

“Positive Horticulture: Marketing Non-Horticultural Industries/Organizations Through the Many Benefits of Horticulture” (talking points audience handout)

By: Paul Haden, to be presented 8/5/17 at the GWA 2017 Annual Conference in Buffalo, NY

- **Harvest the ‘Power of Plants’** and natural environments through *educational opportunities* via multi-media outlet partners
 - Encourage non-horticultural industries to **participate in environmental stewardship projects** on their own grounds and *within the communities they serve*; then *feature those natural enhancement efforts within their branded marketing schemes, showcasing the positive attributes of installing & interacting with healthy plant communities*
 - **Create specific brand loyalty for the non-horticultural partner advertiser** while also creating general **across the board demand for ‘green industry’ products & services**
 - **Go beyond existing marketing resources** of ‘green industry’ components by encouraging *‘pro-nature’ marketing efforts* of endless non-horticultural industry advertisers, which actively seek to be labeled as “green” or “environmentally responsible” while “connected to” or “actively involved in” the communities they serve
 - Enable non-horticultural industries to help **portray horticulture as a positive force within our world** using their own time, money & people, with a little choice guidance by experts in our field
 - **Reach global audiences** beyond the targeted population niches currently reached by ‘green industry’ marketers; ***the world is our audience***, not just a certain socio-economic segment of our ever-expanding population
 - **People do not have to buy plants to own, cultivate, interact with, and gain the benefits of them**
 - collection of seed, division, taking cuttings, gifting, sharing of resources
 - pooled resources (e.g. community gardens, CSA operations)
 - **Plants can be owned by one party and yet still visited by & interacted with many more**, such as the case in gardens, parks, campuses, walk-by yards, etc.
 - **Act as a team to earn new purchasing nature-lovers**, not as individuals fighting over the same old customer basis for *the next big thing* year-after-year
 - Have only **positive things to say about the plants** or natural environments *that you are trying to promote* (e.g. nobody wants to install something that brings in pests, diseases, is messy, or is difficult to maintain over time)

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- Have only **positive things to say about other professionals, businesses and organizations within our industry** (the politician mudslinging *turn-off effect*)

- If you want to put a competitor out of business, do so by *consistently providing a better product and customer service*, not drama-filled public media rants and calls for boycotts of their operation (professionalism counts)

- If you want to show one school-of-thought better than another on how to do something in the landscape or your operation, show by *successful leadership example*, not down-trodding others' efforts

- **Third party informants are** often *considered more objective and trustworthy* by the public than self-promotional marketing ploys; so non-horticultural industries *touting the many benefits of interactions with plants* (and natural environments in general) creates an awareness and raised priority to the causes presented with a **more persuasive force**

- **Educating the informers** is an important predecessor of the resulting *public message campaigns*, making sure that all cooperative *pro-nature marketers* uniformly **present positive, accurate and up-to-date information**

- **Negativity & misinformation** are **dangerous** on many levels

- When getting a non-hort advertiser to promote their green projects, it is good practice to give them a **factual information packet** to **guide their positive effects claims about plants** and the organisms they attract in a landscape setting (or targeted effects they have upon an interior setting)

- Over time, effectively use plants and natural environments to **create an emotional connection** (short-term), then *bond* (long-term), **between the co-advertisers and the general public audience**

- The typical **motivating reasons** current marketers *advertise new plants as purchase-worthy* for tend to *fail to obtain abundant additional new buyers*, but rather transition existing buyers to different products, limiting industry growth

- The **reasons that first-time plant buyers purchase those items for themselves** (e.g. *gift buyers* for others have far different motivations, such as 'convenience, affordability and beauty'), mostly **practicality motivators**, are what we *as an industry*, partnered with non-horticultural industry co-marketers, want to **showcase to our global public audience** in order to **gain a much higher percentage of plant buying** (or at least *pro-natural environment preserving*) **citizens**

Why do we need this? Why have non-horticultural industry sponsors help? Just look around...

