



Gardeners And Landscapers Capitalize On The Industry'S Spike In Demand

With an unprecedented amount of consumer interest, gardeners like Chicago's Sally Callander have the opportunity to grow their businesses—and gardens—at rapid rates.

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When Sally Callander first started her professional career, she never thought she'd end up running her own gardening businesses. She initially got her foot in the door of corporate America by working for a pharmaceutical company in its communications department. Her responsibilities always leaned toward the creative side—she oversaw general advertising and public relations efforts. But it wasn't until her company was acquired and her division was sold that she thought about applying her skills to the outdoors.

After leaving her nine-to-five, Callander worked for a friend who ran what used to be known as

Chicago's Fertile Delta garden center. She fell in love with the job, and decided to get into the business for herself. That's when she launched [Callander Garden Design](#).

Since opening its doors for business back in 1997, Callander Garden Design has grown exponentially. Callander says that's because the gardening industry has done a 180 since she first got involved.

“When I initially got into this business, it wasn't because I thought it would lead to a great career. I started Callander Garden Design because I liked it. It just so happened that I realized my passion right around the time that people started caring about their gardens,” Callander said. “It used to be that gardening was something homeowners either did themselves or not at all. But now, the demand for professional gardening services has never been higher.”

Tapping into that demand and creating a loyal customer base has always been Callander's top priority. Her first client is still one of her hundreds of customers today, bringing a heightened level of customer service to the table that isn't normally seen in the industry.

Callander says it's that commitment to being attentive to her clients and really listening to their visions for their outdoor spaces that's enabled her business to grow over the years. Because gardening is often a word of mouth business, boasting a strong reputation and positive customer experiences goes a long way.

“People hire us because gardening is something they can't do on their own. While that means that there's a constant demand for our services, it also leads to difficulty explaining our techniques and recommendations to our clients,” said Callander. “Most people don't know the names of specific plants off the top of their head. They also often have trouble understanding that flowers don't come huge—it takes time and room for them to grow. That's why it's so important to open the lines of communication with your gardener or landscaper. Your expectations need to be aligned before anything is planted. Otherwise, your relationship—and garden—will end in disappointment.”

The gardening and landscaping industries are positioned to continue picking up speed in the months and years to come. That's partially due to the recent trend encouraging people to “go green”—major metropolitan areas like Chicago even require large businesses to have green roofs. But no matter where people decide to build their garden—from their rooftops to their backyards—Callander urges homeowners to do their research before breaking ground.

“It's really easy for you to look at a gardener's previous work. There's nowhere for them to hide—the proof of their ability is right there in their clients' yards,” said Callander. “That gives homeowners an advantage when hiring a gardener or landscaper. You need to be confident that their vision will align with yours to make your outdoor design dreams a reality.”