

The second lesson, one which I had forgotten until I watched Kim interacting with customers, and went to people's homes to look at their situation/problem/landscape, the real value of a community greenhouse on reservations is that it provides INFORMATION. Several things make it difficult for the people of reservations who want to garden or landscape to ask the questions they need answered. Often the remoteness means that the distances to real knowledge, as you'd find in any suburban retail nursery/greenhouse/garden center are prohibitive. Second, racism is often strongest near reservations, which inhibits those conversations further. And third, reservations were usually pruned to the areas with the worst soils, so the answers might not be applicable locally.

But information sells plants, house plants, bedding plants, trees and lawns. Information is permission. And so you have to have someone who is open to endless questions, and who is 'easy to talk to'. And my dread of the Community Greenhouse evaporated, in March of last year.

Spring, 2005, we sold \$3500 in plants, then over the summer and fall, tried a variety of fall perennials, Thanksgiving and Christmas flowers, all of which were losers. These things simply didn't sell. Between the NRE grant and the Equity grant, we had spent, in two years, nearly \$35,000 and had sold a total of only \$4200. So why am I now positive, optimistic? Well, one part of my growing faith started with Paula... she suggested more of a full service garden center... and suddenly the lovely landscape south of the greenhouse began to look like money. The second factor was that we were rearranging the benches in the greenhouse to increase its production area and make it more amenable to customers wandering around. And the third factor was that Kim has recruited 800 hours worth of volunteers, there are more new customers, and repeat customers.

This last spring the greenhouse was beautiful, crops were on time, healthy, and flowering. I expected the first wave of crops to bring in \$6000 and a second wave of crops to bring in another \$3000. But the weather killed us. It was too cold and frosty until early May, and then it turned hot and dry. The same poor sales plagued greenhouses in both Pierre and Rapid City as well. The best news has been trees. We haven't been able to supply the demand. For this second half of 2006, I've written into one Equity grant 16,000 for the greenhouse, and for 2007 I've added another 28,000. We're going to buy TREES, seedlings, cuttings, liners, bare rooted trees and plant them all around. We'll grow some of them for 1-3 years before selling them, others we'll have for sale next spring. And we'll keep having holiday flowers, house plants, and perennial plants for year round sales. And the Community Greenhouse might start breaking even in 2008. And that's great. Elementary students LOVE visiting the greenhouse. GEAR-UP students don't. We probably have had 50 -100 people 'drop by' the greenhouse just to see how things were going. The only vandalism has been the prankish switching of identifying labels on the trees outdoors. And the ability of the greenhouse to provide flowers for special events, trees for the university landscaping, answers to questions, space for small research projects, produce plants for restoration projects, and so many other outreach and useful programs, investing \$100,000 over four years is still a bargain. But start with a bigger greenhouse.