- **How many households or businesses** in the typical neighborhood **have decently designed and well-maintained landscapes?** Conversely, how many (typically more) are barren with nothing but weeds, half dead trees or shrubs, and/or exposed soil? Just because builders in many municipalities by code now have to vegetate new construction landscapes with formulated ratios of woody plants, flora and turf, it does not mean that the subsequent property owners

and users will actually maintain the installed landscape items over the years. *It takes marketing to get the current non-plant buying public to **appreciate and desire** all kinds of **plants materials** enough to **buy, install and maintain them long-term**.*

- In the typical neighborhood, **how many households buy plants** (interior or exterior) during the course of a year? Of those that buy plants, **how many buy supplemental resources** (like tools or soil amendments)? By showing the public the powers of abundant plants to enhance anyone's quality of life (no matter what your age, background, health, or status), we also *elevate numerous related industries that support the habits of gardening and otherwise exploring nature.*
- In the typical neighborhood, **how many households have established basic landscapes** (or planted containers), **but do not continue to add enhancements to them, or even actively maintain them**, in-person or through another party? Education needs to happen to tell the public that *properly installed plants cared for long enough to be mature, healthy specimens have far greater benefits to humans and their surrounding environment than ones that die young of neglect.* A poorly planted tree that does not grow tall and broad enough to shade a house, for example, does not fulfill the promised benefits of shade-induced comfort or reduced energy costs savings. In a 2-tiered approach, *use non-horticultural industries to tout the basic benefits of mature and diverse communities of plants, and then use the horticultural industry component marketers to elaborate on how to more successfully cultivate these diverse plant treasures that bring forth other live treasures we love,* such as colorful birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects.
- Almost **everyone on the planet** (even apartment dwellers and artificial light situation interior cubicle workers) **can benefit from first-person interactions with plants**; however, out of the global population, *how many people own, or visit to interact in-person with, living, breathing vegetation daily?* Why is this number not exponentially higher, considering that **plants are a source of food, medicine and shelter while being physical and mental health stimulants?**

How do you encourage the average person, who pays no attention to plants, to appreciate, desire, buy, and cultivate a wealth of plants, or at least be motivated to fund protecting them in public or private shared space settings (e.g. gardens, parks, transportation corridors, etc.)?

- **Create** as many effective **first-hand experiences** as possible that directly showcase in-person to the audience how *plants work to positively affect their physical and mental health*
 - Use as many physical sense stimuli as possible on combination with one another
 - Sight, sound, touch, smell, & taste all trigger both memories and emotional links when used in tandem with one another
- **Show others how plants positively affect your own quality of life**; as horticulturists, gardeners, and plant lovers, we are sharing **quality of life enhancements** when we hook someone on *exploring and interacting with nature*, because the *plants are just catalysts for bigger reactions* when people **help build and maintain healthy, natural environments**
 - Physical & Mental Health of People
 - Ecological Health of the cared-for Environmental Components

- **Share experiences together** in public green spaces, gardens, parks, and similar areas where others can learn to use those same spaces to **bond and create new memories** with their own families, friends, neighbors, classmates or coworkers.
- **Educate and enable** the host site business or organization decision makers by having a consulting horticulturist write-up detailed *plant profiles* for each plant species utilized in the cooperative projects, so that they can make both informed decisions on future maintenance adjustments and redistribute accurate information to the public about their project plantings
- **Learn together** as you explore new horticultural endeavors, showing that *gardening and nature are ever-changing, rewarding challenges where no two plants, seasons, or locations are exactly alike*, keeping things interesting.
- **Teamwork builds involved communities.** With gardening projects, there are always **challenges to overcome as a team together**, and many rewards from *overcoming those challenges together*, with help from yet others.
- **Learn from others** who are *from different diverse backgrounds and specialties*. As new species enter the project ecosystem, **research** them and see how they *interact with your installed and marketed components*; as audiences who care about those interesting life forms (such as with butterflies, birds, bees, and beneficial insects) are potential *targeted, action-encouragement audiences with emotional ties* to the long-term outcome of the highlighted project, or at least the concepts explored by exposing the horticultural project in a positive light.
- **Inspire others.** We are *not looking to create clones* of existing horticultural projects, marketing schemes or even plant purchases. Rather, we hope to encourage **individual identity** and character through **creative expression** with *tools and resources that work for your own environment*. Inspire others to *appreciate natural environs around them, want to preserve them and interact with them for a lifetime*.
- **Show** that *one plant alone is not the solution to the world's many problems*; but a vibrant, healthy **plant community** (appropriate to the environmental conditions around that specific space) can indeed bring about **positive attributes** and many-fold **returns upon their investment** as *the quality of life is improved for those who live in, work in, and frequently visit those enhanced, green communities*.
- **Encourage diversity in planting** by offering integrated ecosystems, rather than mass marketing a few over-popular selections for everyone's needs. *If growers cooperated* more in not raising nearly identical sets of marketed plant cultivars, and *encouraged the public to partake of all regional providers* because **each has something unique and worthwhile**, then they would not all be direct competitors and fighting over the same dollar, but rather *growing the industry by encouraging more new faces to help establish larger plant communities beyond our own yards*.

