

Earth, wind and fire

Gardening conglomerate launches subscription plant delivery service for young consumers

November 23, 2018



To better engage twenty-somethings, **Scotts Miracle-Gro** worked with **Buzzfeed** to devise and launch a new product.

Forty experts (which, according to Bloomberg, included a few engineers, a horticulturalist and 'a woman from Brooklyn who lives with 700 houseplants') spent a week brainstorming ideas last year. The result: **Lunarly**.



Lunarly is a houseplant subscription service. Those who sign up will get a new plant delivered to their door at the wake of each new moon, plus instructions on how to keep it alive. The plants are selected by Bloomscape, a plant delivery service.

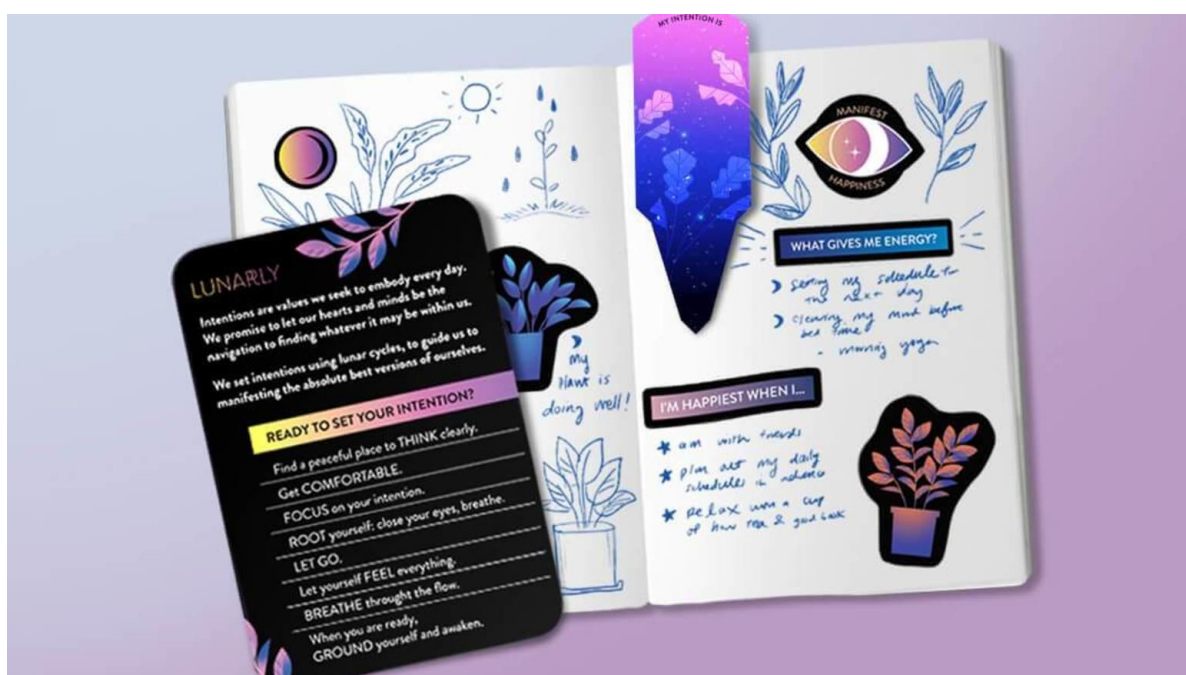
The vibe of the Lunarly brand is distinctively un-Scotts-like (the gardening conglomerate isn't mentioned anywhere on the site). Instead, Lunarly is focused on wellness.



As well as a plant, each Lunarly box contains 'an assortment of beautiful treasures'.

