



I-Plants Magazine

HAPPY

NEW YEAR

2024

IN THIS ISSUE...

2024 International Plantscape Awards Gala

- LAST CHANCE TO GRAB YOUR TICKETS!

- The 5 Strategies for Profitable Business Growth in 2024**
- A Force of Habitat: Tropical Monsoon Climates**
- Don't Underestimate the Power of a Simple 'Hello'**

A modern building with a glass facade and a courtyard with large planters and a palm tree. The courtyard is paved with large, light-colored tiles. The planters are made of dark, weather-resistant material and contain various green plants, including ferns and grasses. A tall palm tree stands in the center of the courtyard. The building has multiple floors with large windows and balconies.

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Editor's Letter

*Happy New
Year Everyone!*

I just want to take this time to thank all the readers, writers, and those of you who entered your great projects into the International Plantscape Awards.

We look forward to seeing all of you down in Fort Lauderdale on Jan 18th!

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2024!

Kind regards,

Elliott Bennett



Elliott R Bennett

Editor-in-Chief, I-Plants Magazine





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AWARDS

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*Gala Evening
Celebrating
the Green Industry*

A Gala Evening Celebrating the Green Industry

2024 International Plantscape Awards -JUDGES-



ROD & BARB BENNETT

Air Strength Canada was founded by Barb and Rod Bennett in 1982 and are still active in the business. Air Strength Canada is a diversified service company which has been a successful strategy for long term monthly growth. Air Strength has “grown” our tropical plant division into a multi city tropical plant business.

Barb and Rod have personally been involved in design, installation, and maintenance projects since 1982. Air Strength Canada has won many international awards, and we are very honoured to be selected as judges of entry projects for the 2024 I-Plants Awards.

A Gala Evening Celebrating the Green Industry

2024 International Plantscape Awards -JUDGES-

JEAN-PIERRE SIJMONS

Jean-Pierre Sijmons is the Vice President of Sales at Architectural Supplements, where he is dedicated to ensuring that the company's sales strategy aligns with the needs of the industry and that Architectural Supplements continues to provide exceptional service, and also leads the expansion of living wall systems in the North American market.



With over 30 years of experience in the interiorscape industry, Jean-Pierre is a highly reputable professional with his wealth of knowledge, proficiency and passion for the industry, and believes strongly in the power of plants to transform indoor spaces, and is committed to continuing on promoting sustainable design practices in the built environment.

SEAN CAMPBELL

Sean Campbell is the second-generation owner of Grundy's Plantscaping in Pottstown PA (for the past 12 years) and has more than 24 years' experience in the interior landscaping Sean has guided Grundys from a local Philadelphia company to one of the most trusted Interiorscape companies in the tri-state area. Sean serves on the Board of Directors of Green Plants for Green Buildings for the past 5 years and has been a member of the PIA (Plantscape Industry Alliance) Next Generations' Group, also been a very active member of BOMA Philadelphia while participating in BOMA Community outreach and suburban committees.



Sean has helped spread the benefits of Biophilic design through his consulting work with architects and developers to help bring nature to urban environments. Sean is an avid outdoorsman and lives in a 200-year-old farmhouse in rural Chester County, Pennsylvania with his wife Annie, young son Kieran and four-legged family member Gemma.

A Gala Evening Celebrating the Green Industry

ABOUT THE GALA

We are excited to announce that we will be hosting the 3rd annual **International Plantscape Awards Gala** event in support of the National Horticulture Foundation (NHF).

The International Plantscape Awards and Plantscape Hall of Fame in-person event will be held again in partnership with TPIE, FNGLA and NHF on **Thursday January 18th, 2024** in Fort Lauderdale, Florida for a gala night extravaganza that includes a four course meal and the full awards program presentation. All proceeds raised from this event will be designated to NHF to create long term sustainability for the Interiorscape Industry.

The International Plantscape Awards recognizes outstanding achievements in interior plantscape design, installation, creativity, renovation, and innovation. These awards celebrate the strides of interior plantscapers to connect people with plants in remarkable ways.

