

Marketing Proposal for



SORGHUM MILL

TREE FARM

Edmond FFA Chapter OK0122 2024
Oklahoma

KELLY AVENUE MARKETING FIRM

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCT



Sorghum Mill Tree Farm is a Christmas and landscaping tree farm company, established in 1973, and is located in Edmond, Oklahoma. In the last 40 years, Sorghum Mill Tree Farms (SMTF) has become a mainstay in the Christmas tree industry, selling more than 8,000 fresh-cut Christmas trees annually between Thanksgiving and Christmas. SMTF has recently expanded their business to include residential and commercial landscaping trees, but has struggled to gain a foothold in the competitive industry. Their competitors include: Deep Fork Tree Farm and TLC Garden Centers. SMTF has handled all aspects of their business, from planting to sales. They have struggled to gain traction in the landscaping tree market, even though we believe SMTF is uniquely positioned to compete in the local market because of their large variety of native and beneficial ornamental trees and because they provide a unique customer service and purchasing experience. Customers find the purchasing process seamless and enjoy quality of product they receive when working with SMTF. Kelley Avenue Marketing Firm believes Sorghum Mill Tree Farm is positioned to compete in this market by increasing their market share through strategies, including: improved branding, redefining the target market, increasing the customer base, leveraging the Christmas trees to improve ornamental tree sales, adjusting the pricing model to include introductory pricing, and implementing new marketing, advertisement, and promotional strategies to increase sales.



MARKET ANALYSIS CLIENT'S STATUS IN CURRENT MARKET



In business for more than 40 years, Sorghum Mill Tree Farm is a trusted and local Christmas tree company in the Edmond area. In the last ten years, they have started to grow and sell ornamental and landscaping trees. SMTF sells more than 20 different species of trees in four different sizes, specializing in ornamental species beneficial to local wildlife. Current marketing strategies primarily include: word-of-mouth advertising and customer recommendations. Customers who have previously purchase landscaping trees from SMTF are largely unaware of this facet of their business, but discover it through the Christmas tree farm. SMTF's customers in the landscaping and ornamental tree industry include both homeowners and residential landscapers. Customers are interested in improving the curb appeal, shade, and environmental health of landscapes. Customers purchase trees directly from the farm located east of Edmond. Sorghum Mill Tree Farm competitors include: Deep Fork Tree Farm and TLC Garden Centers. Both of these are outperforming SMTF because of marketing and advertisement strategies, sales points, and customer base.

INDUSTRY TRENDS

TREE NURSERY INDUSTRY TRENDS

- US nursery industry is an \$18.3 billion industry, 4.3% growth yearly
- Ornamental trees are growing in demand in primarily urban/suburban areas; largest growth segment is native and ornamental trees
- Households spend more than \$500.00 on their landscaping annually
- Landscaping industry has seen 6.6% growth in the last 3 years

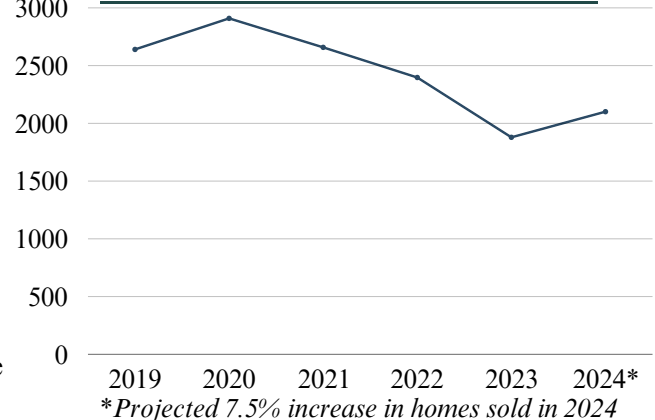
LANDSCAPING CUSTOMER TRENDS

- 62% of landscaping customers come from single-family residential homes
- 18 million homeowners plan to renovate their yards in the next 12 months
- 72% of millennials who own a home plan to renovate in the next 2 years
- The average *new* homeowner spends \$3100.00 on landscaping
- 92% of realtors recommend improving "*curb appeal*" before selling a home
- 83% of new gardeners and landscaping customers look for native plant species to promote habitat for pollinators and wildlife
- 33% of gardeners purchase plants primarily to help wildlife and this priority has been listed as a primary trend for 2024
- Customers have a preference towards purchasing environmentally conscious and friendly products
- Customers primarily purchase trees for the following reasons: wind breaks, soil conservation, add value to home, aesthetics, and wildlife promotion
- Landscaping trends include: natural and immersive gardens, native landscaping, purchasing drought tolerant plants, and wildlife habitat

