

ZEITGEIST 2023

ON GOOD SOIL

Our society is out of balance. Trust in politicians has declined, and there is plenty for us to worry about. Just as we dare to cautiously look beyond Covid, we are confronted with a war in Ukraine. Both will continue to impact our society for a long time. Alongside these fairly sudden changes, there are also larger issues that we have been dealing with for a while. Hence there are the 'BIG 6' - six topics that are causing uncertainty: the climate transition, the housing shortage, the natural resources crisis, healthcare, the work transition and the situation in education. Topics that hang over a heavily divided society like the sword of Damocles. A society that is so changed that decision-makers are walking on eggs because they cannot predict whether new plans will land on fertile soil. And do you still find that good soil in the expected place? Are the target groups still the same as before?

The media have an ever greater influence, and Big Tech exercises extreme power. More clicks mean more income; moral considerations take second place. The polarisation and alienation do not just manifest themselves online in a parallel society. In the real world there is also a need to retreat into mini-worlds, like the Dutch political party Forum voor Democratie's (as yet unrealised) Forumland.

Worries, polarisation and dissatisfaction: are there any positive developments as well? Certainly, because although the climate concerns us greatly, it is good news that many businesses are taking climate change seriously. They are accepting their responsibility, in terms of both production and communication. That's the way to be successful in the (near) future. Politicians are also paying more attention to the six large problem areas with new policy. But it remains a fact that we are dealing with a splintered society, and there is a lot of worry.

The zeitgeist for 2023, On Good Soil, is all about the fact that ideas for the future will not automatically land on good soil. The following five value trends are shaping this zeitgeist.

INSTANT PERFECT

Wanting to smooth out life - that's what this value trend is all about. Instant Perfect is a trend with above-average representation amongst Millennials and Gen Z. These are the groups most impacted by the stress of the BIG 6. In order to deal with this, this target group therefore opts for rose-coloured self-love and hedonism within a smoothed-out life. Pamper yourself and take care of your personal resilience - that is the creed. Maximalised mini-luxury helps with this, both in terms of affordable products with a luxury look and the possibility of having everything delivered to your home at any time. 'Guilt-free' products are important: ordering from responsible businesses, because despite a hedonistic attitude it is important to consume with a clear conscience. In that way, life wraps seamlessly around you. Examples of these products or services include the Gorillas delivery service, the GO Sharing shared scooters, an inflatable one-person swimming pool or a yoga set for your face.

Opportunities for the horticulture sector:

Think of affordable products with a luxury look. Convenience in terms of care and delivery. Emphasise what the product does for (mental) health. Also show that extra luxury for both the customer and the plant can go side-by-side. For example: light therapy for yourself, so why not for your plant as well? It is important that the products are produced in a responsible way, and that this is transparent to the buyer.

EARTHGENCY

As the name suggests, Earthgency stands for the urgency of the climate challenge and the recognition that we too are part of nature. Overpopulation, the climate crisis, and the uneven distribution of financial resources between countries make us feel guilty and despairing. The realisation that if we save the planet, we save ourselves as well is resulting in even greater urgency. This results not only in fear, but also action. We are taking rational steps and creating alternatives. It is thereby important to look at what is already possible, and start with this. In addition, we are seeking out fellow travellers who are also willing to accept their responsibility. This is resulting in circular products such as new building materials, clothing made from algae and the Klarna app, the market leader in deferred payment. This company recently launched the option to monitor the carbon footprint of Klarna purchases in real time using an app. This gives you as a consumer insight into the impact of your shopping behaviour on the environment.

Opportunities for the horticulture sector:

Despite the fact that it is not yet possible within the sector to produce everything in an environmentally-friendly way, we can no longer ignore the issue. Be clear and honest about where things are going well, and where there is still room for improvement. Seek out circular solutions within the sector, and communicate these to the consumer. For example, package the product in recyclable materials. Make the responsibility of the producer, retailer and consumer transparent.

