

Growing new gardeners – seizing the new build opportunity

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Fancy a load of new customers?

The current new-build program gives garden retailers an opportunity to gain lots of new customers from those people who will have gardens for the first time in their lives, and to increase the spend of those customers they already have who are moving to new and empty gardens.

Over the next 5 years the new Labour government has committed to build 1.5million new homes – this would mean a phenomenal 300,000 new homes a year.



New customers who are new to gardening!

Lots of First Time and 2nd time Buyers are new to gardening. They might not even know yet that they want to spend time doing gardening - perhaps the garden was an important part of the purchase, or perhaps the house just came with one.

They are working, and they likely buy stuff online during the weekdays and shop in-store at weekends.

They are different from the majority of customers that plant retailers have right now

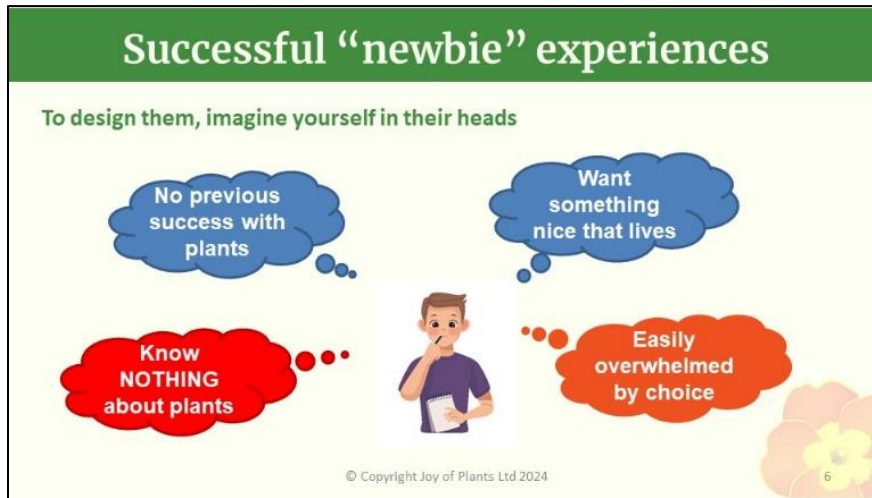
They are usually very **tech savvy**. They buy lots of stuff online. They research and learn online, often before they buy. They are influenced by what they see on social media. And many tell their friends about their lives and their experiences online. They “spread the word” about good places and bad places, digitally.

They mostly haven’t grown up with parents who gardened and taught them about plants. **Many know nothing about plants and gardening.** They are newbies, Beginners. The ones that have done a bit of gardening we can call “Easycare gardeners” – they know a little bit – about sun & shade, how to repot and feed, perhaps, but not pruning and soil types. These people need "easy care" plants.

Currently garden centres don’t cater to their needs

There's little evidence currently of garden centres being set up as easy places for these people to shop. Garden centres are always rammed with a huge variety of wonderful plants, and products to meet every competent gardener’s needs for those plants. And so they are completely overwhelming

for Newbies and Easycare gardeners. There's way too much choice, so they don't even know where to start.



- We've watched these people leave the store before they've even found the outdoor plant section.
- We've watched them make it into the plant area, walk around a little, and walk out with their heads swimming, never to return.
- And so often, we've heard that they came home with something, but it died.

And meantime, on the internet, there are retailers selling plastic plants. Their websites use simple, non-horti language. The plastic plants look pretty, they're pretty cheap, and you don't need to know anything to look after them. And they last for years. And years. And they don't biodegrade.

(I stayed with my brother recently. Knowing about me and my love of plants, he sent his daughter to buy a couple for my room. She returned with plastic plants. This is what's coming our way.)

So this is a dangerous time for both plant retailers, and the environment

Retailers need to understand these new customers in order to gain them, to ensure they sell them some **real plants**, and that (despite their ignorance) **our new people succeed with them**. To convince them that real plants are easy to look after and get them started - instead of being one of the millions who think "I had a couple of plants but they died, I'm just not cut out for that". To stop them filling their new-build gardens with fake plastic lawns and plants.

It's not so hard – just understand the learner's journey

When we start learning something we need things to be made simple for us. And we need to have early successes to develop the confidence to go on. To develop curiosity and delight, we need to have interesting things to study.