GENERAL PURCHASING AND MARKETING TRENDS

- 82% of Americans use online payment
- 69% prefer purchasing products in store
- 41% of Americans have discovered products they have purchased online
- 24% of social media users have bought a product based on influencer recommendations in the last 3 months
- 62% of consumers try a new store because of better price points
- 44% try a new store or product because of discount promotionals

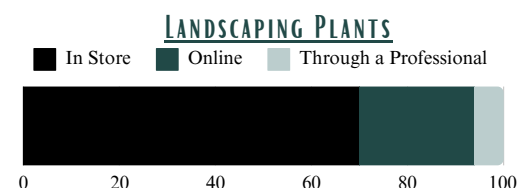
HOMES SOLD IN EDMOND ANNUALLY



PERCENTAGE OF LANDSCAPE RENOVATION DECISIONS MADE AND THE TIME OF YEAR THOSE DECISIONS ARE MADE



PURCHASING METHOD OF TREES AND OTHER



BUYER PROFILE AND BEHAVIOR

BUYING ROLES

Initiators <i>Sees a need to improve curb appeal, promote wildlife; Initiator is typically either a realtor, the customer, or a family member</i>	Influencers <i>Buying decisions are impacted by realtors, personal views, social media, and cultural/social influences</i>	Deciders <i>The homeowner, or their landscaping professional, is the final deciding factor</i>	Buyers <i>Customers choose to purchase trees in retail and farm facilities, with a growing interest in online purchasing options</i>	Users <i>The homeowner is the final "user" of the trees</i>
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CONSUMER DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Problem Recognition <i>Desire to improve curb appeal, lower energy costs, and promote wildlife and native habitats</i>	Information Search <i>Primarily does research online, on social media, visiting stores, working with professionals, or through recommendations</i>	Alternatives Evaluation <i>Tree offerings, product availability, location, social consequence, price, and awareness play a role in the evaluation of potential products or companies</i>	Purchases Product <i>Trees are typically purchased in store or directly from a nursery, but growing interest in online shopping is impacting the industry</i>	Reflection <i>The reflection of this process is time-bound, as planting trees is a long-term investment with long term impact</i>
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DEMOGRAPHICS AND BEHAVIOR

- Single resident homeowners with an annual household income of greater than \$100,000.00/year in the Edmond area, typically between the ages of 25-65 (Primarily millennials, generation X, and baby boomers)
 - Tend to research trees and purchase them between the months of January-June, and most research is done online
 - Interested in: improving curb appeal, native habitats, wildlife promotion, increasing home value, and quality customer service
 - Purchasing is done in stores, but older generations utilize reviews made online when deciding which stores to purchase from

