



Case Study

Intel® Xeon® processor
technology



Northscaping.com
inspiration growth transformation

NetPS

When nursery web sites add the NetPS plant finder grown by Northscaping* with its wish list capabilities and powered by powerful Quad-Core Intel® Xeon® processor technology, customers return to the site more often, spend more time online and help boost retail sales.

Gardeners' Plant Lists Take Root With Northscaping

Intel provides reliable and fast access, making searching easy

Shelmerdine Nursery* has been selling plants, nursery stock and home décor to urban and suburban residents of Winnipeg since 1937. When Jan Pedersen became company president in 2005, he started to look at new ways of connecting to his customers, while providing the same high quality retail service that local residents have grown to appreciate.

"We realized that people were using the web for more things and we needed to be part of that community," he said, adding he wanted to add a searchable plant database but knew the workload to build it would be immense. Enter Northscaping's Jim Kohut, who had dedicated the previous seven years to the development of a comprehensive, searchable plant database and wish list resource that allows customers to e-mail nurseries like Shelmerdine to get pricing on a list they created online.

"Garden centres know they need an online offering but the industry was lagging behind," says Kohut, noting many garden centres don't have their plant inventories on the web or a searchable feature to allow customers to build plant lists online. "The web is a marketing tool like traditional advertising. Our searchable plant database is a tool to draw customers to your site, and keep them there for longer, building customer loyalty and driving sales."

Experience from Kohut's clients proves the solution works. "When someone spends hours on your site building plant lists and viewing your branding time and time again as they search through your plant inventory, they're going to come in to your store to buy them."

Reliable Service Depends on Intel Backbone

Northscaping offers the NetPS database, search capability and customization that enables nurseries to "skin" the site so it looks like part of their web site as a hosted solution. This allows them to continually add functionality, as well as more plants and photos. Kohut knew that an effective ASP needed a reliable hosting platform. In 2004, they moved their hosting to ISQ* Solutions to take advantage of its high performance server environment powered by Intel Quad-Core Xeon processor technology.

"When customers are searching through thousands of plant options, they can't be left waiting. People's expectation in terms of return of information from a query is getting faster and faster. We have set ourselves against other databases and strive to constantly outperform," says Kohut. "And, as an ASP we need performance that is 100% reliable."

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Gardeners' Excitement Grows Online

While Pederson estimates the nursery business is growing business by about three to five per cent per year, he knew that gardeners were getting more information online and wanted to offer greater online resources to his customers. He got this resource with Northscaping's Plant Finder service and signed up as its first customer.

"I saw tremendous value with no work. We get colour photos, a detailed search engine and the ability to allow customers a range of search options for plants from very wide parameters to specific gardening requests," he says, adding the response has been incredible. Within the first two weeks, staff was noticing about 20 people in the store with their lists, and three years later they are getting more than 50 people a week. "We couldn't be more pleased."

And, the revamped web site is allowing them to cut costs in other areas. They used to spend about \$125,000 in media advertising. Today, they spend about \$25,000 and are still seeing retail sales growth.

Customer Wishes Expand Inventory

"Gardening is a relatively inexpensive hobby," Pedersen says, estimating the average transaction at about \$75. When the nursery first started offering Northscaping's Plant Finder, powered by a reliable Intel engine, Shelmerdine narrowed the database to search only stock that was available in the store. The second year, they opened it up to the entire database.

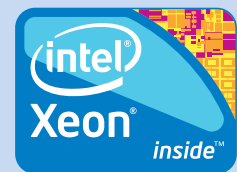
"We would have never known that people wanted a Red Rhapsody Maple as it wasn't something we usually stocked but we had numerous people coming in with it on their wish list," says Pedersen, who changed their buying strategies from 100% pre-ordering for an entire season to pre-planning 30% of inventory and leaving 70% as just in time orders from growers. This change resulted in fewer unsold plants at year end, saving money.

As the Plant Finder tool develops further, Pedersen is looking forward to being able to simply insert pricing directly into the wish list that is emailed back to customers. The current system sends a PDF. "Business is operating at a higher speed with information transfers and that streamlining is important," he says.

Spotlight On Northscaping & Shelmerdine Nurseries

Since 1937, Shelmerdine Nurseries has been a top quality greenhouse, nursery and home décor for Winnipeg area residents. With annual sales of \$4.5 million and growing between 3-5% a year, Shelmerdine employs as many as 125 people during the peak season.

Founded in 2001, Northscaping is an online marketing solutions company that specializes in providing landscaping, nursery and greenhouse companies with a powerful, interactive web-based plant database customized to their inventory or marketing needs. The hosted solution gives customers a reason to visit the garden centre's web site, and keeps them coming back, building customer loyalty.



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