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Tying the Benefits of Horticulture into Non-Hort Businesses as a Marketing Tool

A 'breakout' session lecture for the GWA 2017 Annual Symposium - Aug 5, 2017; Buffalo, NY

By: **Paul Haden**, Horticulturist, Willow Oaks Country Club



Introduction:

As Garden Communicators, it's our duty to promote the many benefits of Horticulture through public exposure to accurate knowledge, effective concepts, and inspirational ideas. Our industry primarily tends to market to a limited audience of existing plant buyers. How does the 'green industry' benefit from influencing non-horticulture-based industries to include horticultural endeavors within their actions and marketing tactics? The renewal of the American economy is targeting industrial and commercial growth, which we can influence to include promotable 'green actions', highlighted in personal and corporate efforts. For those who work at a non-horticultural industry for a primary job (or those 'green industry' professionals who successfully partner with unlikely allies), how do you tie your personal interests/talents into your work environment to promote and benefit both worlds? With a little creativity, almost any trade can be tied into our environment and horticulture, which benefits all.

Background:

We as humans want, need and benefit, directly and indirectly, from plants in our environment. As enablers, countless plants provide food, shelter, medication, and other important aspects of life to not only humans, but also thousands of other living species on our complex ecosystem planet. Life as we know it relies on plants to convert raw energy and resources into usable sources for other living things to utilize in their own life cycles. Humans, and many of the life forms that we cherish as co-existing partners, need plants in abundance to exist and function properly. A singular plant sparsely placed here and there simply will not do. It takes countless interactive *plant communities* to create a fully functional environment that fosters life on this planet. Plants are enablers for beneficial activities to happen.

No matter where we live around the globe, humans need certain resources and conditions to survive, and even more to thrive. Like air and water, plants are one of the basic needs of life, because even carnivores indirectly rely on herbivores and omnivores, who graze upon and find shelter within plant communities. For each species that relies on plants, almost all of them require numerous plant species to feed upon and live within during their life cycles. Humanity co-exists with species that help develop the compounds we need to grow and function successfully physically, but also hone our mental health as well. Providing positive stimuli and a safe place, plant communities help us become calm, happy and less-stressed with repeated or long-term exposure. No matter their regional style or scale, green spaces are important to conserve as urban development takes over new territories to preserve the natural environment ecosystem, interactions and resources the future will need. When native species go extinct or leave a major area, they are no longer available to positively affect the environment in that area.

We *garden communicators* are a diverse group, with combined influence globally through different means. Some of us write for a primary job, some manage horticultural programs, some are gardeners, groundkeepers, or horticulturists, but many are actually every-day, traditional job folks. We, by work

day, are accountants, doctors, lawyers, secretaries, teachers, cashiers, receptionists, tradespeople, and more. In our personal time, we become gardening superheroes and mentors, sharing our personal interest passions and hobbies with all who will listen. Our primary jobs pay the basic household bills, but our secondary jobs and volunteer opportunities feed our souls. Plants enable life, love and joy as we share them with others of not only our own species, but the rest of life in nature as well. So, how could so many people in the world ignore and not appreciate them, removing nature as a centuries-old trend in order to put back human urban spaces, devoid of nature and diversity in life?

While naturalists and plantsmen are considered artists and scientists in some cultures, many folks simply do not value our profession, products or services as strongly as we would like to see. As the media has pushed topics like global warming, species extinction, and environmental change into the public eye, people are beginning to care about the natural world around them because it is seemingly broken and negatively altered by human activity over time. Manufacturers that once showcased factories belching smoke from stacks on publicity images as a sign of productivity or hard work, are conversely now looking to portray a cleaner image of energy efficiency, less pollution, smaller carbon footprints, and other environmentally friendly measures.

