

Selling Roses to the Next Generation of Gardeners

How can we sell gardening products to Millennials? Grabbing the attention of young gardeners is a popular topic in our industry today because the subject resurfaces very often in our industry magazines. There will never be one quick and easy answer on how to grasp this young audience's attention, but there are certainly trends and lifestyle habits that we can learn from the 20 and 30 year olds that will help us reach the next generation of gardeners.

One product category that can be a struggle for this population is roses. One way or another, everyone in the world has a connection to a rose. One may remember seeing garden roses in their grandmother's garden as a young child or perhaps they

received a bouquet of roses from a loved one. Roses are the National Flower in our great nation, yet the younger generation is often intimidated to add them to their garden. Why is that?

There is a perception among my peers that garden roses are time consuming and require a lot of work. Now more than ever, breeding companies are looking for disease resistance, low water requirements and easy maintenance in all of their genetics — all characteristics that busy, young professionals are looking for when they shop for plants. Rose breeding companies, such as Star Roses and Plants, look for those traits and their varieties are trialed extensively before they are in the consumer's hands. Most rose varieties today may look like your grandmother's roses, but they are bred to be successful and are perfect for

the inexperienced gardener!

There are a few lifestyle habits that we can use to help make the rose category more attractive to the next generation of gardeners: **Google, social media and Millennials' emotions.**

1) How often do we all use Google? Personally, I use my Google app at least 10 times a day because I'm always researching something. Whether it's at the grocery store or at Home Depot, I am curious about the products that I'm looking at and using Google on my smartphone makes this process fast and easy. I love Google ... and so does every other Millennial out there. It's no wonder that it's the No. 1 resource consumers have when going online to look at plant information. Retailers and plant brands should build their sites with plant care information that is easy to access and easy to understand. To be honest, if I can't find the information within 20 to 30 seconds,

I'll leave the site and navigate elsewhere. For retailers, you don't want that to ever happen when someone is looking up your rose brand, so it's wise to build your website and maximize your search engine optimization.

2) As we know, social media is all the rage and currently Pinterest is the most popular social media outlet that this target audience uses.

Pinterest continues to rise in popularity and studies have shown that Pinterest is very highly used when they are looking for inspiration for their own gardens. Create Pinterest boards and that will build confidence for that consumer who is looking for something new to try. This is a great opportunity to show urban gardeners that you can grow a rose in a container or show the young mom that she should plant a fairy garden with her daughter using miniature roses.

3) This leads into the topic of emotions. Roses have connections to individuals' emotions and this is a unique way to capture this audience. When roses are used in a bouquet, they often have a symbolic meaning when a specific flower color is used but that same symbolism isn't recognized in the garden center. Consumers often purchase roses because they're pretty or they smell nice — not because a yellow rose symbolizes friendship. Millennials have a lot of exciting events happening in their lives right now — engagements, marriage, babies and first time home purchases. New business can be created if these sentiments are marketed correctly at retail and the symbolism in roses is captured. As a gift, I have given a white garden rose to a newlywed couple and I gave a pink garden rose to my sister when she had a baby girl.

These strategies can be used for other product categories as well, not just roses. This generation has money to spend, so we need to capture their attention because a positive experience in the garden center today, will lead to future business for generations to come. *gpn*

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