

GETTING MORE SOCIAL



Whether struggling to be innovative or still working on getting started, these social media tips can help.

By Laura and Aaron LeBoutillier

Social media can be an amazing way to reach your customers. It can help you get the word out about new arrivals or upcoming events, and it can connect you with your customers in a way that traditional print material can't.

For example, you could have a beautiful new shipment of spring flowers arrive and within five minutes have a picture posted that can reach the people who care most.

That said, we also know it can be a huge struggle. Social media is a beast you constantly have to feed.

It's always changing — the way people want to see things changes, the type of content that is successful changes, so we have to always be paying attention to the waves.

We've learned a lot over the past few years, so here are some tips we'd like to share to get you started.

Be Consistent

Coming from a retail background, I know how hard it can be to consistently reach out to customers on any social media platform.

Most of the time, especially in peak season, it's all we can do to just help customers and get all the plants watered!

I think we get the most discouraged when we think that every post has to be epic — it doesn't.

Consistency is key, no matter what you're posting. Don't let weeks go by between posts.

Take Lots of Pictures

Think about what your customers care about. It can be simple things.

Take a quick picture of something in the nursery that is blooming beautifully or a picture of a new truckload of plants being unloaded.

Most customers appreciate knowing things as they happen, and it gets them inspired and excited to come see for themselves.

Just a couple other thoughts: use a quality camera and be mindful of lighting. Even the latest smartphones (e.g., iPhone7 or Galaxy S7) take great pictures. I use my iPhone for many of the pictures I post on Instagram and Facebook.

Make sure to wipe off the lens before you snap any pictures. If you've noticed your

GARDEN ANSWER



Laura and Aaron LeBoutillier are speaking to your customers. The husband-and-wife team started Garden Answer in 2014. With more than 118,000 YouTube subscribers (www.youtube.com/gardenanswer) and 1.4 million Facebook followers (www.facebook.com/gardenanswer), these inspirational, garden-themed videos have taken off.

The videos have more than 230 million views on Facebook. What are some of the topics people are getting excited about?

Here are three of the Garden Answer videos with top views on the social media site.



DIY Pumpkin Snowman
27,447,404 views



Laundry Basket Turned Strawberry Tower
19,872,652 views



Heart Shaped Succulent Arrangement
13,184,589 views

pictures are looking foggy or not in focus, a dirty lens is probably the culprit.

As far as lighting goes, try to use indirect natural light whenever possible. Harsh sun and deep shade are all problems we deal with.

And one final thought, don't be afraid to change your perspective. Instead of shooting from eye level, try it from the side or overhead. You might end up with a really neat picture.

Video

Another great way to reach customers is through video. This is definitely more time consuming, but the payoff can be worth it.

You don't need to make a huge production out of it. You can share popular videos you see on Facebook, or you can create your own. It doesn't take fancy equipment; just grab your phone and take a quick video of a new shipment of seed or give them a few timely tips.

If you want to up your game, our suggestion is to start off by getting good audio equipment; that's usually what sets a video apart.

When your customers don't have to strain to hear what you're saying, they'll enjoy the video so much more.

Inspire Before Selling

I think businesses would have much better results with social media if the focus was mostly inspirational.

If you're posting (or sharing) beautiful pictures, interesting project ideas, and timely reminders, people will be much more receptive to what you have to say. They will feel inspired, rather than feeling like they are being sold to. Inspiration is infectious.

I think we get the most discouraged when we think that every post has to be epic — it doesn't.

However, letting customers know what you have available isn't all bad either. For example, if it's time to spray fruit trees, posting a picture of fruit tree spray you have in stock would be great, but a better idea is showing a picture or video of someone on your team spraying a tree with the product.

Another example would be to take a picture of beautiful new plant arrivals in their trays, or a better idea would be to plant up a combination to give an idea of what goes well together — it gets their creative juices flowing.

Both of these examples include items you have for sale, but they come across as timely reminders and tips.

Ultimately, social media should be fun. Try to make it more personal and less formal. I guarantee people will sense that warmth and will be much more excited when you post something new.

Hopefully these tips are an encouragement and a help to those of you just getting started or struggling with social media.

Don't be afraid to try new things, and have fun with it. **LGR**

Laura and Aaron LeBoutillier started Garden Answer in June 2014 where they offer fun, DIY garden videos. Laura grew up working at her parents' garden center, Andrew's Seed Co. in Ontario, Oregon. They can be reached at contact@gardenanswer.com.

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