Existing Third Party 'Pro-Plant' Marketing Examples & Concepts Explored:

Companies once seen as major sources of air, water and soil pollution are ironically some of the very first to start empowering marketing schemes to show themselves as 'green' and 'environmentally conscious' to the public. At the time of the conception of this talk for example, CSX, a class 1 American railroad, had as a primary web site home page image, two of their new, energy-efficient locomotives roaring past a row of healthy trees with a click-on article showcasing their initiative to plant at least tree for every mile of track on their operating system. There was a graphic showing how close they were to their goal, a few images and a chart showcasing numerous benefits of a mature tree to the environment and human inhabitants under the shade line of that tree. CSX, a corporation that cuts back or down many trees, and sprays all herbaceous vegetation within so many yards along their rails for clearance and visibility was touting how awesome trees are. So, I did some more research...

In the 2016-17 seasons, CSX sponsored a NASCAR race car, on which the rear bumper featured their "Trees For Tracks" slogan at certain venues. At the race track, promotional handouts were seed packets or seed impregnated cards featuring the CSX logo and wildflowers to take home, then plant shallow in the ground. On this card, CSX promised, "TREES FOR LAPS: CSX will plant 50 trees following the race – 1 for every 10 laps completed. It's part of our effort to plant 42,000 trees by 2018. Track our progress at TreesForTracks.org". How ingenious is this? A non-horticultural company, who I believe does not have a full time horticulturist on the pay roll, just told millions of race fans, who are stereotyped as not being "green-minded people", 'trees are important to us and make a difference.' Plus, folks distributing materials within the infield handed out free wildflower seeds to take home (a call for in-person action in your own yard), asked you to read about trees (passive education encouragement), and promoted CSX (as caring about the environment) all in one efficient swoop. Upon writing this lecture, the current CSX web site and campaigns have changed to different language, images and graphics, but are now touting planting 2 trees for every mile in their system, and still showing connectedness to the communities they serve by having employees co-plant those trees with their families and other neighbors. What an effort!

Reaching "billions and billions served" at this point, McDonald's is an example of an international marketing superpower, often blamed for contributing significantly to the western modern world's bad

eating habits and pollution problems. Human-generated litter in the landscape was always a problem (and why archeology digs work in modern times), but the rise of convenience items and fast food chains in North America quickly accelerated drifting packaging materials deposits along our land and water transportation corridors. In addition to the “Give a Hoot, Don’t Pollute” Owl campaign, youth of my generation (and recent retro drive-in movie theater audiences) saw tv commercials showing sad Native American elders shaking their heads as implied transient European cultures trashed the US landscape and waterways, showing vegetation and waterways excessively clogged with assorted litter, promoting restorative clean-up projects and a change-of-heart to respect the land by not polluting it. In my own rural yard today, plastic drink bottles, bags and food wrappers are our worst daily tossed roadside litter items, despite being over a dozen miles from the nearest fast food place.

I was in a McDonald’s location in Danville, VA having breakfast a few months ago when a small, colorful poster propped upon the counter caught my attention. The informative cardstock ad touted incorporating used coffee grounds into your garden beds as a soil amendment for fertilizing crops; then announced that if you brought your own container, this McDonald’s and other participating locations would give you their used coffee grounds free (as a way of recycling and helping the surrounding community). Other phrases spoke of McDonald’s commitment to recycling, waste reduction, and other good causes. Based on the butchered landscaping I see at most locations, hastily cared for by mow-blow-and-go contractors, I’m pretty sure McDonald’s has no horticulturists on their corporate payroll; and yet *someone* who loves gardening and nature at home in their personal time created that campaign. So, you see, no matter what you do for a primary living, if you are a *garden communicator* as a secondary job or volunteer hobby, *you* can indeed contribute to the cause effectively if you put your mind to it. I asked the manager at that McDonald’s location if customers did actually bring her in containers. She answered that people did indeed bring empty buckets and such; and she offers them used grounds first come-first serve. It does *not* matter who came up with the idea, from the district manager to the late-night fry cook. The fact is, it *was* executed and followed through by more than just the originating author. You don’t have to be a professional writer, photographer, blogger or even plant grower to make a difference by presenting ideas, then having inspired others elaborate upon and continue execution of those ideas to reach the public. All ideas start small and controversial, until they reach a greater following. If they are not shared, then they cannot come to fruition to make a difference in the world.