Entries are judged on their own merit rather than against each other. Award winners earn a designation of gold or platinum based on points scored from information, photos and videos provided. Certain submissions may be awarded the coveted Diamond and Emerald judges' awards for the best overall entries.

We thank you in advance for your support in this great initiative.

We look forward to seeing you there!



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A Gala Evening Celebrating the Green Industry

ABOUT THE GALA

EVENT DATE:

Thursday, January 18, 2024

EVENT VENUE:

Fort Lauderdale Convention Centre, Palm Room (A & B)

EVENT TIME:

5:00 p.m. - Pre-Reception in Palm Room Lobby / 6:00 p.m. - Gala Doors Open

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~ Katharine Hepburn

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The National Horticulture Foundation (NHF) embraces the opportunity to seek out and provide support to projects relevant to the nursery and landscape industry along with addressing issues related to a diverse and changing horticulture industry. Led by our vibrant network of business professionals, the Foundation is dedicated to seeing the industry thrive and survive well into the future.

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For More Information:

CONTACT

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A Force of Habitat: Tropical Monsoon Climates

By Carolyn J.C. Goodin CLP-I

What is a Monsoon climate? What causes a Monsoon? Where do Monsoons occur? What kind of vegetation is found in Monsoon climates? What changes occur in Monsoon plants that help them adapt to radical changes in precipitation levels? Can Monsoon plants adapt to indoor use? Hopefully these questions and more will be addressed in the following article.

A monsoon occurs, typically, when there are seasonal shifts in wind direction. These shifts are created by changes in temperature patterns whereby the shift in wind goes from on shore in summer bringing rain, to off shore in winter bringing little to no rain. Thus, there are 2 seasons in these climates, one is very wet and the other is very dry.

During the dry season we see a shift in winds from off shore to on shore. The temperature of the ground heats up higher than that of the ocean. This pulls cooler air from the ocean to the land changing the winds to on shore. On shore winds bring the rains to the parched dry ground. Once the ground cools, and the temperature differential of the ocean warms, the winds shift again to off shore. This causes rainfall to drop to near zero. These drought conditions force plants to go dormant until the winds eventually shift to provide the much, needed rain for the essentially desert condition created by the off shore winds. Thus, it is the shift in winds that create the two distinct seasons.



Plants which grow in monsoon climates are adapted in some way to withstand not only severe drought, but also periods with weeks of torrential rains. Seems like a contradiction. However,

because of this unique ability to adapt, to severe changes in precipitation patterns, dormant plants “wake up” and flourish when the rains return.

Tropical Monsoons are found in areas where the temperature stays above 64 ° F all year round. We find these climates in West and Central Africa, South and South East Asia, India, Costa Rica, and parts of Central America.

People living in these areas, celebrate the rains. Some areas receive more than 300 inches of rain during the Monsoon. Rains fill up dry ponds, create very large areas of wet boggy ground, perfect for rice planting and saturation of dry ground. The celebration includes people standing in the rain, hands raised to the sky, thanking the gods for the blessings. The Monsoon causes dormant plants to burst into life, flowers abound and what is most appreciated is the saturation of the ground. Deep rooted grasses and trees sustain through the dry season because of this saturation. Although many plants go dormant during the dry season, they are very much alive as the morphology of long, deep roots, allows life to spring forth when the rains finally return.

Subtropical areas such as the southeastern part of the U.S., and Hawaii, experience Monsoon like conditions with rainy seasons happening in late August to early



Autumn, and late Autumn to mid-winter respectively. These areas do not experience the arid dryness extreme as that of Tropical Monsoons, but are described as having definite rainy seasons.

Monsoon plant morphology allows for adaptation to both super dry to super wet. Trees grow with tall multiple trunks, with leaves growing on the upper branches. These are mostly curved, to allow water to collect and fall close to the root line. Thus, saturation of the ground is efficient and sufficient to sustain plants through the dry season. The multiplicity of trunks not only gives specific morphology, but doubles as water storage systems, perfect for Monsoon climates.

