

TV ADS: DO THEY REALLY WORK?

**There are many
advertising avenues
available to you;
find out if TV
advertising is
your best choice.**

By Carrie Burns

Catch phrases, jingles, beautiful and famous people, loud and annoying voices — do these TV advertising tactics really work? Do TV advertisements in general even work? Now, we aren't saying buy a \$2 million spot during the Super Bowl, but take a look at what you can afford. It could be well worth the dollars.

WHY TELEVISION

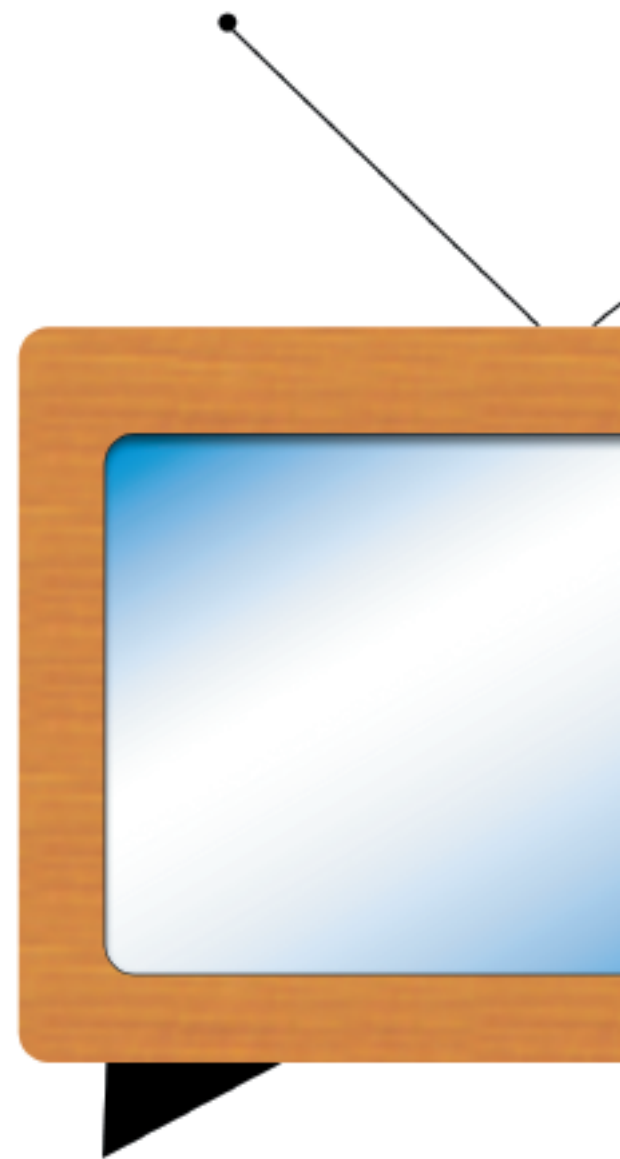
With so many advertising avenues — billboards, newspapers, radio and more — why might television be a good choice? Numbers show that people are watching television now more than ever. According to the Television Bureau of Advertising and Nielsen Media Research, viewing in 2000 increased one hour and 18 minutes since 1990. And women, who are likely your most frequent and loyal customers, are the group spending the most time watching television per day, at a rate of four hours and 46 minutes. Men do not follow far behind at four hours and 11 minutes, followed by teens and children respectively (See page 25 for more facts).

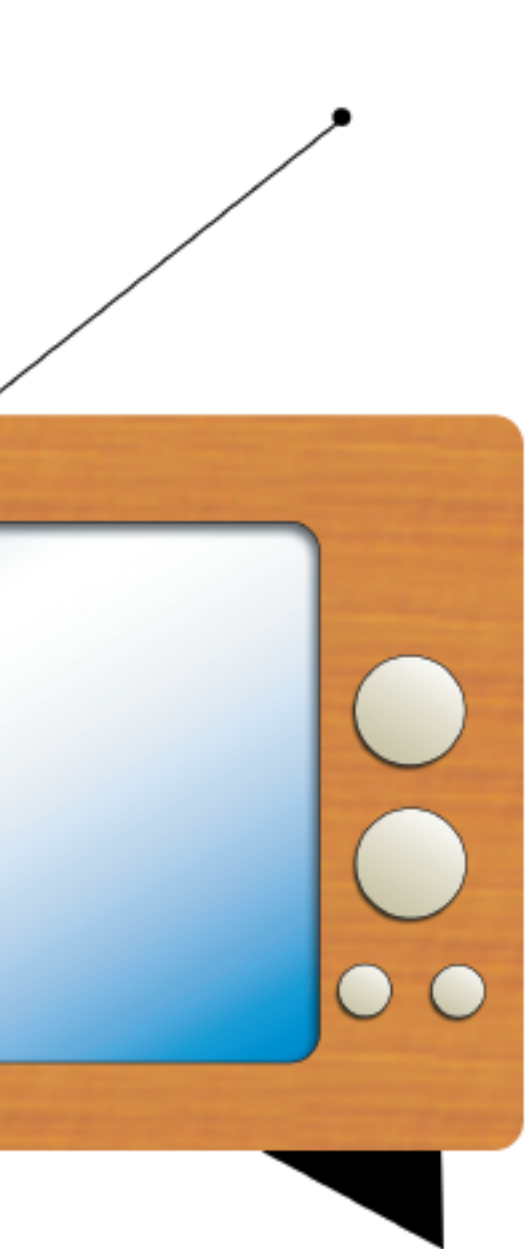
"To touch new customers, we feel that television is the best way," says Steve Sawyer, merchandise manager of Armstrong Garden Centers in California. "We believe that you can't see the beauty of gardening on radio, and our television commercials will emit the beauty of what we have to offer."