CLIENT & COMPETITION SWOT ANALYSIS

	S	W	O	T
COMPETITOR 	- Offers a wide variety of trees, including Oklahoma Proven trees - Convenient location minutes from I44 and I35, adjacent to Rt 66 - Video marketing campaign appeals to younger generations - Previously advertised on Google & Facebook - Easy-to-navigate website	- Hours, social media posting schedule, online information all lead to lower customer access and engagement - Few reviews online - Doesn't provide information on prices online - More expensive than competition - Less than 100 followers on social media	- Emphasize tree characteristics that promote wildlife - Develop social media strategies that include posting content on a regular basis - Create an online tree gallery that includes prices and tree information - Improved hours to increase availability	- Increased competition from local businesses and box stores - Weather conditions impact product quality and availability - Changing customer preferences impact the long-term investment that is required to produce trees
COMPETITOR 	- Multiple locations with retail spaces in two different parts of the OKC metro - Offers wider product selection, bringing in more customers - Longtime and local business - Website has information on plants	- Doesn't sell a wide variety of trees; focus is on shrubs and flowers - Prices and availability are not available online - Cannot purchase trees online - Doesn't offer "bulk pricing" - Social media marketing strategies are outdated	- Offer an online gallery of products that includes prices and availability; offer online POS - Sell products that emphasize wildlife habitat promotion - Adjust social media posting schedule and content to align with younger generations of customers	- Increased customer interest in "direct from farm" purchasing - Increased local competition - Changing customer preferences impact the long-term investment that is required to produce trees
CLIENT 	- Strong customer loyalty due to years as Christmas tree farm - Large inventory of desirable trees - Can reach a high volume of potential customers through the popularity of the Christmas trees	- No online and social media presence - Low brand awareness as a landscaping tree farm - Customers must haul the trees themselves - Limited customer access	- Creating a website with plant availability and information and an online point of sale will help reach more customers - Developing advertisement and engagement strategies will reach more customers	- Evolving customer needs could impact sales if preferences aren't being met - Weather conditions will impact product availability/quality of trees - Increasing local competition



