



Aquatic Plants

Setting up your store for successful retailing

By Rick Weidman, Key Accounts Manager, Aquascape, Inc.

When customers come in search of water garden supplies, they want the whole package ... including plants. If you provide the whole package, there will be less chance that they'll go elsewhere for future business. That's why, as a retailer, you'll have to know how to display and merchandise in order to best attract your customers' attention, and eventually their buying habits.

Location is Key

Choosing the best location at your store to display and sell water plants will have a dramatic impact on your ability to sell them in large quantities. As with other pond-related products, the aquatic plant sales area should be located near your display pond if at all possible. This will give your employees and your customers the best opportunity to see the plants growing in their actual environment.

Your customer can see the products in use, and the display pond helps to cross-sell many different items related to the water features. It will also allow you to demonstrate the wide array of plant types, colors, texture, and heights that are available from your plant offerings. Many current pond owners will purchase additional plants for their pond if they are exposed to how they will look in an actual pond setting, versus looking at a picture on a tag or in a book.

If you don't currently have a display pond, create container water gardens so customers can see plants attractively grouped in an aquatic setting. Sell the containers as well, so customers who don't have water gardens can start with something small before making the decision to install a backyard pond.

Making it Easy

Plant display areas are much more effective when located near a water feature that has a variety of plants incorporated into the feature. If your display pond is at one end of the store, and the aquatic plant retail area is at another end of the store, customers may not even know you offer aquatic plants for sale. If you're not able to keep the retail display near your water feature, be sure to have signage near your display pond that lets customers know where to find the aquatic plants.

The same is true if using container water gardens throughout your store. Include signs that let customers know where to find the product. The easier you make it for customers, the more likely they are to return.

Keep Them Where Your Customers Can Reach

Your goal should be to make it as easy as possible for your retail consumers to buy your plants. Because water plants are heavy and tend to be messy in general, it is crucial for you to display your plants on a bench at heights that allow them to be transferred easily into a cart or into plastic bags.

Your bench height should range from a low of 30 inches to a maximum height of 55 inches. Most customers are not going to reach out over a pit of water in the ground and pull up plants for closer inspection. They want to conveniently inspect the plant and read information about the plant on its tag or from signage located on the display table. These raised benches also make it easier and faster for your employees to maintain the plants. Any broken or declining leaves can easily be pruned off and disposed of, leaving your display looking its best. The raised bench also reduces maintenance by keeping the water out of reach of smaller children who may knock over plants or throw items into the water as they wander around with the parents.

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Easier Maintenance, Too!

If your aquatic plant benches are over three feet in width, you should have access to them from both sides. This will ensure that all pots can be within easy reach. It will also give you flexibility to display different plant varieties on the same bench, as long as signage can be neatly displayed in the center. This flexibility becomes much more important as the retail season begins to decline.

You are able to consolidate your inventory of plants onto retail benches that are stocked full of plants, instead of having many benches that are only partially filled. This will keep your aquatic display looking well stocked and reduce the time your employees spend maintaining the plants and benches. You are also able to remove the unused benches or place other seasonal merchandise like mums on them for the fall season. This will improve your sales per square foot by utilizing your space wisely during the entire year!

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