

# A look at nursery retail and market trends

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TORONTO  
BOTANICAL  
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Thank you for having me.

# Today's Discussion

- Consumer Trends
- What people are buying
- Impact on Urban Canopy
- Barriers and Opportunities for retailers



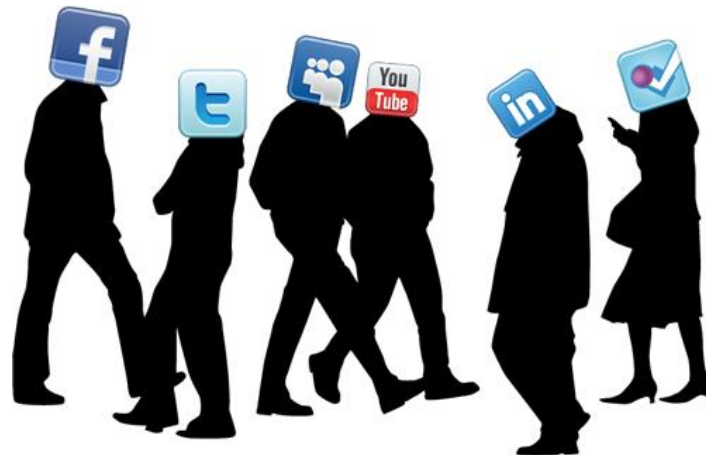
# Retail Customer = Home Landscaper

- While some retail garden centres sell to landscapers, contractors, municipalities, and other larger scale users
- largely the retail customer is a home landscaper.



# Who is today's customer --what are they looking for?

- baby boomers – have money and time, and an interest in gardening
- Gen X and Y – want the aesthetic – not as engaged in the process of gardening– are the decorating or gardening?
- They want to enrich their lives with what is meaningful to them
- They want value (economical and valuable as they see it)
- Concerned with health and well-being
- They are interested in ecological, sustainable and local
- They seek status
- They use technology and have lots of access to information and products
- Urbanites – busy, time-strapped individuals and families



# Home Landscaping

“By definition, **home landscaping**, means arranging or modifying the features of the grounds around a home to improve the property from the standpoint of aesthetic ideas (visually pleasing) and/or practical usage.”

# Investment in home and lifestyle



- Personalization of home space
- Update landscape for aesthetics and functionality
- Curb appeal
- Make space more usable – eliminate wasted space
- Extend the season and outdoor activity (“home as cottage”)
- Create comfort and convenience (low maintenance, multi purpose, storable, etc.)
- Create privacy and block out noise / traffic
- Increase property value

# Back Yard: Oasis et al...

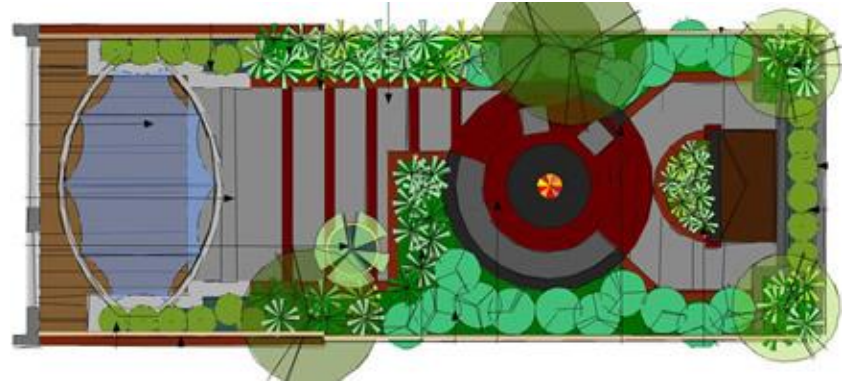
- Playing
- Retreating
- Cooking
- Dining
- Entertaining
- Working
- Wildlife watching
- Extend the season



= patios, fireplaces, heaters, outdoor kitchens, fountains, furniture, lighting, playthings, birdfeeders...

# City Garden – Smaller lots

- Smaller plants
- Fewer plants
- Vertical gardening
- Shade!
- Pollution
- Noise
- Plants sharing the space with hardscape, BBQs, furniture, storage, recreational items, etc.



Or no lot at all...