PRIMARY RESEARCH RESULTS

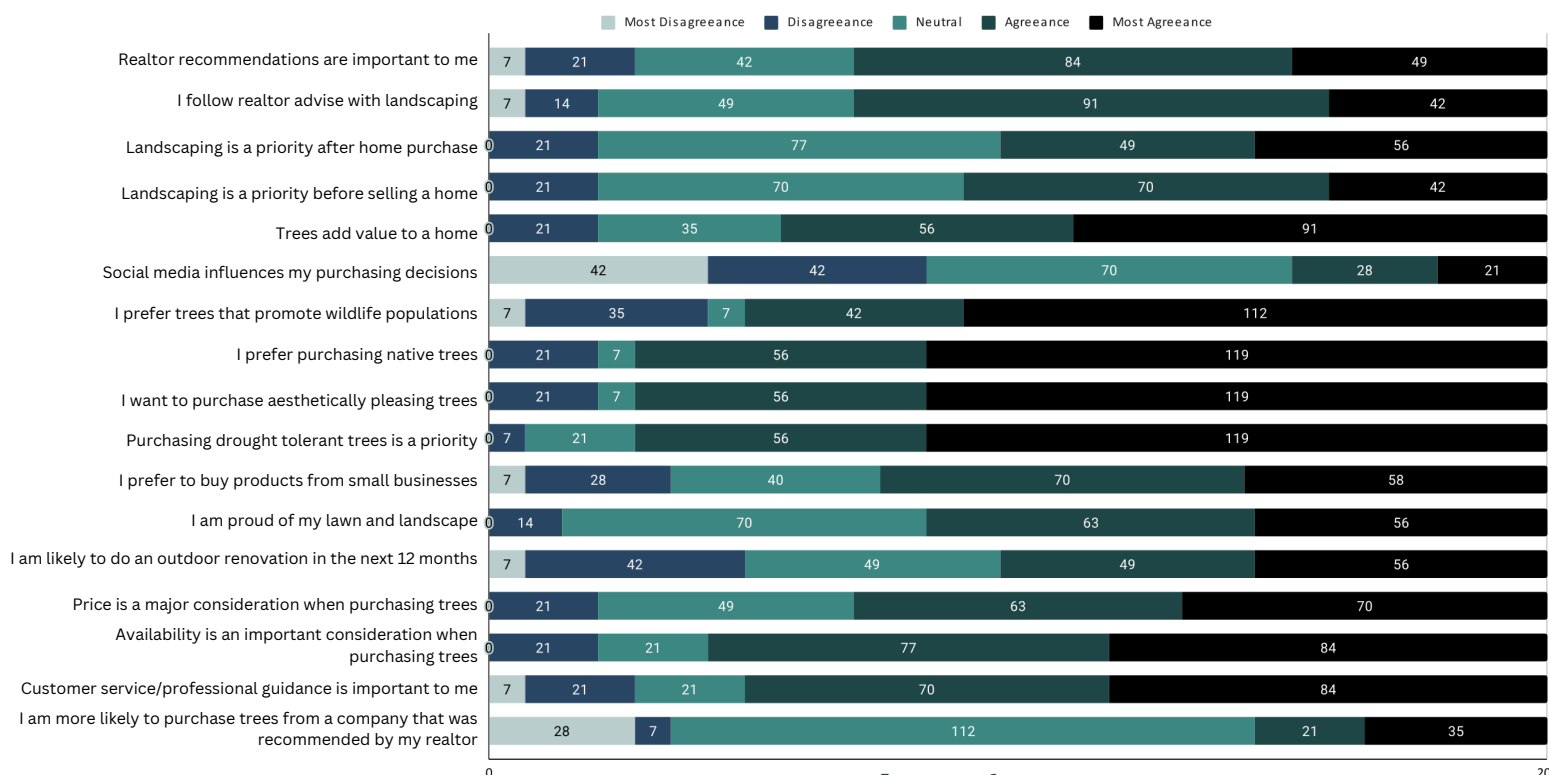
SURVEYS



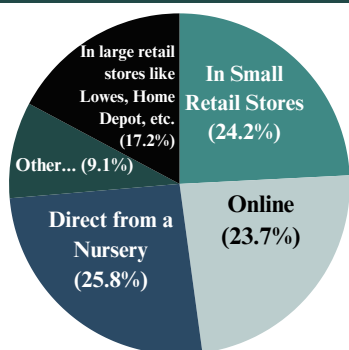
Kelly Ave Marketing Firm surveyed 203 people in Edmond. 21 have purchased Christmas trees from Sorghum Mill in the last 5 years. The surveys were distributed via social media and sent out to local citizens via email. A five point Likert scale was the instrument utilized. Statements were ranked 1-5, with 1 being “most disagreement/least important,” and 5 being “most agreement/importance.”

- 14% of the respondents have purchased and/or sold a home in the last 12 months
- The average annual household income aligned with projected target market; >\$100,000.00 annually
- Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest were the most popular social media platforms utilized by respondents
- 90% of those surveyed who have purchased a tree in the last 5 years initiated their purchase by conducting research on Google

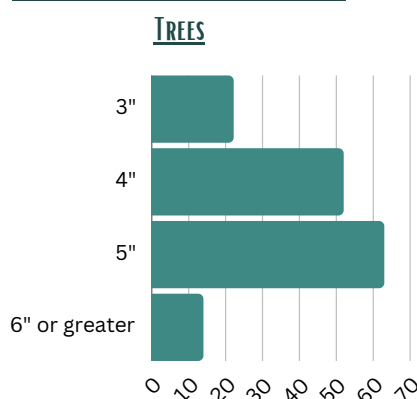
PURCHASING CONSIDERATIONS OF SURVEYED PARTICIPANTS



PLACE PREFERENCES OF SURVEYED PARTICIPANTS



SIZE PREFERENCES WHEN PURCHASING TREES



FOCUS GROUP

A focus group study was conducted with eight individuals, with ages ranging from 25-65. Everyone surveyed aligned with projected customer demographics including household income. Three were familiar with Sorghum Mill Tree Farm because they had purchased Christmas trees from SMTF in the past, but 3 stated they had never heard of Sorghum Mill Tree Farm before. The focus group was a forum with open-ended questioning and comparing/contrasting exercises.

- The group agreed they would like to see more information put online, including availability, price, and care of trees
- Facebook and Instagram were the most recommended social media platforms for advertisement, primarily due to the target market demographics
- The focus group agreed that an updated logo without the Christmas trees would help better advertise the landscaping trees.
- “Giving Christmas tree customers information on the landscaping trees could help sell the trees” - Participant 3
- “I’ve been frustrated with nurseries in the past because they aren’t open when I am free and I never know what they have in stock” - Participant 2

INTERVIEWS

We interviewed seven realtors in Edmond to gain more information on how to reach people who are buying or selling a home and want to improve curb appeal.

- Most provide customers with a list of preferred vendors when work is needed; All seven would gladly take promotional discounts to give to their customers
- Customers are generally willing to spend around \$2,000.00 when selling and \$5,000.00-\$10,000.00 when buying a home on landscape renovations



BUSINESS PROPOSAL

MISSION STATEMENT



Sorghum Mill Tree Farm is invested in tomorrow's landscape by elevating community beauty and promoting nature, one tree at a time. We are dedicated to working directly with customers to give them the trees and experience they deserve.