RESTORE SOCIETY

You can repair a 'broken' society with equality, connectedness and respect. That is the thinking behind Restore Society. Society is fragmented and polarised, partly due to Covid, the uncertainty around the BIG 6 and the lack of political effectiveness. So there's plenty that needs repairing. Looking out for one another and a positive approach to the future can restore both trust and social relationships. We shop local and second-hand where possible, and have respect for our environment. This renewed respect leads to appreciation for our surroundings, so that we also no longer want to throw away broken products but repair them. We are seeing the latter reflected in the rise of repair shops, even on a large scale at brands such as at H&M and Zalando. IKEA's Circular Hub also falls within this value trend. Companies are thereby taking responsibility for social problems. The new perspective on repairing is also resulting in a fresh appreciation of old crafts, hence we are picking flowers in pick-your-own gardens, and then taking the time to arrange them creatively.

Opportunities for the horticulture sector:

Build a loving relationship with your customer. Don't worry that consumers' interest in growing plant cuttings and having pick-your-own gardens will harm sales. Offer ideas for reuse and customer tips to extend the lifespan of the products. If we offer plants a second life (such as the Kneusjesplantenbox, offering imperfect plants), we still increase the respect for plants. This increases the added value, and therefore the commercial value, of floriculture products.

METAMORPH REALITY

Factors including urbanisation and the consequences of Covid are resulting in more merging of functions. Think of living and working in one house, the merging of city and nature, indoors and outdoors. This is manifested in physical spaces that overlap one another. In addition, a new phenomenon - the metaverse - is arising, a new phase of the Internet in which the web will become a 3D experience. Here too time and place will merge. Taken together, this offers new possibilities. It seems as if we can expand and contract our life, involving the elements of place, time, function and reality. This multidimensional life forms the basis for the Metamorph Reality value trend. In this multilayered reality - where place, time, function and reality merge - the gap between the real and online worlds is constantly shrinking. This offers people the opportunity to add more dimensions to their lives. After all, online you can enjoy the ultimate freedom with no restrictions. As if you are extending reality, so that everything truly is possible: new experiences, but also new products. A good example of this is the Voyager album by ABBA, performed live by avatars of the four Swedes, with their present-day voices and their appearance of 40 years ago. Or the preparations that Zara is currently making for a sales concept in the metaverse where you can purchase the collection both digitally for your avatar in the virtual world and for yourself in the real world.

Opportunities for the horticulture sector:

Pick up on the idea that nature is coming ever closer. Nature is coming into the city, and a green revolution is taking place on balconies. In the interior, plants must remain flexible, easily movable. That enables us to make space to convert the living room into a workspace. The metaverse may become important for promoting plants. Perhaps it will become a significant environment for ordering physical plants online. Don't just dismiss it, but explore this development. Once consumers are used to shopping in this way, there will be gains to be made for the horticulture sector as well.

MIND THE GAP

The fifth and final value trend we identify is Mind the Gap. This is characterised by a dislike of big drastic changes. The pandemic and Covid policy play an important role in this. A section of society feel neglected, unheard. There is a risk of radicalisation, whereby this tendency rebels against change and longs for how things were. There is distrust of the authorities and dissatisfaction about restrictions on freedom and social inequality. Yet this is not a value trend that is solely based on tradition. The rejection also manifests itself in those who are abandoning the system and embracing a new lifestyle. Pioneers who live off-grid, who want a more autonomous, self-sufficient, sustainable and meaningful life than what is currently the standard. Also think of private schools with their own curriculum, or people who live and work in a van. Providing perspective and making the future clear and appealing can ensure that we keep these people on board.

Opportunities for the horticulture sector:

Make your business and your products accessible to everyone. See horticulture products as a lifebelt: they offer something recognisable to hold on to in turbulent times. Make nature and its nourishment a shared goal. Show how flowers and plants contribute to a more sustainable life, and how they can make a house a home.