



## PLANT COLLECT INTRODUCES PROFESSOR PLANTSTEIN

### A REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT BRINGING KNOWLEDGE, CONVENIENCE, AND UNITY

Jochem Nieuwesteeg had long been puzzled by the fact that 30 to 50% of garden center revenue consists of greenery, yet the green department is often a maze for consumers. This led him to the idea of a revolutionary new POS (Point of Sale) concept, aiming to bring peace and unity to the shop floor and instantly inform consumers about plant characteristics. Thanks to the plant library, consumers can further explore the product at home. Plant Collect introduces: the cheerful Professor Plantstein and his 19 specialists.

After a year of hard work by the entire team and the automation company, the professor can finally be introduced. The Einstein-like figure represents almost 20 different key characteristics, from 'easy to maintain' and 'attracts bees and butterflies' to 'not suitable for direct sunlight.' The icons on POS materials on plant tables straightforwardly answer the most common consumer questions. The three most important specialists are highlighted.

Nieuwesteeg: 'Consumers can simply look at the pictures. It's clear and organized—especially when they see the professor throughout the entire shop floor. That unity is important because the various banners from different suppliers and stores confuse the customer. I understand that the grower wants to give their concept its own identity, but, in the end, it doesn't mean anything to the consumer. It's better to have a unified approach, so that the Dutch garden center visitor can trust the same concept everywhere. We will assist the grower with that.'

#### PLANTBEEB

The most important information about the plants is already provided on POS material in the store, including 'tips from the professor' for the top-performing plants in a specific category, such as a *Skimmia japonica* "Rubella" in the winter-hardy group. But the concept goes a step further. From February 2024, consumers who want to delve deeper into a product can scan the Plantbeeb QR code on the sticker on the pot to get all the information about the respective plant species. In addition to the three main specialists, they can also see other plant characteristics, such as how to prune a specific plant. Those who create an account can save the information in the so-called Plantbeeb—allowing the user to build their own plant library. They can also ask the professor questions, such as: what goes well with lavender in the garden?

The database is also accessible via the touchscreen display that garden center entrepreneurs can set up in the store, where visitors can ask questions.



## **ENTHUSIASM & KNOWLEDGE**

At present, the system has already read almost 50,000 items, so there is plenty of knowledge. And since garden center staff has less knowledge, according to the owner of Plant Collect, this is a significant advantage. Not only is he enthusiastic, but his idea has also been very positively received from various quarters. According to a large Danish retailer, for example, this is the most innovative plan presented to them in recent years. Nieuwesteeg: 'Talking to other entrepreneurs, I have become even more convinced of Professor Plantstein. I think we are also coming up with this at the right time. Consumers increasingly prefer to serve themselves, and knowledge on the shop floor is decreasing.'

Patrick Coppelmans has already had a look at the concept and agrees: 'The knowledge of the staff in garden centers is increasingly lacking because there are fewer specially trained individuals. So it's nice that Plant Collect has found a fun, simple, and interactive way to guide the consumer themselves, with today's technology.' He also appreciates the service the wholesaler offers to garden centers and their consumers. What distinguishes the company is that they genuinely provide convenience for the entire green department. They are exploring the possibility of using the Plantbeeb QR code and POS materials on other suppliers' green from next spring.

## **CONVENIENCE IS KEY**

Plant Collect always works from the perspective of how they can make it easier for their customers and, consequently, consumers. This comprehensive solution is the ultimate answer to that question. To increase convenience, the wholesaler wants to agree on a minimum commitment with the customer. As an entrepreneur, they don't necessarily have to take all the green and the Professor Plantstein concept for the entire shop floor from Plant Collect, but they are expected to make choices in a few larger groups in specific concepts. 'This story has to come back throughout the entire garden center.' Nieuwesteeg emphasizes that the entrepreneur can still remain the boss. 'For example, they decide whether to place one or more Plantstein dolls in the store.'

## **SPRING FAIR & MATERIALS**

On February 6 and 7, Plant Collect is organizing the spring fair again, accessible by appointment. The garden center entrepreneur can view all POS materials in a special corner and choose from banners, cardboard or steel dolls, and A3 or A4 cards. 'We can deliver everything with the first order so that garden centers can be ready for the new season in the new style. Of course, we recommend a large board for more clarity and visibility, but A3 boards are also a viable option. This ensures that startup costs are manageable.'

On an A3 or A4 board, for example, there is a top 5 of top performers, along with the three most common specialists, such as 'requires little water' or 'good for biodiversity.' Nieuwesteeg: 'Of the consumers who visit a garden center, many don't know in advance what they will put in their cart. With this POS material, we make it easier for them. You also have to assume that the consumer has little knowledge and probably doesn't know that a particular plant is easy to maintain. Once they know that, without having to look up information on their phone first, they are more likely to take that product. You only need to grab your phone if you want to delve into the product. All in all, we expect that this concept will increase turnover.'

## FOR ALL TARGET GROUPS

The Professor Plantstein concept serves all visitors to the garden center, from beginners to experienced gardeners. Beginners can rely on the 'specialists' on the shop floor, while those with truly green thumbs can consult the Plantbeeb for all care tips at home. 'Most consumers throw away the information label and then don't know what to do with a plant. Googling advice is more cumbersome than scanning a QR code. Allowing you to read what you want to know at a glance. Well, it's not rocket science, but you just have to think of it.'

## ON THE AGENDA

The data collected by Plant Collect with Professor Plantstein will be fed back to garden center entrepreneurs through weekly reports. It will record how often a certain product is scanned and what questions consumers ask the professor. 'This way, the consumer also helps us. It may be that based on the most frequently asked questions, we introduce new specialists after spring.' The director of Plant Collect looks forward to the launch of the concept that will truly help his customers and has full confidence in the future of Professor Plantstein. 'This is just the beginning.'