# What are they buying ?

- Small scale (compact, columnar) trees and shrubs
- Four season interest (Colour, Texture, Form: flowers, fruits, foliage, bark, shape)
- Low maintenance (low time investment)
- Disease resistant
- Resilient / hardy = zone appropriate
- New, different, exciting (especially for sought after attributes)
- Buy what looks attractive when they are shopping (impulse or in-store decision)
- Planting ideas to replace turf (Positive impact on UF)
- Edibles (Grow your Own trend)



# Impact of Home Landscaper on Urban Canopy?



- Specimens in and of themselves
- Propagation

# Retailing Native Plants

- Native woody plants have appeal to consumers in principle but not as much in practice (native perennials more successful at retail)
- Trees usually too large
- Not enough four season interest
- Don't work hard enough ornamentally to carry the "specimen tree status" in the small garden
- Don't merchandise well = "ugly babies"

# Why native?



- Consumer appeal is emotional rather than fact based - (individuals polled had a vague notion of lower maintenance; some loosely described inherent resilience; none mentioned sustainability on a bigger scale -- of the urban canopy, or indeed any connection to the urban forest at all, and some simply thought of natives as “supporting local”)

## Today's urban garden



- City gardens are by definition contrived
- Today's gardeners have a broad choice of plant materials – options that include native and non native
- Most landscapes have many varieties of plants compared to the lawns and hedges of long ago
- Access to information, inspiration, ideas, designers and plants has led to inspired use of plants in the home landscape and sophisticated gardens in our cities.



**Exotic vs. Native**

# Exotic vs. Native

“ Most exotic species that are found in natural areas do not appear to be a problem for restoration or protection of biodiversity. They co-exist with indigenous (native) species and can increase the local biodiversity without dominating the site.”

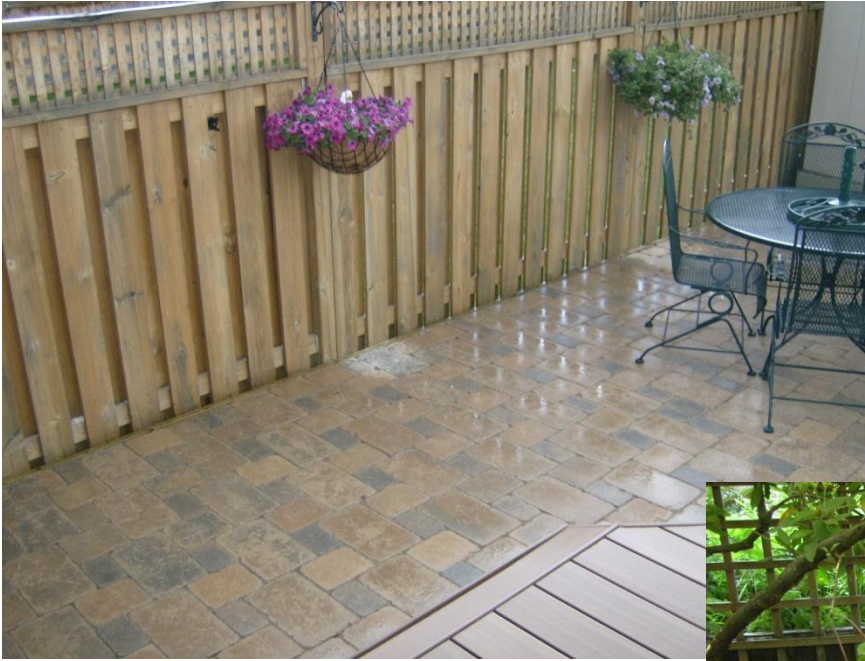


# Opportunity for retailers to influence the urban canopy

1. Foster a love of plants and gardening. (Inspire, excite, inform, equip, and support...)
2. Instill confidence as gardeners.
3. Explore customers long term needs and support them planting the best plant for the garden.
4. Ensure plants are baked into the planning and design (not an afterthought).
5. Set the customer up for success by providing the right plants, information and ancillary ingredients.
6. Educate consumers about trouble trees, plant issues and other potential choices.
7. Educational role in long term aesthetic of things that don't merchandise well. (ugly babies)
8. Provide great shade solutions and selections so that having canopy is desirable.
9. Provide choice in selection.
10. Work with industry and community on the big issues.

If we can make these kinds of  
changes...











**We all win!**