Another booming industry tarnished by negative environmental consequences from the nature of their business is the automotive world, as Americans transitioned from no vehicles to multiple units per average household in just a few decades, and the rise of associated racing sports. How does a car company negate the huge resources it consumes to produce every single car, truck, motorcycle, and suv in its product line? They so desperately want to be known as ‘green’ and responsible, while connected to the populations they serve. Automaker Hyundai, for example, developed a marketing campaign that promotes urban rooftop farms that sell or use their produce crops inside the buildings they were grown upon. Honda chose to produce a series of environmental themed short films for viewing online. Ford installed a 454,000 square foot, xeriscape green roof on their Rouge Plant, which assembles F150 pickups, and planted the surrounding grounds with wildlife supportive environments that continue to be featured, with highlight on the plants and their side effects, on their corporate website, after initial exposures in national print ads, tv and other media. Competitor General Motors, upon checking, only promoted minor clips on their web site touting “building biodiversity” on their newest campus, featuring stock images of nesting birds and such, with no mention of plants.

A local car dealer in Richmond, VA in past years handed out free, small pawpaw tree saplings with each vehicle purchase in the spring or Fall, but not during summer heat, promoting the correct time to plant the investment in our future environment. Education to the public about plants can be passive and does not have to be actively intrusive or in your face. Not everyone has space for a tree or even has a yard, so that tree sapling can go to the local public park, school, library, etc. in your name, where you can still enjoy it over the coming years. *You do not have to own a plant to interact with it or care about it, nor reap the many benefits of interacting with it over time.*

Similar to railroads and highway right-of-way owners, utility companies have thousands of miles of land (a powerful resource) they own or lease, where something has to act as a manageable, drive-over groundcover. Utilities typically have abundant consulting arborists on-staff, but not until more recently ecologists, biologists and horticulturists. Until this winter, Dominion VA Power sent me annual notices as a landowner about hacking back or down my lineside trees and meadow vegetation, regardless of species, because everything was mowed, trimmed, armature-sawed, or bush-hogged down uniformly by habit. Now changing their corporate image to Dominion Energy, the regional electricity and natural gas provider has dramatically changed their vegetation management habits on over 43,000 acres in a bird and bee habitat development program called “Wings at Work”, launched June 20, 2017. Along with converting their generation facility landscape buffers, Dominion Energy is now seeking to partner with landowners who seek to create right-of-way sanctuary corridors for pollinators; then include these projects within their reported annual accomplishments. Such projects need local guidance from experts in the field who best know the local conditions and species. For local clubs and individuals, this would be a great way to get more exposure to your cause as the regional company presents the joint efforts on the web, tv and print media.

Not every individual marketing effort has to be large, or even to the general public. The most effective advertising is one-on-one, genuine word-of-mouth reviews of objective, satisfied parties. While in-person, full-sensory experiences are best, sometimes you cannot get the target audience into the natural landscape setting you’re promoting during a peak bloom season. So, the second-best thing is to show them highlight photos, videos, and visitor positive feedback comments. If you are a gardener, horticulturist or groundskeeper for a non-horticultural employer, use an editing program like Shutterfly or Vista Print to compile best-of photos from throughout the growing season into a custom horticultural photography coffee table book, calendar, a series of seasonal posters, flags, or framed images to display in the public or guest-use parts of your facility. For example, after taking a full year’s worth of documentation photographs of existing flora species on-campus at my private country club employer, I composed a site calendar, a [Willow Oaks Horticultural Highlights 2016](#) and a [Willow Oaks Wildflowers - 2016 Season](#) photo book each. The captioned books were first used to show our vendors where the plants and supplies we bought from them went, which was rewarding for them to see and earned us future potential enhancement project sponsorship opportunities. Secondly, the coffee table books were reprinted for display within each of our buildings, where potential new members, new employees, and the public (present for on-site special event rentals) can all see how great our dynamic landscape looks through diverse seasonal weather conditions with different flowering plants, attracted wildlife, and so on. The minor cost of producing the books has created a multi-fold return on investment as more potential members, casually shown the productions as part of the application process, have loved them and chosen to join the beautiful club. Since these books are laid out for browsing during member

gatherings and on-site rental events, vocalized overall campus landscape pride from the members and interior employees that normally don't venture outside surged as well.