KEY PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

- Customers expect product and company information to be available online and online points of sale, even though most customers still prefer going in store/farm to purchase trees.** Primary research and secondary research indicate online points of sale and information on availability and on tree care could uniquely position Sorghum Mill. ^{4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12}
- Native trees, drought tolerant trees, ornamental trees, and trees that promote wildlife are a priority for customers interested in purchasing trees.** According to both the survey and the focus group, including those aforementioned qualities on sales tags and online information could lead to more sales. ^{1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13}
- The real estate market in Edmond is largely untapped, but could yield growth for SMTF by working directly with realtors and customers who are selling a home or recently bought a home.** Improving curb appeal is a common recommendation of realtors, and primary research indicates most customers trust realtor recommendations. Improving landscaping is priority for new homeowners. ^{9, 10, 11, 12, 13}
- Social media will remain a powerful advertisement and marketing tool in reaching a larger market share.** The age brackets of the defined target market are increasingly technologically literate and are active on social media, many of which are influenced by social media marketing strategies, including short-form video content, ad postings, and posting content on a regular basis. ^{3, 4, 11, 12, 13}
- Tree availability, price, customer service, expert guidance, convenience and business hours all impact customer purchasing decisions.** The focus group indicated frustration with previous tree purchases due to availability, hours of operation, and product price, while also indicating a desire to work with companies with quality customer service and expert guidance. ^{3, 6, 13}
- Search engines and other forms of media like radio can provide exposure to potential customers.** Primary research indicated that most purchases start with doing research on Google to find local companies and to learn more about trees best meet their needs. Matching search engine results with radio could help maximize SMTF's reach within the target market by reaching customers who don't use social media. Nearly 90% of Edmond's population listens to the radio for at least one hour per week. ^{3, 6, 13}

SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS

SHORT TERM GOALS

- Launch a website dedicated to the landscaping trees, with points of sale and an online gallery of tree options, by November 15, 2024
- Develop and pass out pamphlets about the landscaping trees during the Christmas tree season (Thanksgiving to Christmas) starting on November 21, 2024
 - Include promotional pricing for customers who purchase a Christmas tree during the previous holiday season
- Create and tag trees with new tags with price, new logo, and information regarding wildlife promotion, drought tolerance, and if it is considered a native tree cultivar by January 1, 2025
- Purchase ad space on Google and other popular search engines by January 1, 2025
- Make social media content on a regular basis during the peak tree buying season (Jan 1-Aug 1) starting on January 1, 2025
 - Content should emphasize trees as beneficial to wildlife habitats, drought resistant, native, and aesthetically pleasing
- Send promotional materials, including introductory pricing coupons, to 10 realtors in the Edmond area by January 1, 2025
 - Have the promotional material, including introductory pricing coupons, reach 20 home buyers/sellers by June 30, 2025
- Implement a seasonal schedule from March 1-August 1, 11:00 AM-7:00 PM, Wednesday-Sunday, Starting March 1, 2025
- Have 5,000 unique visitors to the website by July 1, 2025 with an average pages per session rate of greater than 5 PPS
- Have more than 2,500 followers on both Facebook and Instagram by July 1, 2025
- Have a conversion rate on the website of greater than 5% by August 1, 2025 (Desired actions include: purchase from website, calling, purchasing in person, sending web link to someone else, putting address in GPS)
- Average a reach of greater than 5,000 and an engagement rate of more than 300 for each social media post/ad by August 1, 2026

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- All primary research, including surveys, focus groups and interviews

LONG TERM GOALS

- Have more than 15,000 followers on both Facebook and Instagram by January 1, 2030
- Collect survey information and secondary research on evolving customer preferences yearly until January 1, 2030
- Continue to create content on Facebook and Instagram during peak purchasing season (Jan 1-Aug 1) every year until August 1, 2030
- Grow the website conversion rate to 7% by August 1, 2030 (Desired actions listed above)
- Send promotional materials to 70 Edmond-based realtors, and reach 1000 potential home buyers/sellers by August 1, 2030
- Continue to utilize ad space on Google, adjusting keywords and target demographics yearly until January 1, 2030