IT TAKES PREPARATION

Sawyer suggests you do your research. Use in-store, direct-mail or exit surveys to find out where the best spot for your commercial will be for potential and repeat customers. "Our customers are well-educated, predominantly female, between the ages of 35 and 65, and they like to watch educational-type shows, so we really pound the time lines around 'Jeopardy,' 'Wheel of Fortune,' and news hours," says Sawyer. "It's had great success touching our customers around those time periods."

Not only should you research your customer base, but you should also research your local TV stations. Chalet Nursery & Garden Shop in Wilmette, Ill., took its demographics and what it wanted to all of





the stations to see what each could offer. “When we decided to try it [advertising on television], the retail manager decided to see what the cost would be, so he called all of the major TV stations in the area and asked them to give him bids,” says Jennifer Brennan, horticulture information specialist at Chalet. “He was stunned at how reasonable the prices were. He had always heard that it was a lot more than what he had been quoted.”

Wenke Greenhouses in Kalamazoo, Mich., has been advertising on television for at least 10 years, but it takes months of preparation. “We’re preparing our spring 2003 commercial during spring 2002 in order to get the right shots,” says Lisa Wenke, production manager.

While it is difficult to time commercials according to promotions and sales, holidays are a good chance to remind viewers to shop at your garden center for Mother’s Day tulips, Valentine’s Day roses or Christmas poinsettias. And if you do annual promotions, you can remind your customers of them. Shoot some footage of your general displays this year to use next year. ♦



COST-CUTTING POSSIBILITY

While television advertising might be the most effective, it is also the most expensive. But you can reduce the costs with co-op advertising. Many vendors are more than willing to share the cost of advertising with you if you share the time. Armstrong has found that co-op advertising helps and has been doing it since 1997. The company airs 30-second ads with an 8- to 10-second spot for a vendor and now has more than 50 vendors involved in its TV advertising campaign. “It works for both companies involved,” says Sawyer. “It’s a positive, all-around, win-win situation.” (See the March 2002 issue of *Lawn & Garden Retailer* for more information about cooperative advertising.)

The best time to run a commercial? Outside of prime time — morning, afternoon and late night. During daytime soap operas and news segments are both less expensive and beneficial slots, again, with the majority of women watchers. “We went through the morning news, the morning soaps, intermittent through the afternoon and then at the 4 and 5 p.m. news,” says Brennan. “We didn’t go after those hours even though the cost was a lot more that way, because those



A FEW TELEVISION FACTS

All facts are from the Television Bureau of Advertising.

Television has been the top advertising medium in the United States since 1994.

- In 2000, \$59,231 million was spent on television advertising, followed by newspapers with \$49,050 million. Direct mail came in third with \$44,591 million, followed by radio, yellow pages and magazines.

**Source: Universal McCann*

It's no secret that people spend a lot of the day watching television, but just how much?

- In 1950, television households spent about four hours and 35 minutes a day viewing television. In 2000, the average time spent viewing television was seven hours and 35 minutes.

**Source: Nielsen Media Research*

So what's the top TV ad component?

- Local station television was the largest in 2000 with \$25,806 million, followed by network television with \$15,888 million. Cable television came in third with \$14,429 million.

**Source: Universal McCann*

grocery store. "Because they saw the ad and because it looked so good, they decided to come up here," says Brennan.

If the commercial brings customers in, then it's doing its job. You have to take care of the rest.

If you have quality product, it will show on television, unlike black-and-white newspaper ads. The colors of your live goods, the greens of your foliage, the textures and depth of your hard goods will all be apparent to potential cus-

tomers. As with other advertising methods, decide if television is right for you, make your spot the best, and they will come. 📺

Carrie Burns is associate editor for Lawn & Garden Retailer.

were the best times to reach the demographics we wanted."

DOES IT WORK?

Most importantly, does TV advertising work for our industry? Wenke's customers look forward to its ads, which feature Lorence Wenke, owner and president. Wenke has been using humor in its commercials for the past 5-6 years, and it seems to be working. "We have customers that come in and say, 'I love your commercial,' or something like 'Your commercial is so cute,'" says Lisa about her father's commercials.

Chalet just began advertising on television this past Christmas season and has had great feedback from customers, although it is a little early to review the numbers. Christmas was a good time to monitor the results rather than during May when days are busy. The commercials have drawn in customers from up to 45 miles away who would most likely not stop in on the way home or to the