These kinds of in-company and company-to-consumer (or investor) marketing create awareness for highlighted programs and projects when first utilized. When executed consistently as an on-going series over the years, custom books, calendars, lightpole banners, and such document progress as plantings get established, grow in and mature to provide further benefits over time as plant communities bring up the health of the environment while increasing the quality of lives of those who interact with it. Even our members that typically pay no attention to plants now report that the campus now has a 'different, better feel' now that we have installed and properly cared for over 450 species of flowering plants on-site, after years of merely having a monoculture of expanses of turf, upper canopy trees, and a few stiff foundation shrubs around the buildings. By bringing in perennials, naturalizing bulbs, and self-seeding annuals, transplanted into the ground at the end of the season from our key-use area containers, we have very quickly changed the look and feel of the property. Club members, their frequent guests, and most importantly their impressionable children are now exposed to the joys of watching different migratory species of birds, butterflies, and bees visit the transitioning seasonal flora (all of which will return with a little care year after year). A little educational effort goes a long way, from brief social media posts, showcasing what is blooming on-site, to simply answering random questions in-person as visitors notice interesting flowers. I have started writing up plant species profiles for each cultivar we have on-property; and eventually, I will be able to email or hand out those profiles to inquiring members when they ask about some neat flower they would like to consider for use in their own yards. The plant profiles also educate my staff about each plant cultivar's characteristics, its locations on property, and any site-specific data about caring for them in those places. I'm a garden writer penning pieces of useful literature for my own staff, fellow non-plant employees, members, guests, and the public interested in what we have planted recently. Every earned new plant or nature lover is important.

The Tie-In Connection Explored:

In order of ease-of-connection, from easiest to hardest, *most any non-horticulture industry can be tied to horticulture through their products, services, mascot, or people*. Companies who use plant parts or biproducts to make their product line have the most obvious connection to horticulture, and the most motivation to promote the benefits of healthy plant communities. Companies or organizations who have services that relate directly or indirectly to nature, life, and similar topics have a great chance of promoting how plants help life happen better. Those with a mascot who is a life-form that occurs in nature, such as the Cheerios Honey Bee and the Coca-Cola Polar Bear, have an instant link to promote how plants shape the lives of those creatures in their native habitats, no matter what that company produces for a primary product line. Finally, if none of the aforementioned conditions warrant a potential 'pro-plant message' marketer to start a 'green' marketing campaign, then their quality people will. Every company and organization has *valued people*, as both employees and target consumers. The most valued resource of many companies is their people. Those people have families they love, homes they care for, and environments they live, work and play within along the way. There is no more precious family commodity on our planet than our children and grandchildren, who we want to be healthy and happy in a clean, safe world. Plants contribute to all of those factors.

Made by General Mills, Cheerios brand cereal completed an extremely successful campaign this year to raise awareness to the cause of the loss of honey bees around the world, which pollenate many of

the world's edible crops. Their beloved mascot went 'missing' from the boxes of product in the stores and in ads, illustrated by a dashed silhouette. 'Find out where the bee went and why.' They set up fake future grocery stores (as an urban walk-through diorama) to show the general public how many of our typical-use products would be missing (via empty shelf spots) and much higher priced without insect pollinators. General Mills executed print and online ads on how bees need year-round habitats, full of diverse blooms, to survive. Then came the genius tactic, carried out in French and English language versions of the Honey Nut Cheerios boxes, that overtook the providers: a Spring 2017 launched, 100 million wildflower seed give-away actually yielded, due to overwhelming demand, *1.5 billion* wildflower species seeds being distributed via packets with the 'missing' Cheerios Bee on them to consumers in the US and Canada. The corporate website graphically tracked where North American consumers 'pinned' planting their received packets of seed and showed images of sample blooms being visited by bees. Further publicity was drawn to the example online because some industry folks questioned the validity of the seed mix containing non-natives for many areas they were distributed to, with a response back from provider Veseys Seeds stating that none were officially labeled 'invasive noxious weeds'.