TARGET MARKET

PRIMARY TARGET MARKET

- Homeowners, and potential home buyers and sellers, with annual household income greater than \$100,000.00 per year in the northern Oklahoma City and Edmond area, ages 25-65
- Homeowners interested in renovating their landscape to improve curb appeal, promote wildlife, decrease water usage, lower their utility bills, or add value to their home

SECONDARY TARGET MARKET

- Wildlife and nature enthusiasts in the Edmond area
- Gardeners or people who play an active role in their landscapes
- Professional landscapers, landscape architects, and other professionals in this field in the Edmond area



STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLAN



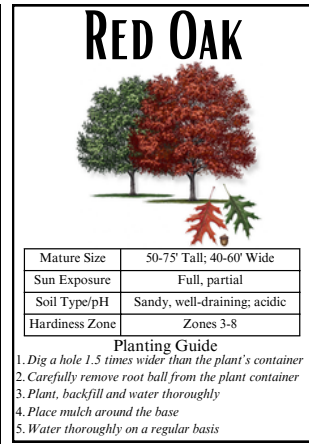
PRODUCT

Sorghum Mill Tree Farm's landscaping trees division emphasizes tree cultivars that are native, wildlife promoters, and currently offers more than 20 varieties of trees, including:

- Oaks (Red, White, Chinkapin, Bur)
- Elms (Cedar, American, Winged)
- Pine (Loblolly, shortleaf)
- Redbud (Oklahoma, Eastern)
- Maple (Red, Sugar)
- Cypress (Bald, Arizona, Pond)
- Magnolia (Southern, TeddyBear)
- Chinese Pistache
- Prairifire Crabapple

Kelly Avenue Marketing Firm recommends:

- Selling the following sizes of trees, all of which are ball & burlap: 3", 4", 5", 6" caliper
- Selling the evergreens by linear foot
- Placing the tags, like the ones seen to the right, on the trees



PRICE

Primary/secondary research indicates customers currently pay more than \$500 annually on outdoor renovations, and the average outdoor renovation costs between \$2,000-\$5,000. The following price points establish Sorghum Mill Tree Farm as a mid-price point entry for their landscaping trees when compared to both competitors listed (Deep Fork Tree Farm and TLC Garden Centers). Primary research suggests price is a major consideration when selecting trees, which is why we suggest offering discounts to realtors, as well as introductory pricing during the 2024 holiday season to customers who purchase a Christmas tree to promote SMTF's trees to a larger audience.

Product	3"	4"	5"	6"
Ball & Burlap Deciduous	\$325.00	\$415.00	\$505.00	\$595.00
Evergreens	All evergreens should be sold by the linear foot at \$45.00/foot			

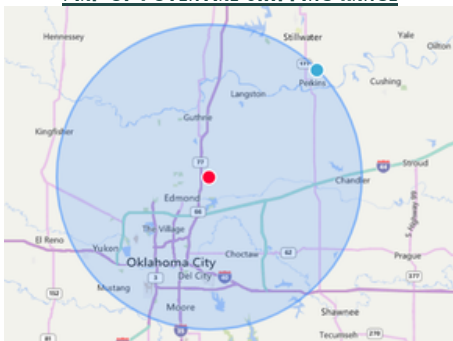
***Discounts will include 10% off total purchase price*

PLACE

We recommend selling trees through the website and directly off the farm in Edmond. Strategies related to these places are listed below.

