

## Features

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## 10 Products to Grow Better Veggies

*Danielle Ernest*

This list was generated by asking vegetable gardeners what one product they would recommend that they use in their garden. These suggestions, or similar items, would be wonderful additions to your product lines, but the key to new products is communication and education of your clientele so that they know it's new and how they can incorporate it into their new or already-established hobby.

In order to have high sales yields with these and other veggie gardening products, educating your employees on upselling to your customers is key, as well as having these products near where customers are purchasing their seeds or plants.

Letting customers know of these new products through signage, classes, newsletters and social feeds is essential, as they won't know it's available unless you tell them. Having classes to teach new vegetable gardeners what tools they need for their success is critical so that they don't fail and walk away to another hobby. If you need help with someone teaching classes, reach out to local garden educators and writers in your area to see if they would be interested in teaching a class and educating customers about these new products that you're carrying.

Every gardener knows that the success of a garden comes from the ground up, so first let's look at some products that could be sold alongside your vegetables and herbs to give first-time vegetable gardeners success that they'll need to continue to come back year after year.

### New Varieties of Veggies, Herbs & Fruits

One item to consider is what seeds and plants are you carrying this year that are new? Are you working with suppliers to know what they'll be promoting to home gardeners? For instance, Fignomenal Dwarf Fig Tree that's being highly promoted in mail-order catalogs and on social media. Are you making your customers aware of these new products that are being carried by special signage, classes teaching them about these new plants or through newsletters and social feeds? Some popular varieties for 2023 include:

- Basil Prospera (Johnny's Selected Seeds and Harris Seeds)
- Pepper Pots Sugar Kick (Proven Winners) *(pictured, right)*
- Peppers From Heaven (Burpee Home Gardens)
- San Joaquin Jalapeno (Bejo Seeds)
- Sweet Jade Squash (Johnny's Selected Seeds)
- Sun Dipper Tomato (PanAmerican Seed)



- Galaxy Suite Tomato (High Mowing Organic Seeds)
- Tempting Tomatoes Patio Sunshine Tomato (Proven Winners)
- Vivacious Tomato (W. Atlee Burpee Seed Co.)
- Regency Lettuce (Territorial Seeds)
- Superilicious Blackberry (Monrovia)
- Scarlet Belle Strawberry (Star Roses and Plants)

It's important to talk with your suppliers to see what they'll be speaking to writers about, as well as advertising so that you have the inventory in stock when customers come asking for those specific plants. By looking at what's trending in the food industry, we can make speculations about what veggies will be growing in popularity with consumers.

We're seeing Brussels sprouts, kale and cauliflower used frequently in recipes and on menus. Cauliflower is often used as a substitute for meat in recipes like Buffalo Bites where it's breaded, fried and dipped in Buffalo sauce to mimic the effect. Reach out to your sales representatives from your favorite vegetable, fruit and herb suppliers to ask what will be highly promoted from the coming year.

### **Burpee Seed Trays**

Burpee has developed these wonderful, reusable seed-starting trays made of flexible silicone that help gardeners to easily pop out the seedlings to provide a stress-free transplant into the garden. They come in 8-, 16- and 36-cell count trays and provide the gardener an eco-friendly alternative to plastic trays.



### **Earthway Garden Seed Planter**

This incredible product takes the guesswork out of direct seeding into the garden. The sturdy furrow plow lets you select the correct seed depth while your chosen seed plate perfectly spaces the seeds. An ideal row crop planter, the 1001-B is a tool that makes planting any row crop a breeze.

Here's how it works: install one of the precision seed plates that best fits your seed, adjust the depth of planting on the ground opener and then set your 30-in.-long row marker for the desired width. Fill the seed hopper with seeds, then begin pushing in your well-tilled soil and, voilà, you're done. Any tool that makes gardening easier for your customer will be a win-win product.

## Soil Blockers

Also popular among gardeners is soil blocking—these ingenious seed-starting methods result in vigorous seedlings with roots that quickly re-establish growth upon transplanting. Soil-blocking reduces expense, waste and storage issues associated with starting seeds. Soil blockers come in a range of sizes and propagation trays, as well as dibbles could be sold in conjunction for add-on sales.

*Pictured: This soil blocker product is from Gardener's Supply, which has an online store, as well as four brick-and-mortar garden center locations.*



## Coast of Maine

Most gardeners are wanting to grow their vegetables, fruits and herbs organically and offering soil, compost and fertilizer that can fulfill that desire is necessary. Coast of Maine offers organic potting soil, compost, worm castings and many more options. Placing these products next to seeds or starts provides the customer with an easy shopping experience, as well as a reminder to your staff to upsell the product. Give your staff an incentive or contest to see which employee can upsell the most fertilizer for a certain month. It could also be placed by the check-out line and cashiers can be involved with the contest.



## Viagrow Heat Mat

Heating mats are used by many vegetable gardeners as a way to provide consistent bottom heat for faster germination and vigorous root growth. Mats can be used either inside the house or greenhouse. Offering a variety of sizes that match the seed trays you carry would be ideal. A Viagrow 20.5- in. x 8.5-in. Seed Propagating Seedling Heat Mat is a perfect option.

## Laser Infrared Thermometers

Home gardeners are getting as savvy as greenhouse growers and starting to use laser thermometers when measuring soil temperatures. There are many highly rated choices on the market to pick from, but AMES INSTRUMENTS 12:1 Infrared Laser Thermometer is rated top on the list by reviewers. Having at least one in stock to see how it sells with gardeners is a good idea.

## Battery Operated Handheld Sprayer

Convenience and ease are key in our fast-paced society—gardeners have done away with hand-pumped sprayers and moved onto battery operated to keep their emerging seeds evenly moist. The Bauer 20V Lithium-Ion Cordless 1 Gallon Chemical Sprayer is rated very highly because the ease of use, 70-gal. size tank and 12-ft. reach make it a handy tool for those vegetable gardeners starting seeds in their greenhouse or home.

## Plant Grow Lights

The LUMINAR EVERYDAY 2-ft. Linkable Two-Light Full Spectrum LED Plant Grow Light delivers full-spectrum light to help plants grow faster and fuller, producing more desirable flowers and fruit. The light is easy to install in most growing areas and can be used in greenhouses with high humidity. Link up to eight grow lights for wide area coverage. Gardeners are very serious about this hobby and want to get the best quality material that will last them for seasons to come.

## Grow Boxes

Make sure to provide options for those gardeners who live in apartments or yards with limited space. There are

several different choices from the items, such as the GrowBoxes, which many vegetable gardeners love because they automatically feed and water the plants by sub-irrigation. It's ideal for new gardeners who are just starting out because the trickiest part is knowing when and how much to water a plant. Most of the time plants die because of oversaturation due to the gardener "over-loving" the plant. **GP**

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