We also find many species of aroids which live on trees. Epiphytic orchids and bromeliads are found. These survive dry spells by tapping into water storing branches, on which they are growing. When the rains arrive, they burst into growth and bloom. Many Tillandsia bromeliads are found here. Orchids are more of the exotic varieties, rather than common dendrobiums. Hunter gatherer farmers have brought some of the most beautiful orchids to market. Because they come from Monsoon climates, they have a definitive blooming season. Orchids and Bromeliads have added so much to interiorscapes because of their exotic forms and brilliant colors.

We do not find many indoor adaptable plants in the Tropical Monsoon. However, in the “monsoon lite” or subtropical areas of the world there are multitudes of selections from which to choose. Many of these plants have thick fleshy leaves, which are basically their own water storage systems. The ZZ, a member of the Araceae group and a relative of the Spathiphyllum plant, is one of the best examples. The ZZ is native to southeastern Africa, eastern Africa, and southern Mozambique. Because the leaves are thick and fleshy, ZZ's will tolerate hot, dry, climates. They grow in sandy soils, which is a large hint as to what they should be planted in. This information tells us that drainage is very important. Perhaps treat them as one would treat succulents. Infrequent irrigations with lots of drainage, ZZ plants make great indoor plants for those who are forgetful. Another aspect of ZZ plants is that they prefer semi shade. All



ZZ Plant

the better for an interior plant selection. The main structure is the rhizome from which it grows. The rhizome is another water storage organ. The plant is easily dividable by pulling the rhizomes apart. We owe this discovery to a Dutch hunter gatherer who saw the potential of the ZZ as a perfect candidate for indoor use. This plant is now one of the hottest selling plants because of its remarkable adaptability. NASA also claims this plant as a phenomenal air cleaner. What more can one ask than this, from a plant for interior use!

The unique *Beaucarnea recurvata*, commonly known as the Ponytail palm is another plant that grows well indoors. It is native to semi-desert areas of southeastern Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala. Left to its own resources the Ponytail can grow to 30 feet tall. However, it is not uncommon to see one of these plants in a small pot on a windowsill. The



Ponytail
Palm

morphology of the Ponytail, with its bulbous base and single fleshy trunk, tells us this plant is a water storer. Infrequent irrigations make this a perfect plant for the busy and forgetful. The foliage grows in weepy whirls. It will tolerate both heat and drought. In some cases, the plant will produce a side branch. This can be left in place for an interesting multi-headed form or severed to start a new plant. A bit of caution when removing a side branch is to wait until it begins to grow root buds. Taken before this point may kill the baby Ponytail.

Yucca is another plant we found throughout Mexico, Guatemala, northward through Baja and as far north as southern Alberta, Canada. That is quite a range of environments, wouldn't you say? What this also says is that Yucca has quite a range of adaptability, from hot dry desert to cooler climates in the Northwestern hemisphere. Surprisingly, Yucca was originally found in the southeastern US. So, what's up with that? Seemingly, Yucca can grow where ever we find hot dry areas. Southern Alberta?? Well, maybe dry, but not so hot. I am a bit confused as well. Suffice it to say the exact native habitat of Yucca is a bit dubious. The morphology of Yucca is similar, but not so closely to the *Dracaena marginata*. They grow with canes but have much thicker and stiffer leaves. Some have very sharp pointy leaves, while the *marginata* leaves are soft and weepy. While researching Yucca, I was surprised to learn that Yucca is part of the *Asparagus* group. One learns new things all the time! However, I did find some decided errors with some of the photos presented. No, Yucca foliage does not look anything like *Dracaena massangeana*! Now I wonder if some of this research was thrown

together haphazardly. (Too educated for my own good.) Still in all, Yucca is a hardy plant that has a wide range of adaptability, making it a great choice for interiorscapes. It requires little care, is very drought tolerant for especially wide irrigation intervals. For those projects with monthly maintenance schedules, Yucca, if placed in bright light should be considered one of those plants which will keep maintenance costs at bay. Having good architecture is one more plus for consideration.