DIRECT OFF-THE-FARM

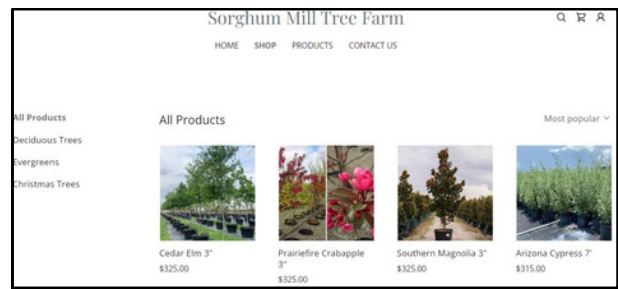
MAP OF POTENTIAL SHIPPING RANGE



To differentiate Sorghum Mill Tree Farm from the competition, we recommend adjusting the farm hours in east Edmond from 3/1 to 8/1, 11:00 AM-7:00 PM, Wednesday-Sunday. This aligns with customer survey results, which indicated that potential customers have preferences towards shopping at times that are convenient to them. We also recommend increasing tree pick-up hours to one hour before the farm opens and one hour after it closes to increase convenience for the customer. A focus group recommendation is that SMTF should accept credit cards, checks, and cash. Kirkpatrick Bank offers Clover as a POS system which connects directly to the website, which would be used for purchases made directly off-the-farm. We recommend offering shipping to customers within a 30 mile radius with an additional cost of \$75. When spending more than \$500, shipping is free.

WEBSITE

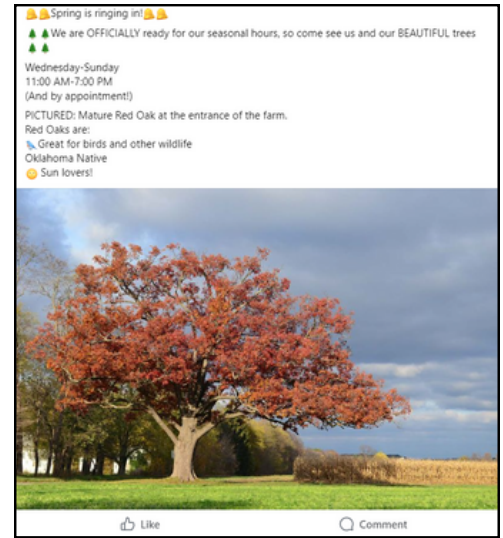
To better align with customer expectations and reach a larger share of the defined target market, we recommend creating a website, which will include a point of sale, a picture gallery of trees with information regarding care and maintenance, origin, and its benefit to wildlife. The website will be updated after each purchase, giving customers online access to accurate tree stock. Customers will have the opportunity to ship the product to their location if they live within 30 miles of the farm (with an added shipping cost) or they will have the ability to pick the trees up directly from the farm.



PROMOTION SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTIONS

Kelly Avenue Marketing Firm recommends the following:

- Create Instagram and Facebook pages
- Utilize the “Boost” application on Meta platforms to reach the target market (\$3,500/year)
 - Target: ages 25-65, located in Edmond and North OKC, and are interested in: gardening, home improvement, real estate, family, birds, wildlife, ecotourism
 - Dates: January 1-August 1 yearly
 - Goal reach: 600-1.7K people daily per post with boost
- Purchase ad space for Facebook and Instagram (\$2,000/year)
 - Ad space should be utilized to bring potential customers to the Facebook page, website, and contact Sorghum Mill Tree Farm directly
- Data from the analytical applications on Meta platforms, including customer contact information, awareness, and customer demographic information, will inform future marketing strategies on the social media platforms
- Ads will emphasize tree benefits, farm information, and updates to product offerings



DISCOUNT AND INTRODUCTORY PRICING PROMOTIONS

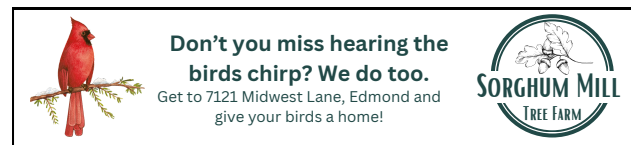
As price is a primary barrier to purchasing a tree and renovating an outdoor space, Kelly Avenue Marketing Firm recommends the following:

- To introduce the landscaping trees division of Sorghum Mill to a wider market, provide Christmas tree customers with a 10% discount on all landscaping trees, which can be used the following year.
 - Trees will be tagged with the promotional tag to the right.
- To meet the needs of the active real estate market in Edmond, fliers and brochures will be provided to local real estate agents and brokers. These fliers and brochures will include a 10% discount on tree purchases.
 - Kelly Avenue Market Firm has contacted OklaHome Real Estate, a realty company in the Edmond area, to pilot the new homeowner and home seller discount promotions.



