

NGP's

Bob Brown

These are Non-Gardening Partners – the initialization coming from the USA. They are very important people if you run a plant nursery. The NGP is often, but not always, a husband who is liable to say, “How much longer are you going to be?”, “Stop! Where are you going to put all these plants?” or “How much more money are you going to spend?” You get the idea. They're bad for cash flow. The arrival of two friends who are plantaholics is much, much better for business. Engaging the NGP in conversation helps distract them as does the offer of tea or coffee. We used to provide a newspaper but it was rarely read.

A few years ago I was chatting to two male NGP's who'd brought the mother/wife to the nursery for plants and were then going to take her out for a birthday lunch which, I think, is a lovely birthday present. She'd disappeared through the stock beds when the son said (apropos of where the plants were going), “We hadn't realised what was happening until the lawn had almost disappeared”. I have a vision of a garden where the lawn has shrunk to a metre-wide strip. There were obviously no football players in the family.

Another good customer and a member of our group deliberately takes her husband with her to reign her back. Her purchases are limited to one a month. A by-product of this are twelve visits a year when she buys whatever is looking good and she now has a garden that looks good all year.