

Fiskars KitchenGarden – fresh herbs every day from your indoor garden

1. The Company

FISKARS is a metal and consumer brands company, which previously specialized in utensils and garden tools, but later expanded production to many more different consumer goods. Fiskars is best known for its scissors, axes and high-quality knives. The company is part of the Fiskars Group, which is the oldest company in Finland and is divided in three main business areas: home, garden and outdoors.

2. Sustainability Innovation

KitchenGarden is an indoor garden that allows growing herbs inside during the colder times of the year. It utilizes evenly distributed LED light for stimulating plant growth – much like the sun. The LED light does not heat up, as the regular light bulbs do, which made it possible to place the light in the middle of the herbs to promote more even growth from the bottom to the top. The use of LED light has enabled this innovation, because it is bright enough to keep the herbs thriving, yet it only utilizes 9W.



Source: www.fiskars.fi

The water should be added regularly to keep the supply of water to the herbs. Especially in countries with colder climates the indoor air is very dry during the heating season. The plastic cupola mimics the greenhouse, maintaining the optimum humidity inside the cupola and protecting from the colder air. The premium version allows adjusting of light intensity, timing and wavelength of light for optimized growth. KitchenGarden comes with two herb holders and capillary mats that can be used to extend the lifetime of the herbs bought from the store.

Sustainability impacts:

- Using fresh herbs every day is supportive of healthier eating habits & lifestyles;
- Availability of fresh herbs at home stimulates to engage with cooking & discovering new recipes, making it a fun and fulfilling experience, which adds to the quality of life;
- Growing your own food sensitizes people to appreciate the food more, which helps to reduce the amounts of food waste;
- Indoor gardening is part of the larger urban gardening trend, which promotes social cohesion through sharing food & gardening experiences in (online) communities.

3. Engagement of End Users and Other Stakeholders

New product development is a dynamic process at Fiskars, where they seek inputs both from professional gardeners and more mainstream end users. The reasoning is about creating highly functional products, which would satisfy professionals, yet also make them stylish and trendy – to attract new more mainstream consumers.

The **early exploration phase** for new products is about identifying challenges of the existing users, and matching them with the ongoing trends & advances in technology. In KitchenGarden development, Fiskars consulted with various grass-root gardening organizations, such as Dodo ry (the urban gardening NGO) and Hyötykasviyhdistys (Finnish Association of Useful Plants). The exploration included general discussions on urban gardening challenges, which were not specifically focused on indoor garden solutions. Other exploration activities centered around the members of R&D team traveling and looking for users who practice gardening in different countries, actively conversing with them and watching their gardening activities.

In the **early product development** phase Fiskars proceeded to engage with end users via individual interviews. The interviews focused on the end users' relationship to gardening & herbs to get an overview of the customer base. End users were shown some early prototypes of the product, and their inputs mostly concerned the outlook & general feeling of the product.

The second round of interviews was organized in the form of **focus group discussions**, while the product was ready for manufacturing. The inputs from end users were mainly utilized for learning on how to communicate about the new product. The participants were, for example, asked to make collages about herbs and lights.

Fiskars also **tested the prototypes** of KitchenGarden with different types of end users: both professional gardeners and more regular consumers. The end users got to test the indoor garden for half a year, and keep the product afterwards. Their inputs were related to issues like the amount of light and growth, noise and watering system.

4. Networking and everyday communication for dynamic product development

New product development is a highly dynamic process at Fiskars. All the member of the R&D team, including the director, are encouraged to “hunt” for weak signals to be used in product development. This means being alert to the trends, talking to end users practicing gardening anywhere (in their homes or in public spaces), taking photos of gardening activities and gardeners, communicating with customers in gardening departments of the stores.

Fiskars' philosophy is to look for challenges that they could design solutions for, rather than seeking for end user ideas. However, this still requires extensive interaction with different types of end users: professional, amateurs, or even users completely new to gardening. This interaction is organized according to which phases of product development it would benefit the most. More professional gardeners are regularly involved in longer term testing of prototypes to gather the inputs on products' functionality. While the inputs from regular end users are utilized for communication ideas, and designing trendier and attractive looking products to make gardening, as well as urban gardening more attractive to everyone.