

Features

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Chatting with Laura LeBoutillier

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Laura and Aaron LeBoutillier make up the popular Garden Answer team, creating fun and inspiring garden-related content seen on many social media platforms. Their immense popularity has prompted industry brands like Proven Winners, Espoma and Crescent Gardens, among others, to partner with Garden Answer to reach consumers. We reached out to Laura to talk about trends, video and what she thinks retailers can do next year to make their message count.

Q: What trends are you seeing that consumers are

loving and why?

LL: We've seen huge interest in Supertunias, specifically. Mine always perform extremely well and I can't tell you how many photos I get from our followers who are excited because this is the first time they've had success planting annuals.

Q: Your videos get shares that sometimes number in the thousands, with hundreds of comments. What advice do you have for retailers looking to build their social media presence?

LL: Consistency is key. We think what has helped us is setting a schedule on when our content goes up and sticking to it, not taking extended breaks (social media never sleeps ... if you need to take a break, use the scheduling feature to auto-post your content on the days/times you want it to go up), and to just keep making content and posting it. Aaron was a huge encourager in the "just keep going" area. Oftentimes, I'm not 100% happy with how one of my pictures looks or how the project turns out and he always just says, "Content is king. It doesn't have to be perfect. Just put it up and start working on the next project!"

Q: What are some tips you can provide about creating quality video content?

LL: Audio is probably the most important. We provide a link under all our videos on YouTube and on our website sharing all the equipment we use to create our videos. We didn't start with fancy camera equipment (and we still don't use top-of-the-line gear), but audio was important from the beginning. Also, on the content side of things, create a nice mix of inspiration versus education. If we can create something that inspires someone to get out and try something new in their garden, that's the first step. Then we back it with some good "meat and potatoes" videos providing them with the knowledge they need to see their project through to the end. One hundred percent education

is boring—you've got to start with some inspiration first!

Q: What are a few of the questions you hear from consumers most often?

LL: The two main questions we hear the most often are: “How much did that cost?” and “How much water do I give it?” I think, as people in the industry, you can't get away from the fact that people want something that's awesome, yet inexpensive, coupled with the most basic knowledge to keep it alive.

Q: Where do you think independent retailers have the most opportunity for 2018?

LL: We think that the most important opportunity for them to focus on is their staff. They need to have a staff that is friendly and welcoming to the younger generation. Retailers, now more than ever, have to be a step ahead of Amazon. Amazon does not have knowledge and can't offer a knowledge base, but retail centers can and if you staff your store with non-gardeners you're setting yourself up to fail. If your staff knows less than the description the consumer can find in the Amazon description, there's no reason they need to buy it from you. Garden centers must have something that Amazon doesn't, and people will come in and shop (and even pay a little bit more) if they know there is added value. **GP**