

## Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

## Episode #37

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Announcer: Welcome to the Marketing Munchies Podcast series hosted by Dr. Bridget Behe. Each week Bridget and her guests will share information, insights, research-based findings, and her 30 years of experience to help your horticultural business connect better with current and future customers. Now, let's join our host, Dr. Bridget Behe.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Hi, and welcome back to the Marketing Munchies Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. I am happy to have my listeners back today, and I am even more excited to have with me, as a guest on the show, Dr. Charlie Hall, my good friend and colleague at Texas A&M University, the Ellison Endowed Chair. Welcome back, Charlie!

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Thanks, Bridget, it is great to be here.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** I'm so excited to have you back, because as I was looking at the statistics for the downloads of the podcasts, you were my number one most downloaded guest.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** That's awesome.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** I'm super excited to have you back, and I want to focus today on the benefits article that you and Madeline Dickson did. Why don't you tell the listeners what your plans are for...?

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Sure. Yeah, in fact that particular article was written back in 2012. It included all the literature that had been written regarding the research projects that have been conducted on any benefit related to plants. Madeline and I, we searched the literature far and wide, and we got every piece of literature we could and summarize it up until 2011. Well, I have another student who right now is summarizing all the benefits-related research since then. That will be coming out some time in early 2019, hopefully. In fact, the literature rigid is so voluminous, that I don't think we can fit it in one article.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Oh my goodness! Are you going to do a series then?

**Dr. Charles Hall:** We probably will do a series of the economic benefit of plants and then another article on the environmental benefit of plants and then following up with the health and wellbeing benefits of plants. For example, the health and wellbeing benefits, right now we have a draft of that article; it is 70 pages long.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Oh my goodness!

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Now that's double-spaced, so you divide that by half, still that's too long for a summary article. That just gives you an indication on how other industries like the medical field have been looking at our industry, the horticultural field, as a means of enhancing the quality of life. That's what we have been talking about.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** So, enhancing the quality of life, that's a lot of studies to compile over the last 8 years. That's a lot of work.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** I've been saying that oft all the growers and service providers and retailers—you don't simply grow and install and maintain and merchandize plants, you enhance people's quality of life. Forever forget that they are merely this: that they have a higher order that they are filling. That higher order will impact the inelasticity of demand for plants. That leads us right into our economic discussion.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, so that was the thing I really wanted to talk about today. We will do a couple of other podcasts talking about the environmental and then the health and wellbeing. What were some of those key economic benefits, either that you and Madeline found or maybe even let the listeners know some of the newer work?

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Some of our own research through the Southern Cooperative Series Bulletins that we have published through the Multi-State Regional Project that we are working on (well, it's a national project now). Some of that early work, remember we were doing the Perceptions of Landscapes whenever we increase sophistication of the landscape design, and we found in that research that, on average, for every one dollar that is invested in landscaping, the homeowner is going to find that the perceived value of their home increases by \$1.09. So a dollar or \$1.09. It ranged from \$1.06 to \$1.12 but on average \$1.09.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, and you think about it, how many investments in the home do you make that can return 100 percent plus.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** None.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, none. Kitchens go down. Patio porches go down.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Yeah, I just spent too many dollars renovating my master bathroom. Right? I could have bought a car with what we spent. What the killer for me, though it pleased my wife greatly (and that's priceless, right?), however, for every dollar that I spent I know from the cost/value report that the *Home Remodeling Institute* puts out that I'm only getting about \$0.73 return on every dollar we put into that, in terms of the value of our home. Even in the kitchen, the other home remodeling project that is often done, I'm going to get about \$0.93 return for every one dollar that I spend in the kitchen. But, landscaping, \$1.09 for every dollar.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** And that's a tremendous return on investment. Were there any other key economic benefits that stuck out to you?