Areas of the US with rainy seasons we find Pitcher plants. Originally native to

Borneo, they grow abundantly in bogs. When the rains come, bogs fill up and provide the growing environment for this unique plant. We find them growing in great numbers in North Carolina. These and other carnivorous plants such as the Venus Fly Trap are interesting but only for those with strong stomachs. They do “eat” insects, lizards, small rodents, and amphibians. It is not pretty. People do buy these out of pure curiosity. Kids get their thrills watching creatures being digested. Sorry, not for me, but worth mentioning. Carnivorous plants exist and are found in certain areas with rainy seasons. Of course, when the bogs go dry, the plants go dormant. However, once the rains resume, the plants grow back in abundance.

The one thing we learn from this discussion is that Natural Habitats from all over the globe provide us with special and unique plants. The morphology of plants is dictated by the Habitat. Plants are remarkably adaptable. Researching the natural habitat takes us to plant origins. In many cases we get hints as to how to maintain the plants.

There is one glaring omission, which I chose not to discuss. The Tropical Rainforest habitat. These areas of the world provide us with nearly all our interior material. We are very familiar with the bulk of interiorscape plants. I chose to familiarize you with some of the rarer and unique plants from other parts of the world. Until next time, be well, keep learning and stay Professional.



Yucca Plant



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Hello!

Don't underestimate the power of a simple 'hello'

Article Source:

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/dont-underestimate-the-power-of-a-simple-hello-72ca6c87>

Everyday interactions can help boost your mental health.

That barista you talk with for a few moments every day may actually be crucial to your mental health. The so-called weak ties in your social network — such as the barista or the person you chat with on the next treadmill at the gym — provide novelty and stimulation

and help reduce loneliness, according to Karen Fingerman, professor of human development and family sciences at the University of Texas at Austin.

“The weak ties matter,” said Fingerman, who is also the director of the Texas Longevity Center at UT Austin.



said. A 2023 study published in the Journal of Aging Studies underscored the importance of weak ties. “Our qualitative interview data shows that strong ties are susceptible to relationship loss, geographic distances, or relationship conflict. A greater number of weak ties, on the other hand, increases the likelihood of support and engagement when needed, reciprocity of relationships, and access to new social groups and networks,” the study said.

The interest in social connections comes as loneliness has been in the spotlight as a public health crisis. The U.S. surgeon general issued an advisory in May that said loneliness was associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death.

Meanwhile, suicide rates in the U.S. rose to their highest level ever in 2022, with the oldest adults having the highest rate of suicide among any age group, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The suicide rate among men was about four times higher than the rate among women. Men make up about half of the population but account for nearly 80% of suicides, according to the CDC. Fingerman also noted that the way people interact with others also affects their sense of loneliness.

An in-person connection carried the most weight and mattered most to people, while a phone call failed to reduce loneliness, she said. Video chats, texts and social media, meanwhile, helped maintain connections to family and friends. Even small gestures may help ward off loneliness, Fingerman said.

Holiday cards — even if they come from a friend who checks in just once a year — can help strengthen a person’s sense of belonging and connection, she said. So give cookies to the cashier who helps you every week, and say “Happy Holidays” to your parcel delivery person.

“Very small gestures may make a difference for people,” Fingerman said.

“They carried the weight on whether you were lonely.” The strong ties of family and close friends are vital, of course.

But there’s also power in casual interactions, according to Fingerman, who spoke at a SciLine event focused on loneliness in older adults. Having weak ties was also associated with physical activity, because people generally need to leave the house in order to run into a casual acquaintance, Fingerman said. The mix of close ties and weak ties is crucial to support mental health and thwart loneliness, she



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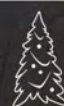


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The 5 Strategies for Profitable Business Growth in 2024

Article Source:

<https://videnglobe.com/blog/the-5-strategies-for-profitable-business-growth>

You need fresh strategies that respond to today's unique needs.

A Forbes study indicates that companies leveraging new technologies are seeing

a profit increase of up to 16% and a market valuation jump of 7%. So if you aim not just to survive but to thrive by seizing new revenue streams and achieving sustainable growth, it is time for a strategy overload. Let's dig into five



strategies that are making a big difference for businesses right now.

