



GREEN

Beyond Christmas

For environmentally conscious customers, evergreens have potential not just during the traditional holiday season. By Shannon Kuhrt

A few quick Google searches will produce a plethora of articles on the trendiness of “green living” in home and garden design. In fact, maybe you are totally on this bandwagon when it comes to the spring season with your urban container gardening, and the whole grow-your-own-food movement.

Does that inspired mindset carry over to your Christmas and winter sales? Or are you still operating the way you have always done during the holidays? Don’t get me wrong, there is certainly a place for tradition, especially with the Christmas holiday. Just don’t get so comfortable with your annual holiday routine that you forget to freshen your marketing for the winter season.

Fresh evergreens are so much more than tossing wreaths and swags on a table and advertising your competitive pricing on pine roping. Not only is that completely uninspiring, it is totally uninformative. From millennials to the baby boomers, all generations have some level of interest in the environment. Share with them how their purchase of fresh evergreens helps the environment, and you create another whole new reason for them to purchase these items from you.

So exactly what information do you share and how do you share it? Read on for some key points that you can include in store signage, newsletters, emails and social media posts.

1. Fresh evergreen products are sustainably harvested. There is a misleading perception that exists in the minds of consumers that tons of trees are chopped down to create the wreaths, swags and other decorations that they see. This is actually untrue.

These products are created by trained arborists that actually thin the trees to promote growth, and the clippings left behind then make these decorations.

Think of it as a “haircut” for the tree to keep it healthy. Instead of sweeping and tossing the trimmings, they are put to use to make wreaths, swags, garlands and other decorations.

2. Fresh evergreen products are biodegradable and recyclable. If harvested properly, fresh greenery will last a long time — all winter, in fact, in your more northern climates. A good, hard frost on the trees before they are trimmed will “set” the needles and that will keep the needles from shedding. So, as winter is drawing to a close, and you are preparing to do some spring yard cleanup, don’t just toss out those decorations. Recycle and repurpose them.

Take a wreath for example: clip the wire that wraps the greenery to the frame until all the greenery is off the frame. The metal frame and wire pieces can be recycled, and the greenery and pinecones can be used in compost piles, tossed into ponds or small creeks for a haven for aquatic wildlife or layered onto your mulch beds or piled into your yards for the wildlife to enjoy and use. Alternatively, pinecones can be made into natural birdfeeders by adding peanut butter and birdseed. It can become a fun, family event and learning experience all rolled into one. And the best part? Nothing ends up in a landfill.

3. What if your customers don’t have yards to recycle the greenery into? Set up a compost bin at your retail location or other form of collection area where your customers can recycle their rings and greenery. And the best part — it gets them back to your store!

Maybe even offer incentives — like clean up their winter porch pots and get them ready for spring. Possibly tie it into Earth Day in April — the options and ideas are endless! The more

you can draw your customers in year-round, the more connected they will feel to you. Show them you are eco-minded and they will respect your dedication to conservation.

So, as you begin to plan for your 2017 to 2018 winter season (November to March, which includes the holidays of Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and Valentine’s Day) keep in mind these eco-friendly attributes of the fresh winter products you sell.

Build your marketing program and be sure it includes conveying this message to your customers. Cross-educate using in-store signage, videos, Facebook (including Facebook Live) and other social media avenues. Simply think outside the box when it comes to promoting a “green” Christmas and you just might be surprised how much “green” you will get in return. **LGR**

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