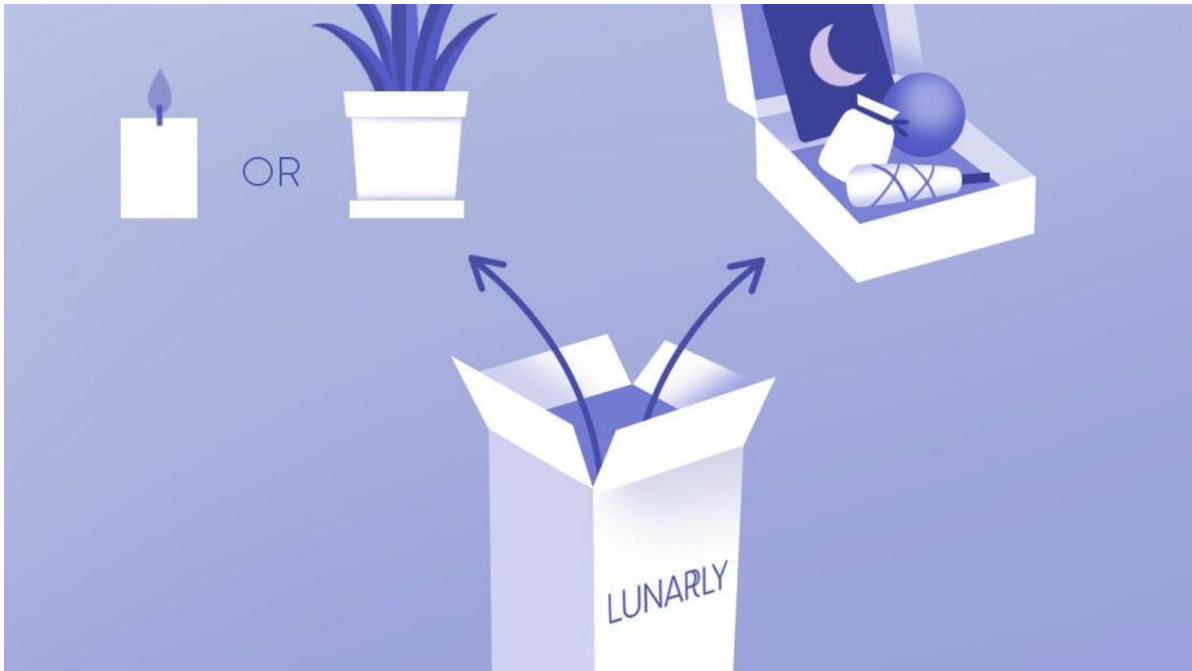
These are focused on mindfulness and wellness, and themed on the lunar cycle. In the Sturgeon Moon box, which is said to provide a surge of energy, is a Cedar Smudge stick (a collection of cedar tips tied together that you burn like incense), which the instructions state will ‘cleanse your personal space and invite in the chill vibes of the Sturgeon Moon’.

The Sturgeon Moon box also contains an amethyst crystal (which can either brighten up a shelf or ‘keep that serene Sturgeon Moon close’), a bar of Spearmint Lemongrass soap (scented to awaken your senses) and a card explaining the qualities of the moon and with that month’s inspiring intention (‘Passion is a spark; the world is my candle. My heart is the flame, and I intend to set the universe ablaze’).



Setting an intention for yourself is a common wellness practice, it’s like a mantra that you can use to motivate yourself. Lunarly describes them as ‘a commitment to taking care of yourself by actively intending to improve your life’.

Regardless of which moon is in the sky, the first Lunarly box subscribers receive contains intention-setting instructions as well as a journal in which to write about their monthly intention.



Boxes cost \$40 for a one-off month, or \$110 for a three-month subscription. And every third month, subscribers will receive a candle rather than a plant.

The service launched in July – promoted by this BuzzFeed post – and has repeatedly sold out.