5 Strategies for Profitable Business Growth in 2024

1. Embrace Technological Integration and Automation

The world of technology in 2024 has grown way beyond simple tools. We are talking about systems that think for themselves (like AI), computers that work at unimaginable speeds (thanks to quantum computing), and digital experiences (DX) that merge with the real world (via augmented reality). But why should businesses care? To put it simply: adaptation to these technological wonders is no longer optional — it is essential for survival and growth.

For example, by leveraging AI in customer service, you can offer a 24/7 touchpoint, addressing queries and resolving issues at all hours without human intervention.

According to a study by Salesforce, 75% of consumers expect consistent experiences across multiple channels, and AI can help you deliver that efficiently. That is why integrating these technological advancements into your business operations means becoming a front-runner. By

The year 2024 marks a crossroads for businesses. It is a time filled with opportunities and challenges we have never seen before. If you run a business in this era, you cannot rely on old methods.

adopting these technologies, you can streamline your operations and offer an enriched customer experience that can set you above your competition.

2. Offer More Than Just a Nice Deal

Businesses used to be all about the product. Now, it is about the people buying them. In 2024, consumers are looking beyond just the price tag.

A good deal, while enticing, is no longer the only driving factor. Studies reveal that over half of today's consumers — 53% to be exact — are willing to invest in durable products, even if they come at a higher price point. They are thinking about long-term value rather than just immediate savings.

And it is not just about the product. Exceptional customer service seals the deal. Brands that provide attentive, responsive, and personalized service and value create loyal customers who come back time and time again.

3. Stand out Online to Maximize Your Profits

In the digital age, merely having a website or social media account is not enough. The online landscape is crowded, and standing out is crucial. Digital advertising solutions play a pivotal role here.

Through targeted ads, SEO optimization, and engaging content, businesses can capture their audience attention, turning passive browsers into active buyers.

But it is not just about visibility. Creating a memorable online presence that resonates with your brand values and voice is key to building trust and rapport with your audience.

To jumpstart, let's talk about the role of targeted advertising. With platforms like Google and Meta allowing granular targeting — by



Profitable business growth in 2024 requires more than just a good product or service. It is a multi-dimensional strategy that demands a strategic approach and adaptability.

profit



demographics, location, interests, and even behavior — you can hit your targets easily. Businesses that use targeted advertising are twice as likely to reach consumers who are willing to make a purchase.

Content marketing complements your advertising efforts. Why? Because the best ads lead to compelling content that locks in engagement.

Video content is a great example. An engaging video not only captivates but also keeps your audience coming back for more, thereby increasing your opportunities for conversion.

And do not forget the search engine game. SEO is not just about visibility; it is about visibility to the right audience. Companies that prioritize SEO are 60%

more likely to achieve business outcomes such as lead generation and high ROI. In a world where 68% of online experiences begin with a search engine, a well-optimized site is not optional; it is essential.

Ever browsed a product and then seen it chase you around the internet? That is retargeting. It is an invaluable tool for nurturing leads and can increase ad response by up to 400%. With cookies becoming a thing of the past, using predictive analytics and machine learning for retargeting has become the new norm. So, to round it all off, digital advertising is not just a tactic; when done right, it is a full-blown growth strategy.

4. Leverage Data-Driven Decision-Making (DDDM)

While many businesses tout their decision-making processes, most fail to analyze the impact of those decisions. A Gartner survey revealed that one of the toughest parts of decision-making for organizations is actually tracking and analyzing the outcomes.

Your goal is to make your decision-making process as proficient as possible. So, if you are concerned about the efficiency of your data management or wondering how to make data central in your business decisions, here are a few questions to consider:

- What is our data strategy, and if it is undefined, are there issues that could be alleviated through data?
- Is the leadership committed to placing data at the heart of business decisions?
- Do you know what data you have, and do you trust it?
- How sophisticated is our data management, and what resources could improve it?
- Are there any processes you need to refine to ensure robust data governance?
- Do your employees have the necessary data capabilities? Are there gaps in data skills at different levels within the organization?
- Are you following analytics best practices? If not, what standards should be established for consistency?