ROADSIDE PROMOTIONS

To increase general awareness of SMTF in the Edmond area, we recommend paying for ad space along road sides, at the entrance of the farm, and using designs similar to the one below. We also recommend using billboard space, utilizing designs like the one on the right, on I-35 to reach a larger audience.



ALL OTHER PROMOTIONS

We recommend creating a pamphlet to have on hand for customers throughout the year to better market and emphasize the beneficial characteristics of landscaping trees, including: wildlife habitat, saving money on utilities, serving as a windbreak, soil conservation, adding value to home, and increasing curb appeal. We also recommend taking ads out in Oklahoma Living, Oklahoma Gardener, Edmond Active, and Edmond Outlook, all of which are local magazines. Utilizing Google Ads to promote the company will help drive more customers to the website. Target market characteristics and keywords will drive ad placement. Lastly, we recommend working directly with local radio stations to promote Sorghum Mill Tree Farm, as both are effective ways to reach the local market. Focusing the advertisements to local radio stations to time periods that align with the timeline schedule on page 2 will increase effectiveness of dollars spent on advertisements.

POSITION

Sorghum Mill Tree Farm will uniquely position itself as the premier provider of wildlife friendly, drought tolerant and native tree species that also improve curb appeal in the Edmond area. The company will reach more customers through marketing efforts, which will increase the share of the target market. Those efforts include working directly with realtors, their promotional materials, and the advertisement strategies. SMTF landscaping trees division is also poised to gain traction through the Christmas tree operation, which will initially fund the marketing efforts. Emphasizing SMTF trees as beneficial to the environment and local ecosystems will continue to attract new customers as customer wants and needs continue to prioritize ecologically friendly products.

BUDGET

	2025	2028	2030
PRO FORMA INCOME STATEMENT			
Total Sales/Revenue	\$85,000.00	\$115,000.00	\$165,000.00
EXPENSES TO NEW MARKETING EFFORTS			
Marketing Fees	\$3,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$5,000.00
Website, Social Media, and Google Advertisement Expenses	\$8,000.00	\$10,500.00	\$12,000.00
Radio Advertisements	\$3,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$5,000.00
Roadside Posters and Billboards	\$3,000.00	\$3,750.00	\$4,500.00
Advertisements in Magazines	\$500.00	\$700.00	\$900.00
Promotional Discounts	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$6,250.00
Pamphlets and Handouts	\$500.00	\$750.00	\$900.00
Expenses to New Efforts	\$20,000.00	\$27,700.00	\$34,550.00
Operating Expenses (Projections provided by Sorghum Mill Tree Farm)	\$24,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$47,000.00
Expected Net Profit	\$37,000.00	\$52,300.00	\$82,450.00
Marketing ROI	Marketing: 325%	Marketing: 315%	Marketing: 377%

EVALUATION

GOALS	TOOLS	BENCHMARKS	ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES
Website and Search Engine Goals	Google.com Analytics Integration System Wix Analytical Application	Quarterly reviews indicate 5% growth in measurable analytics, including: Return rate, conversion rate, views, cost per action measurements, reviews, bounce rate, pages per session	Redefine target market and change keyword selection. Reallocate funds towards other promotional strategies to reach another segment of market, including radio and magazine advertisements.
Social Media Goals	Metaverse Business Page, Metaverse Analytics	Monthly reviews indicate 5% growth in measurable analytics including: engagement, reviews, reach, follower sentiment analysis, conversion rate	Redefine target market and change keyword selection. Reallocate funds towards other promotional strategies which focus more on a redefined target market.
Goals Related to Sales	Wix Ecommerce, POS System, QuickBooks	Annual review of income statements indicate at least 10% growth each year	Adjust emphasis on sales to primarily be in person and adjust promotional materials to align with market redefined target market.
Print Media Goals	Design	Purchasing process is started in November of each year	Find new print company to work with if print material isn't ready for handout.
Continual Market Research Goals	Survey Applications	Annual review and release of new survey and focus group information	Collect survey data on customers and include discounts for completed surveys.
Real Estate Goals	Realtor partnerships	10% growth in real estate partnerships each year	Increase real estate firm partnerships to include surrounding cities like Guthrie.