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Yeah, in fact, if you go to (let's just say) retailers—not just specific to retail garden centers or home improvement centers or what have you. But across the board, and you look at retail businesses, those that are landscaped versus those that aren't, and either and/or have interior plants in the store and have good natural lighting in the store, those stores find that they sell more stuff. Plain and simple. People travel greater distances to go to those stores. They shop longer if the wife or the husband has the kids in tow. Those kids are more well behaved, and get

this: the likelihood to purchase increases, but not only that, the amount that they are willing to pay increases by as much as 17 percent.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Wow, that's significant.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Absolutely. If you are a business—even if you are a stand-alone business, even strip mall types of businesses or downtown businesses—they benefit greatly from the addition of hanging baskets, mixed containers, and so forth. We find that time and time again in our American bloom cities that those cities like Castle Rock, Washington (is a great example). Small town and before they started their beautification efforts, they had a lot of their retail space downtown that was vacant. Since they started their beautification efforts, they have zero vacancy. Every single retail space downtown (that's now's field) into a "T" every single one of those said, "How could we not be downtown, because it looks so beautiful?" Right? So, that's the value of plants.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** That's real plant power.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Exactly, and it's not only for retail establishments but you look at hotels, you look at condominiums, apartment complexes. Those occupancy rates also go up. So as those occupancy rates go up, that's more revenue for those businesses which means the taxes that they pay, locally, also increases. All of a sudden, those municipalities have more dollars in which to provide services to the community which enhances the quality of life. Not only do you have direct impact on peoples' quality of life, you have an indirect impact on quality of life.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** These are really compelling messages—economic messages that need to be told. One of the things that I'm trying to do on this podcast is help growers, wholesalers, and retailers understand how to practically use that. What would you advise any business in the industry to do to try to help communicate some of these economic benefits?

**Dr. Charles Hall:** That's a great question. I think the key word you said there is "any" business. It's not only the consumer-facing businesses, it's not simply a retail issue. This is an industry supply chain issue.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Has to be industry-wide.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Yeah, so, no matter where you are at in the supply chain, you need to be positioning your marketing in such a way that you're facilitating these messages getting across to the end consumer. The way that you do that is, let's say, I'm a growing operation. I can partner with my retail, independent garden centers or even box stores. I'd love for Lowe's and Home Depot and Walmart to get in this game as well. Put some point-of-purchase advertising in their stores—that would be a nice pleasant change of pace.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** "A rising tide lifts all boats..."

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Indeed. As garden centers right now, you can work collaboratively with your grower or vendor in which to do some joint types of advertising and not simply emphasize that this particular plant has more flowers or blooms all summer. Those are important benefits, yes. We know that garden performance impacts the purchasing.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** However, these messages that we have been talking about regarding the benefits that plants provide that enhance quality of life, will have a longer term impact on elasticity of demand. If those messages that reach a level or through point-of-purchase signs, if they are in TV screens while people are checking out...

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** The back of t-shirts for employees...

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Absolutely. Or specialized banners that are hanging from the rafters or whatever. There are all kinds of merchandising techniques to get the retail messages to the consumer. It's just that we don't employ as many of those as what we could. If I'm a grower, then I'm thinking of, "well, how do I make my independent garden centers aware of this?" You can include some fact sheets. You can include these little "did you know..." tidbits.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, and the research, they can point back to your article, which they really should, because it's not just, "hey, I'm saying 'this.'" Here is the research-based information that backs up the claim.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Yeah, because if you start making claims that aren't backed up, then the Federal Trade Commission steps in and puts a quietus on that. You can't make claims (we call that green-washing), you can't make claims that aren't true, because that would be fake news, right?

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Exactly.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** The beauty here is that there is no fake news. We have this substantiated by (again these are authoritative institutions) whether it be academic universities, whether it be in the medical field, whether it be environmental entities—those have been substantiated with hard science. And that's the beauty.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, well, folks, the listeners can get a copy of that article either on your website or on my website. We want to make sure that that's available to them to use, and I really appreciate you being on the podcast today and look forward to having you back again soon.

**Dr. Charles Hall:** Thanks for the invite, Bridget. I enjoy it!

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**Announcer:** Thank you for joining us on this week's Marketing Munchies Podcast. For more information or to download the transcript of this podcast, please visit, [connect-2-consumer.org](http://connect-2-consumer.org). That's C-O-N-N-E-C-T, dash, the number two, dash, C-O-N-S-U-M-E-R, dot, C-O-M.

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