Many plants can be very tricky to grow – they aren't like cushions or home furniture - they are living things that can die. Some of them, however, are unfussy, tough and have a strong "will to live", as well as being attractive. They have flowers, or other interesting developments. They make you want to look at them, to admire them. These are the plants that are good candidates for Newbies and Easycare gardeners.

Changes to the industry for Newbies & Easycare gardeners

As an industry we need to identify the best plants for these consumers. And grow lots of them, in attractive colours. To have them ready for sale in pots big enough to thrive in, so they can be taken

home and just watered, and will live for a long time. To have them sold under “retail names” that are pronounceable - or if a Latin-style name must be used, it comes with a pronunciation ("pro-nun-see-ey-shun") too.

To ensure that Newbies and Easycare gardeners find things simple enough to buy, retailers need to set aside a small and obvious bit of space for them. Where they can shop from a restricted, carefully chosen set of plants and products. So they don't get overwhelmed before they even begin, and so whatever they take home, it thrives.



@Plant area: better “newbie” experience?

Hurray, I can do this!

I'll buy some purple ones

BEGINNERS BENCH
These grow & flower for a year or more

1. Pick some of these
2. Put them in the garden
3. Water occasionally
4. That's it!

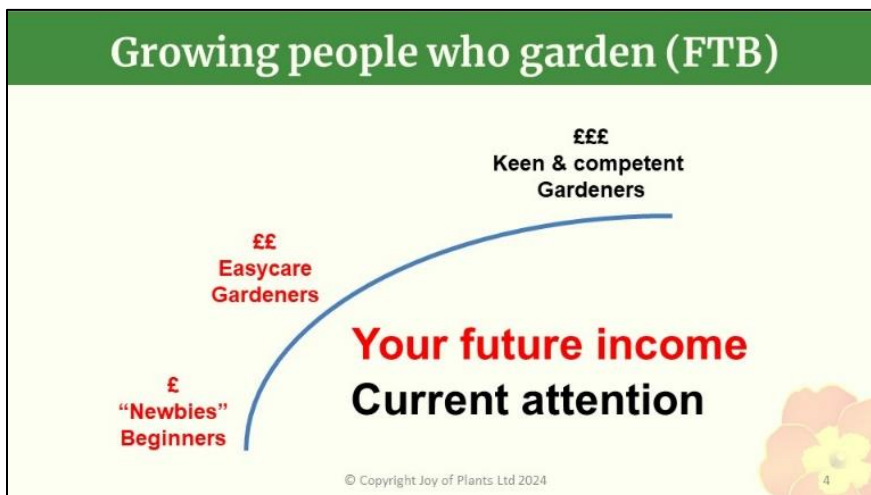
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The staff who help also need to pitch things at the right level. So their help is reassuring, rather than making the shopper feel stupid. The language of their questions and the terminology they use are really important. Assuming no knowledge is the safest bet (until you hear otherwise).

Printed materials and plant information in-store and digitally also need to have information for these shoppers, again so as not to overwhelm them. We need to “layer” plant information so beginners get fed very little info, Easycare gardeners get a bit more, and we save the full menu of knowledge for the competent gardeners who want all the details.

Newbies and Easycare gardeners become the big spenders of tomorrow

Slowly, developing confidence and a love of plants and gardening as they go - instead of walking away because their first plants died - many of those Newbies and Easycare gardeners become the competent gardeners of tomorrow. Some will become people who love it, whose gardens are overflowing, who spend a lot on their gardening hobby. Some even will love it so much they find a way to join the industry.



Growing people who garden (FTB)

£££ Keen & competent Gardeners

££ Easycare Gardeners

£ “Newbies” Beginners

Your future income
Current attention

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If they're looked after right, all those Newbies and Easycare gardeners will buy real plants, not plastic ones, **for decades**. And we'll all thank the hort industry for helping to fill the new-builds of the UK with living, breathing plants that nurture our planet, our wildlife and our people.

Thank you for reading. And good luck with whatever you can do to support our Newbie and Easycare gardeners who are so important for our future.

We're Joy of Plants, and we're on a mission to fill the pipeline with new, successful, repeat customers.

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