The lesson to learn from this demand explosion, then second-guessing result is that the modern consumer is smart and can pull up information (and misinformation equally) at the drop of a hat about products and services you provide as part of a positive message, 'green initiative' project. Everybody needs to be on the same page and distribute accurate, honest information about involved materials and resources. There will be successful projects, like this one, that become so large that inspirational groups like GWA need to have enough networking power to match the right resources with the right cooperative regional or international partners. In this free seed mix distribution example, it is helpful to have a large company who provides specialty mixes for all of the regions a program intends to distribute within; or conversely, simply use multiple regional provider partners who have appropriate mixes for their own locales, making the end consumers both happy and successful. Do not set the consumer up for either disappointment or failure. We as garden communicators can set up more partnerships through networking and open communication as these kinds of marketing schemes get hatched. It's ok to have say 4-6 partner companies help provide seed packaged as Cheerios wildflower mixes, as long as the actual source, packing date, and contents are listed on the back. Have a CO company cover the Midwest, an OR seed grower handle the West Coast mix, a NY grower handle New England distribution, and so on, if no one source is large and diverse enough. Encouraging new partnerships to form into an even bigger picture team is a great thing. We, as an industry, are trying to gain new gardeners and nature addicts from the non-plant-buying general public, not fight each other for existing customers. We want to show them how *easy* it is to plant and care for beautiful flora, then appreciate the benefits. Marketing the free seed packets on the cereal boxes was a *call-to-action* for adults and children alike to set aside a moment to plant seeds, care for them lightly, and watch the environment fill up with birds, bees, butterflies and other interesting beneficial insects that use those plants as food and shelter.

An example of a corporation utilizing its people as resources within the communities they serve to foster installation and maintenance of better shared-resource green spaces is Bank of America. The lender funds many residences, commercial and industrial properties. Additionally, beyond their own business unit properties, they have on-hand often-neglected, foreclosed parcels that have seen better days, which nobody wants to purchase due to being in sketchy parts of town. Bank of America is a believer in reviving depressed sections of towns by partnering with local organizations to start and maintain community gardens that can bring hope, pride and a sense of involvement or belongingness to

once scarred neighborhoods. Tended by employees, volunteers from partnering organizations, and members of surrounding households, the transformative plots typically contain beds of fruits, vegetables, herbs and beneficial insect-attracting ornamental flowers that can be harvested for arrangements to brighten someone's day. Such community gardens help feed the people while nurturing cooperative, positive relationships between neighbors, who utilize different skill sets and backgrounds to advance a common cause that benefits all equally. Everybody eats; and everyone wants to be a happy, healthy human in a safe place to live, work and play. We all care about preserving a functional environment with clean water and air for our children, which plant-life plays a large part in.

Acting as horticultural therapy, gardening is an equalizer, where Mother Nature does not care if you are rich or poor, black or white, old or young, handicapped, disabled, etc. Sharing equal footing gardening challenges and rewards together creates a sense of worth, pride, accomplishment and purpose. Gardening long-term increases human physical and mental health. Those who do it together tend to form positive bonds across socio-economic differences. Getting members of a fractured community to get to know about and care about others through positive opportunities is important. Neighborhoods with active community gardens are more likely to form a more effective neighborhood watch program to prevent/reduce crime because the central garden gives residents a viable reason beyond 'watch meetings' to gather and converse outdoors regularly. Neighbors who interact outdoors more frequently are more likely to notice and be certain when something looks out of place or suspicious nearby than those who keep to themselves inside. Almost nobody looks out for a bank repossessed, empty lot of weeds or vacant house, and the bank is often thought of as the heartless enemy. However, in a community-harvest garden setting, sponsored by financial institutions, everyone has a sense of ownership or potential gain from the same, better-maintained lot, and has an improved attitude towards the property possessor. Even people who do not harvest from the common-use garden plots feel a sense of betterment in the improved parcel because it's more beautiful as a pass-by feature and increases nearby property values. When you *invest in people* who are your current and future customer basis, that action brings in long-term returns to both the initial investor and the community.

Conclusion:

With a little proactive, expert guidance and encouragement from leaders within our horticultural industry, cooperative multi-media marketing campaigns from numerous non-horticultural industries and organizations (looking to be promoted as 'green', environmentally responsible, involved with the communities they serve, etc.) can contribute positively to public perception and demand for overall Green Industry products and services internationally in the modern global marketplace. Topics of coverage can include the many benefits of diverse, abundant, live plant materials to the improving health of the environment in general, human health (physical and mental), and benefits to the us economically. Rather than pointing out characteristics of plants that do not motivate current non-plant-buyers to actually buy plants for the first time (such as a different flower color or earlier bloom time than prior available cultivars), we should instead concentrate on the practical aspects that motivate additional new buyers to try plants out for themselves. Show all citizens of the world that plants work hard for them to create a better, healthier, more enjoyable life in numerous ways.