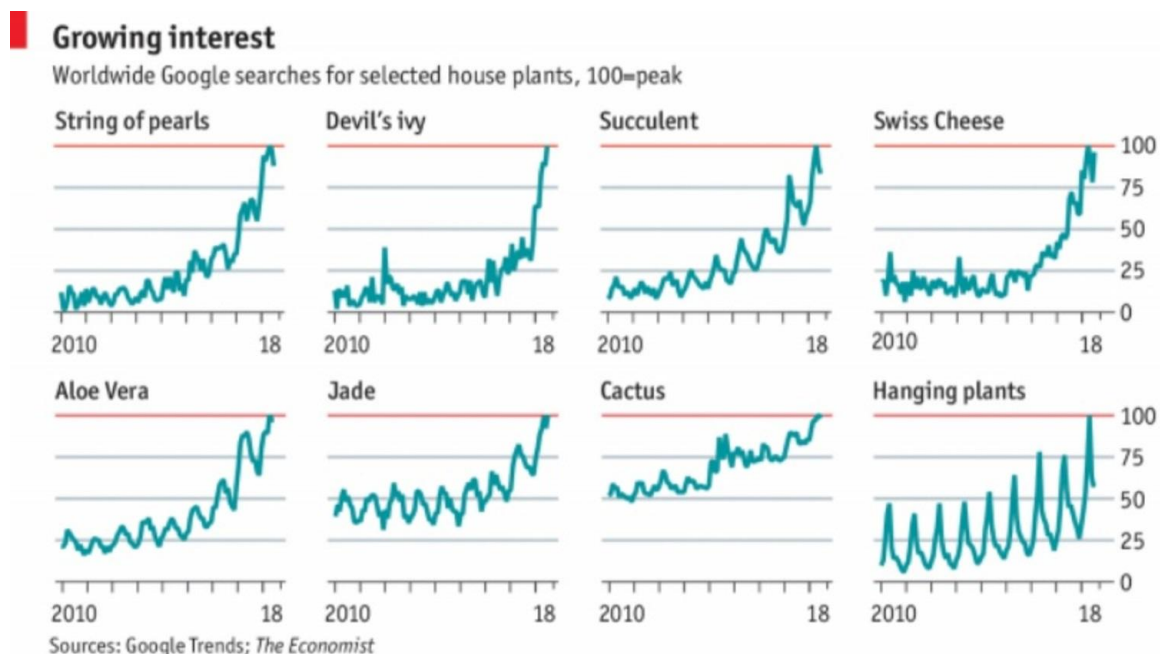
INSIGHT /

Engaging millennials / As we explored in our Brand Spotlight on Scotts, millennials aren't instinctively into gardening, and the housing crisis meant many don't even have green spaces of their own.

By focusing on houseplants and merging germination with mindfulness, Scotts has found and filled niche with younger customers. 'Like many packaged goods companies, we face a maturing market and we are challenged to bring a whole new generation of consumers into our franchise,' Patti Ziegler, VP of global marketing and communications at Scotts Miracle-Gro, told Contagious. Lunarly is a good way to introduce a younger audience to gardening in a simple and more relevant way.

Mindfulness has become a priority for generations Y and Z (basically anyone born after 1980). Healthcare provider Dignity Health conducted research last year that revealed 64% of millennials perform specific activities - yoga, meditation, journaling - in pursuit of mindfulness, compared with just 19% of baby boomers.

Even those who aren't actively seeking mindfulness think they should be – 93% of millennial respondents said they were 'trying to be more mindful'. By attaching plants to this mindfulness movement, Scotts is providing young people with a low-effort entry point. It is worth noting, however, that millennial interest in houseplants is already well-established. According to *The Economist*, American millennials account for about a third of the country's houseplant sales. Google search data also shows that searches for various houseplants have surged in recent years, with the popularity of the term 'succulent' increasing tenfold.



Big data / Lunarly was created with BuzzFeed's commerce team, which is led by Ben Kaufman, the media brand's chief commerce officer who also heads up BuzzFeed Product Labs, the publisher's ecommerce arm. As a huge presence in social media, BuzzFeed has a good chunk of data on what its predominantly young audience wants and doesn't want – and its commerce division is using that data to create products that fill gaps in the market for brands as well as itself (we reported on the Tasty OneTop earlier this year).

It's been successful so far, for both BuzzFeed and its partners. Bloomberg reports that Kaufman's team has generated \$50m in revenue for BuzzFeed this year. And Patti Ziegler told Bloomberg: 'BuzzFeed helped me build a better product and not just sell my product.'

Scotts isn't the only brand that's worked with BuzzFeed in this way. According to Bloomberg, the publisher has also devised products for Maybelline (the 'Fundle': a set of items to take to the beach, including lip balm and a towel) and Taste Beauty

(a fidget-spinner with lip gloss in the middle called 'Glamspin').

Buzzfeed's innovative commercial model the publisher-advertiser relationship around. Rather than asking media companies to flog products that brands have already made, BuzzFeed takes a symbiotic approach. 'Companies make a thing, then tell media companies, "Please tell the world about this.' It should work in a more collaborative fashion. We should say, "Here's what we think the world needs. Can you make this?" And go back and forth,' Kaufman told Bloomberg. A win-win situation.