

Plant Something grows bigger

A single state started a natural, nationwide movement.

The state was Arizona. Taking the lead was Cheryl Goar, the forward-thinking executive director of the Arizona Nursery Association. Like many movements, this one came in response to a need — a need to drive consumer demand for nursery products, thereby helping both growers and retailers, but we realized that our options were limited.

The nursery and greenhouse industry does not have a checkoff program like the cattle industry. That is how they fund their highly effective “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” campaign. Likewise, we are not the dairy industry. We don’t assess production. “Got Milk?” was not something we could do.

These signature campaigns, with big bucks behind them, cut through the white noise of advertising with a call to action. However, with an industry such as ours, a top-down marketing campaign would have cost too much. We also lack uniform production and retail types that made the milk and beef campaigns easier to do.

However, we felt that if individual states could come together and create a way to get people excited about gardening and all its benefits, it would be worthwhile. That is how “Plant Something” was born.

Build something that is easy to use

We asked ourselves how we could build something multiple states could easily deploy, in a manner suitable for each unique market.

Crowdsourcing was the answer. Arizona secured a USDA specialty crop block grant. The various associations got behind the campaign by investing close to \$500,000 in the development of materials, all held together by the unifying Plant Something theme. It’s simple enough that anyone can understand and respond to it, but broad enough to include everything it should.

The messaging was further developed to emphasize the environmental, financial and health benefits that accrue if people simply “Plant Something.”

The Arizona Nursery Association launched www.plant-something.org, a clear-house for all the materials devel-

oped by the various states. Today, 21 states and one Canadian province are participating, each doing their own thing.

The West is a big collaborator — including Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Arizona and British Columbia. Idaho made digital billboards for high traffic areas. Arizona and Colorado did drive time radio ads and television commercials. Other states focused on truck wraps to extend the message.

The best part of the program is that all materials are available to the retail association members of each participating state. So, if you want to use the truck wrap graphics, they’re available to you.

Perks and stats

Research has proven that planting trees, flowers and shrubs improves property values. It lowers energy costs through shading, and provides clean air and water. In short, well-landscaped, heartily planted neighborhoods make for more pleasant places to live.

Just three well-placed trees can save the average household between \$100 and \$250 in heating and cooling costs. One tree can remove 26 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, equaling 11,000 miles of car emissions. In addition, plants, trees and grasses perform janitorial services on the environment.

In urban and suburban settings, vegetation helps reduce storm water runoff, decreases pollutants and suspended solids in surface water runoff, and reduces sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide and particulate matter from the air.

The Plant Something campaign has educated the public on all of these benefits, and people have responded. In Arizona, retail sales increased by more than 10 percent in the first two years of the campaign. That’s a positive sign.

OAN values its retailers

In Oregon, we realize the importance of providing value to our retail community. That’s why we support Plant Something and keep looking for new ways to push it forward.

Recently, we started to develop a series of down-



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loadable PDF flyers highlighting the many research-backed benefits of plants. These flyers appear every month in *Digger* and can be downloaded from www.PlantSomethingOregon.com/pmlb. Retailers are encouraged to post them in their stores, include them in mailings or share them in newsletters (printed or electronic).

In addition, PlantSomethingOregon.com was recently relaunched in a version that’s friendly to desktop as well as mobile users. As before, the site contains an online, searchable version of our Retail Nurseries and Garden Centers Guide. Like the printed map, it allows potential customers to find you and learn more about what you have to offer. If you are a landscaper or a mail order/Internet retailer, you’re also listed on the map and online — free with your OAN membership.

The site also offers an event calendar where retailers can list their classes and workshops. But that’s not all. The new website now incorporates the old Random Acts of Gardening blog, with fresh editorial content on the joys of gardening.

The blog content is updated at least once per week. Every month, an email digest is sent to a growing community of more than 3,000 garden-loving subscribers. All of this is backed up with a strong presence on Twitter (@PlantedInOregon) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/PlantSomethingOregon) to drive traffic to the site.

A tool for your marketing plan

Economic health has begun to return to the nursery industry. That means both growers and retailers. America is ready to reinvest into their communities and homes again. Plant Something is a single tool to motivate people to do exactly that. It is all yours.

Now is the time to spread the word again. Get out there and Plant Something! ©