Adopting a data-driven culture is no walk in the park. It is a long-term strategy that requires commitment from both leadership and employees. Executive advocacy, agility, data proficiency, and a collaborative approach are essential ingredients in this mix. When data is involved, the possibilities are endless, but only if you know how to harness its true potential.

5. Use the Power of Omnichannel Marketing

The line between online and offline

shopping is blurring. Today's consumer does not differentiate between a brand website, app, or physical store — they want a unified, seamless experience. Data reveals that 55% of consumers still value the tactile experience of visiting a physical store. Even if their final purchase is online, in-store interaction often plays a decisive role in their buying journey. It is essential for brands to recognize this interplay between various channels. From your website to your physical store, your branding, promotions, and customer service should sing the same tune. That means the discount promoted on your mobile app should be applicable in-store and vice versa. The key here is creating a unified brand voice and customer experience, regardless of where your customer engages.

Here are just a few examples of actionable omnichannel strategies:

- Click-and-collect services: Make it easy for customers to browse and buy online, then pick up the items in your physical store. This way, you leverage both your online presence and in-store traffic.
- Consistent customer service: Whether a query comes through Twitter, email, or in person, the quality and tone of the customer service should be uniform.
- Multi-channel loyalty programs: Offer loyalty points or rewards that customers can earn and redeem across all channels. A purchase made online should translate to points that can be used in-store, and vice versa.
- Virtual in-store assistance: Through your app or website, offer real-time chat support that simulates the in-store help from a sales associate.

An effective omnichannel strategy ensures consistent branding, promotions, and customer service, whether your customer is browsing on their phone or wandering through your aisles.

Conclusion

Profitable business growth in 2024 requires more than just a good product or service. It is a multi-dimensional strategy that demands a strategic approach and adaptability. From making data analytics your second language to constructing exceptional customer experience, success now has many architects including a well-thought-out digital advertising strategy to amplify everything you are working hard to build. These are not mere options; they are imperatives for growth that bring transformative results!



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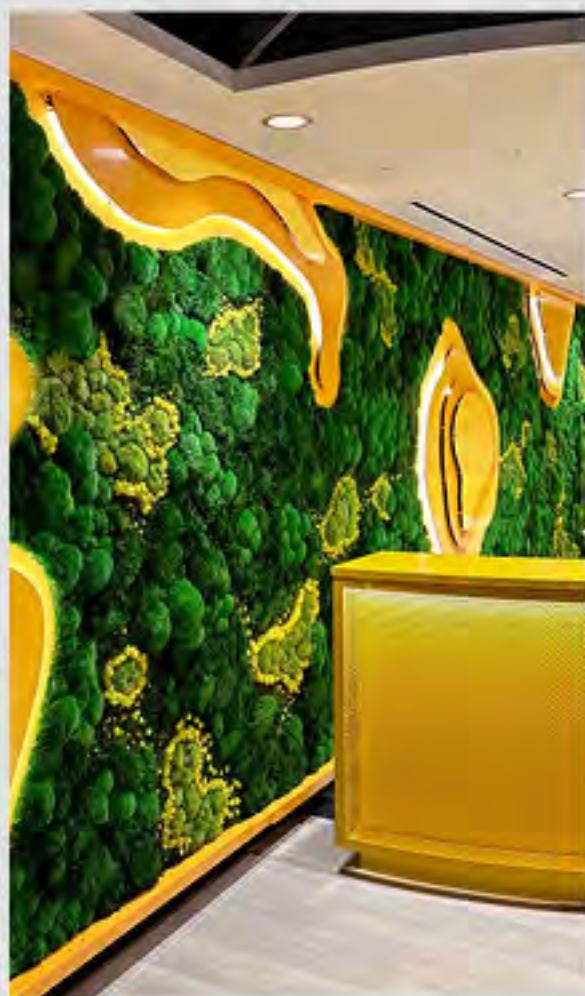
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