Variety is important, but also relevancy. We go really heavy into houseplant and home décor books during first quarter when people are inside more and then transition to landscaping, gardening how-tos, etc. in the spring when people are outside more. Selling titles that make sense for your area is important as well.

Q: What types of books do you find to be most popular?

AG: Our two top-selling books this past year were "How Not To Kill Your Houseplant" and "On Boards." Both are great books and make wonderful gifts. We find that most of our customers are purchasing books as a gift for someone else.

Q: How do you decide which books to offer?

AG: Information/quality, aesthetic appeal (cover/inside) and seasonal relevancy.

Q: What types of promotions/events/activities do you do related to book sales (or involve books)?

AG: Workshops. For example, bonsai workshops promote bonsai books at the same time, herb container workshops sells herb books.

Q: What else is important when it comes to book sales?

AG: Re-merchandising! Constantly re-organizing and building new displays. Always thinking about how the book fits into a display both aesthetically and informationally. **GP**