

AHS PARTNERS IN PROFILE

YourOutDoors: Creating a Multi-functional Gardening Tool

by Courtney Capstack

FOUR YEARS AGO, **Ray Miller** had a heart attack, jeopardizing his ability to enjoy one of his favorite pastimes: gardening. Upon discovering that conventional garden tools were too heavy and imbalanced for his new found needs, Miller designed “The Perfect Garden Tool System,” a multi-purpose tool for users of all ages and abilities.

In 2006, Miller, an entrepreneur whose career included stints in the telecommunications and medical software industries, founded YourOutDoors, Inc., to manufacture and distribute his new product and other garden hand tools. Since then, this Florida-based company has expanded into a rapidly growing business, forming partnerships with nine universities and gardening organizations (including the American Horticultural Society), donating five percent of all revenue earned to the World Craniofacial Foundation, and boasting a core management staff whose backgrounds range from senior positions in start-up companies to Fortune 500s.

A TOOL FOR ALL GARDENERS

“The Perfect Garden Tool System,” the initial product offering of YourOutDoors, Inc., was designed for maximum versatility. “I wanted to create a garden tool that fits everyone,” says Miller. “We selected 13 of the most popular garden tools on the market and combined them into one.”

The unique handle, designed ergonomically to increase stability, replaces

For more information about YourOutDoors, Inc., visit its website at www.perfectgardentool.com.

To learn more about establishing a corporate partnership with the AHS, please visit the AHS website at www.ahs.org or e-mail Sue Dick at sdick@ahs.org.



The Perfect Garden Tool System comes in sizes suitable for adults and for children.

the traditional pole handle on most gardening tools, and a “Quick-Snap Connector” allows the desired activity-specific tool—such as a hoe, rake, or shovel—to connect to the base of the handle, creating one streamlined tool. The tool, says Miller, “supports both the standing and kneeling gardening positions” to enable gardeners of all ages and abilities to “work more efficiently with less muscle pain.”

A youth version of the tool system features a handle that is two-thirds the length of the adult handle. “By giving children a tool they can enjoy using,” says Miller, “we hope more young people will become involved with gardening and gain a stronger connection to the outdoors.”

BRINGING GARDENING TO CHILDREN

To further expand its reach to the youth gardening community, YourOutDoors has partnered with the University of Florida Master Gardener Program, Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, and the Epcot International Flower &

Garden Festival to create the Florida School Garden Competition. The competition is open to both public and private schools, and each competing school receives one set of tools with extra handles so children can grow their own gardens. Children then write a 500-word essay comparing “The Perfect Garden Tool System” with conventional garden tools.

YourOutDoors hopes to expand this competition to children across the country. “This industry is dependent on getting young people involved with gardening,” says **Jeff Trunzo**, president of YourOutDoors. “Cool, innovative, unique garden tools will help get them interested.”

SHARED GOALS

A sense of shared values was instrumental in fostering the partnership between the AHS and YourOutDoors. “We respect the work the AHS has done and its goals,” says Miller. **Barry Goodinson**, AHS director of development, recognized parallel goals between both organizations. “YourOutDoors has great energy, enthusiasm, and a solid commitment to youth gardening,” says Goodinson. In support of the AHS’s youth gardening initiative, YourOutDoors has agreed to donate a generous collection of “The Perfect Garden Tool System” tools to attendees at this year’s AHS National Children & Youth Garden Symposium in Minnesota.

Recovered now from the heart attack, Miller says, “I’m 67 years old, and I garden as much or more now than ever.” The promise of influencing a new generation of gardeners through his invention also keeps him looking ahead. “We set about to help affect a change in gardening tools,” says Miller. He sees the partnership with the AHS as another step toward turning that dream into reality.

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