

■ Study Guide: Starting a Permaculture Nursery

Based on the presentation by Ben Caesar, Fiddlehead Nursery

Discovering the Nursery Path (Timestamp: 2:04–2:31)

Key Takeaway: Ben's difficulty sourcing unusual perennials led him to start his nursery — business ideas often come from unmet needs.

Action Steps:

- Identify plants hard to find in your area.
- Specialize in unique perennials.

Starting Small, Scaling as You Grow (Timestamp: 3:40–4:21)

Key Takeaway: Nurseries can start in a yard or driveway and grow gradually.

Action Steps:

- Begin with a few trays.
- Test sales locally.
- Scale slowly.

Demonstration Gardens & Tasting Tours (Timestamp: 5:53–6:29)

Key Takeaway: Demo gardens let customers taste and see plants, building trust.

Action Steps:

- Plant a demo garden.
- Offer tours or tastings.
- Upsell plants customers try.

Seasonal Sales Through Demonstration Gardens (Timestamp: 6:11–6:42)

Key Takeaway: Seasonal crops keep customers returning at different times of year.

Action Steps:

- Promote seasonal crops in marketing.
- Invite repeat visits.

Propagation Workshops as Customer Education (Timestamp: 7:00–7:22)

Key Takeaway: Propagation workshops teach skills and build loyalty.

Action Steps:

- Host propagation classes.
- Give starter cuttings.

Turning Ornamentals into Edibles (Timestamp: 8:13–9:15)

Key Takeaway: Ornamentals like hostas and daylilies can be marketed as edibles.

Action Steps:

- Add edible ornamentals to inventory.
- Promote dual-purpose uses.

Leveraging Ornamental Markets for Edible Plants (Timestamp: 8:26–9:10)

Key Takeaway: Ornamentals already have a market — framing them as edibles increases value.

Action Steps:

- Sell ornamentals with recipe cards.
- Approach landscapers with edible stock.

Benefits of Perennial Vegetables (Timestamp: 9:34–11:11)

Key Takeaway: Perennials are nutrient-dense, fill the spring hunger gap, low-maintenance, and resilient.

Action Steps:

- Emphasize resilience in sales.
- Market as low-maintenance food crops.

Filling the Spring Hunger Gap (Timestamp: 10:18–10:40)

Key Takeaway: Perennials produce before annuals, giving early harvests.

Action Steps:

- Promote early crops in spring sales.
- Bundle early greens for new gardeners.

Marketing via Social Media & Storytelling (Timestamp: 12:26–13:11)

Key Takeaway: Sharing recipes and stories helps customers imagine how to use plants.

Action Steps:

- Post weekly recipes.
- Use Instagram reels for cooking demos.

Building Customer Trust with Cooking Education (Timestamp: 12:34–12:45)

Key Takeaway: Answering 'how do I eat this?' builds confidence.

Action Steps:

- Include recipe cards with plants.
- Run cooking demos.

Essential Books & Resources (Timestamp: 13:16–14:06)

Key Takeaway: Key texts: Perennial Vegetables (Toensmeier), Creating a Forest Garden (Crawford), Around the World in 80 Plants (Barstow).

Action Steps:

- Buy at least one nursery book.
- Recommend books to customers.

Practical Propagation Tip: Forcing Shoots (Timestamp: 16:13–16:47)

Key Takeaway: Using buckets to blanch shoots increases tenderness and yield.

Action Steps:

- Experiment with forcing hostas/asparagus.
- Market forced shoots as premium.

Start with One or Two of Each Plant (Timestamp: 48:13–48:31)

Key Takeaway: Avoid overwhelm — begin with small numbers, then propagate.

Action Steps:

- Buy 1–2 of each species.
- Learn propagation skills.

Customer Engagement & Sales Strategies (Timestamp: 48:25–48:53)

Key Takeaway: Customers come from word of mouth, social media, and conferences.

Action Steps:

- Stay connected to past customers.
- Attend regional garden events.

■ Inspiring Quotes

"People don't just buy plants—they buy stories. Share the history, flavor, or resilience of the plants you sell, and you'll	Timestamp ~12:26-13:11
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"Start small — you can begin in a driveway and scale up when you're ready."	— Timestamp ~3:40-4:21
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"Perennial vegetables fill the spring hunger gap, producing before annuals even get planted."	Timestamp ~10:18-10:40
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■ Final Advice from Ben Caesar

1. Start small, scale slowly — a driveway is enough to begin.
2. Educate your customers — show them how to cook and use unusual plants.
3. Use demo gardens & tours — let customers taste before they buy.
4. Diversify income streams — plants, workshops, tours, and value-added products all matter.