

Kiss My Aster

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Pushing Your Comfort Zone on Instagram

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I have a love/hate relationship with social media more than anybody. I'll be the first to say that it's done so much for me and my career. It's still the best, cheapest and most effective way to reach customers ever, but ... I use it so much that I get so weary; it truly is a job in itself. I fall into a rut and my goals get hazy. Before I know it, I'm adrift in the sea of "wait, what was my point again?"

Today I'm mostly talking about Instagram—you should use it, as always, to sell stuff. For a garden center, that's most likely plants, hardgoods or services (not just design, but classes or the knowledge of your staff).

It's easy to get either too literal (photos of flowers, forever) or too personal (this is where I slip up; I should always be selling that I'm a freelancing plant genius and not share photos of me, drunk at Hamilton).

I want you to shake up your social media feed with photos of ... people. Mostly employees, but customers too, if they're okay with it. They should be next to or holding plants, not at Hamilton. (Unless you brought plants to Hamilton with you because that would really be awesome. Wow!)

People love flowers, sure, but it seems that people like photos of humans even more. And by including photos (or extra points for video) of your employees, you're helping customers feel more comfortable shopping with you. When you snap photos of plants, you're showing people what you have. When you take a photo of a person, try to tell a bit of their story.

Think less about showing and more about telling. You should also be using the multiple photos option to share more information while you have an interested audience.

Here's how to break into it:

Take three photos of something that just came in—let's say it's some lovely Philodendron Selloum. You can make the first photo a 100% predictable shot of the leaves. This is your comfort zone.

For the second photo, we're going to run away from your comfort zone. The shot will be of an employee holding or standing next to the plant. Even better, add a video of an employee talking about why it's their favorite plant or telling

where it's located in the store from the entrance.

The third photo will be the philodendron in position, in a house with staged, but normal, house stuff around it in the proper light setting. You're giving customers with zero imagination a view to how this plant will look in their life. If that's impossible (real talk: it's not impossible, but it is difficult), set it up in the shop as best you can with all the accoutrements you can sell with a houseplant, showing people EXACTLY what you should do with a Philodendron Selloum. You can even use a flat lay photography. Tell this houseplant's story.

Use the multiple images function on Instagram and write:

"We just received eight of these gorgeous Philodendron Selloums and we don't think they're going to last long! Here's our beloved employee, Anakin, with his favorite container option for them. They're \$30 each (in gallon pots). Perfect for bright, indirect light and good vibes. Come on in and meet them."

It does NOT matter how many you got in, put eight on the sales floor and see what happens.

And then you've got to add your hashtags, which can follow the above text or be added into a comment. The only difference is a pretend aloofness and you can post right to Facebook without messy hashtags.

HASHTAGS: #PhilodendrumSelloum #Philodendron #philodendronlover #philodendronfanatic #girlswithplants #plantlady #yournursery #yourtown #Theneighboringtowns #houseplants #plantsofinstagram #plantnerd #plantshop #gardencenter #houseplantclub #indoorjungle #plantsathome #indoorgarden #plantlovers #plantinspiration #planttips #anakinrules #comfortzone #theend **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author. Her blog is planted at KissMyAster.com and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.