

Creating and Using Social Media

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Definition of social media: forms of electronic communication (such as websites, Facebook, Instagram for social networking) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (i.e., pictures and videos) Note: these are free platforms. Google the platform name and sign up as your club, council or state federation.

What do you want social media to help you achieve? What are your goals? How can you use social media to reach those goals?

Assemble a committee of people with an interest in one of the social media platforms you wish to use (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) Determine Who, What, Where, and When (see below).

Create Guidelines for each platform:

Who is your audience? Members, community, gardeners, floral designers, new homeowners

What is the goal? Membership, information, publicize accomplishments

What values are you providing? Information sharing, education, resources, friendship

What is the focus? Emphasis on information sharing while remaining responsive to social interaction

What tone? Warm, welcoming, cheerful, energetic, and/or light-hearted

Posting frequency? Daily, weekly, or 1-5 posts per week, with monitoring of subsequent interactions

Content? Original material, shared material, photos, videos

FAQ: a list of questions and answers relating to a particular subject, especially one giving basic information.

1. **How do we choose a social media platform?** Poll the membership as to what platforms they use and how often. Facebook seems to be the most familiar to garden club members. Pinterest is also well known and used because it is a do-it-yourself idea site (great for floral designs). Instagram uses pictures with a very brief caption. Stats show that young people use Instagram consistently. Consider whether there are members who will update the platform regularly.
2. **How do we start?** Google the name of the platform you are going to start. Create an account. Record the usernames and passwords. Add names of several members to the account to act as administrators/editors.
3. **What can we post?** Social media is about exchanging information over a broad range of subjects that your membership thinks is interesting. Horticulture, floral design, events/speakers, schools, awards, projects, youth gardening, contests, etc. Create guidelines for the posting committee that spell out exactly what is appropriate and what is not.
4. **What should we include in a post?** PICTURES, GRAPHICS and/or VIDEOS with appropriate attribution. Use your own pictures, if possible, to avoid copyright infringement laws. It is considered best practice to attribute a picture to the owner and site where you found it. This is a world of instant gratification. Everyone wants to see a visual related to the post subject. Facebook allows you to add many pictures to a post. It depends on the subject — one or two for an award or announcement post, but one to two dozen to display flower show exhibits. Add the state website URL, if appropriate, so non-members can find a club near their location (be aware that a non-member doesn't know where "Dig and Dream Garden Club" is located). Complete information on the Facebook page to include the website, city, state, phone, email, and other social media links, and do the same for Instagram in the biography where the website, location, phone, and email should appear. Remember that posts with pictures and less than 40 words are the most appealing to viewers.
5. **How often should we post?** Post often! Once a day on Facebook is not too much. Your followers may not see every post unless they are interacting with the platform regularly. Encourage users to "like" a post or respond to a question with a comment as that will bring future posts to their Facebook feed. Respond to people who comment on your posts. Look at your Facebook "insights" to see the day and time your followers are online. You can schedule the posts accordingly (probably not at 2:00am because it might be low on their feed by 10:00am).
6. **How can we increase the number of people who follow us?** • Write or post a picture about different subjects. • Ask your followers to invite their friends to follow the platform. • Invite people who have responded to a post to "follow" you. • Remind the membership about the various platforms in newsletters and emails and give them a direct link (see icons on the front page of KIT for examples). • Respond in your platform's identity to other Facebook or Instagram posts. • Use analytics to guide your strategy. (Keep in mind that if your page's post is a share from another page, then someone shares your page's post, your page name will not show on that person's post because only the original page will show.) • Create a content calendar if there are several people posting. • It takes time to build a following.