

## Features

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# On the Media: Tonkadale Greenhouse

*Jessie Jacobson*

The digital landscape is constantly changing. It's tough to be seen, it's tough to keep up and it's challenging to continue to develop new, original content. The keys to success? Start small and don't try to do it all. Figure out what strategy or platform will generate the best engagement.

Right now, email is getting the best results for us with open rates and click rates higher than average. Our current open rate hovers at 48%. I often hear comments from customers about how they consume our content. I would say 50% is email, 50% is Instagram. Reliance on social media as a primary form of marketing will change as we move forward. One thing will always be true: Consistent, authentic content will capture the attention of viewers and get noticed.

Set yourself up for success with specific goals. Keep your mission, vision and values at the forefront of everything you do.

## Media Team Goals

Having clear goals helps to outline the tasks to be done. Here are our Media Team goals here at Tonkadale Greenhouse in Minnetonka, Minnesota:

- Introduce new customers to Tonkadale.
- Speak seamlessly to all customers and bridge the virtual experience with in-store experience.
- Visual storytelling that is recognizable by style and voice.
- Curate content that speaks to many interests and demographics all at once while creating a layered customer journey (Plant Parents, Legacy Customers, Indoor/Outdoor Focuses).
- Problem solve, via self-guided or hands-on.
- Drive in-store sales.
- Brand awareness and recognition.
- Market position to increase market share.
- Have it be fresh, exciting, entertaining and ever-changing to consistently capture the attention of an audience in real time with a seasonally evolving product assortment.

## How We Do It

Let's start from the top! Keep in mind, all platforms should speak to each other with consistent branding, images, graphics and voice.

Our website is a catalog, an educational resource, a place our content points to and a place that organizes and houses all of the content we create; i.e., it's a digital library.

Web development and maintenance is a very time-consuming task. You have to know how you want your website to work for you. The user experience has to be top of mind (and this is hard), as we greenhouse people are not experts in the UX (i.e., user experience) space.

We do have an online store that adds to the customer experience. We use this as a catalog of indoor plants, annuals, perennials, a selection of home décor items that tell the story of the season, new vendors, local vendors, potting soils, amendments and solutions. All are useful to have online because we can send links to customers when they have specific gardening or problem-solving questions. We also group products into categories for ease of shopping—annuals, perennials, hanging baskets, local vendors, giftable items, etc. In a perfect world, customers can see LIVE inventory in all categories. Customers use our online shop as a catalog and resource to see what's new and what's available. Detailed product descriptions also help push your website higher in search.

We continue to develop our "Learn" page as the best place for information about plants and gardening. The learn page features our blog, mini blogs—perennial and indoor plant of the week—podcast, perennial plant resource library, video page and indoor plant care cards. Our media team is continuously updating our care card information, streamlining blog posts, formatting, checking links, deleting old, adding back tags, updating with current information.

Most of the content we create is housed on our website and is pushed out on social media.

## A Typical Week Looks Like This

**Reels:** Four or five with one open concept to feature something fun or trending, other topics relating to the theme of the week, new shipments, mini blogs, unboxing, behind the scenes, a day in the life at Tonkadale and so much more!

**Story Series:** New products, blog links, video links, unboxing, fresh Friday finds, reposting user-generated content, popping on to talk about events, timely topics and fun.

**Static Posts:** One or two per day on the topic for the week, some posts are topical and repeat weekly or monthly. They include gorgeous images that are consistently light and bright.

**Blog:** One long form, 500 words or more, that speaks to the theme of the week, what you should be doing in the garden right now, how-tos and answers to frequently asked questions.

**Mini Blog:** Indoor Plant of the Week and/or Perennial Plant of the Week. QR codes on plant signage point to these blogs.

**Video:** The most effective use of video seems to be the 90-second reel right now, moving away from YouTube format, which is a totally different orientation, still posting MP4 on YouTube for distribution in stories and in email.

**Email:** Our Wednesday email is informational and covers events, sales, mini blogs and new product arrivals. Our Friday email is more inspirational and tells the story of the season. It includes our long-format blog and video, and seasonal product selection, all of which relate to the theme of the week.

**Podcast:** We're super-new at this platform and still trying to get into a rhythm here. The goal is to publish once per month. We have 12 podcasts to date. It has been fun to interview staff in their area of expertise or interest. We also

interview local vendors and suppliers, which is huge right now!

**Illustrations:** Coloring pages, one per month, on theme for the month. Sometimes we have coloring contests, which are a big hit!

**Infographic:** One per month related to a seasonal or educational topic such as how to plant trees and shrubs, re-potting, how to plant a raised bed, houseplant watering guide, and so much more! This blog features an infographic and a care card.

**Photography:** Product photos for our online catalog, static wall posts, stories, email slides and blog posts.

We're not currently focusing on TikTok or YouTube specifically. We would need to dedicate about 10 to 15 more hours/week to do a good job on these platforms.

## Who Does What?

**Aaron:** Photography, email design, content calendar draft and finalization, overall strategy, "week of" email to the team. Works on contract with a monthly fee agreed upon annually, about 20 hours per week depending on the season.

**Brooke:** Reels, video editing, blog posting, stories, graphics, print materials including apparel, branded merch, signs, banners, gifs, care cards. Full-time employee, 40 hours per week.

**Megan:** Illustrations, UX, web design/consulting. Two illustrations per month, special projects and trouble shooting. About 20 hours/month.

**Hannah:** Indoor plant mini blogs, one mini blog per week.

**Perennials Team:** Long-format blogs related to perennial garden topics, what to do in the garden, perennial of the week mini blogs, care cards, garden designs, online store inventory and maintenance. This team works ahead in the off-season to have all materials prepared ahead of spring. One day per week to manage online store in season.

**Kelly:** Idea generation, branded merchandise coordination and design, trends, online store for the hardgoods category. One-half to one day per week depending on the season.

**Caitlin:** Online store for indoor plants, one-half day per week.

**Jessie (that's me!):** Blogs, web maintenance (needs to do more), copywriter, editor, big-picture concepts, video personality, dancing, reels and education.

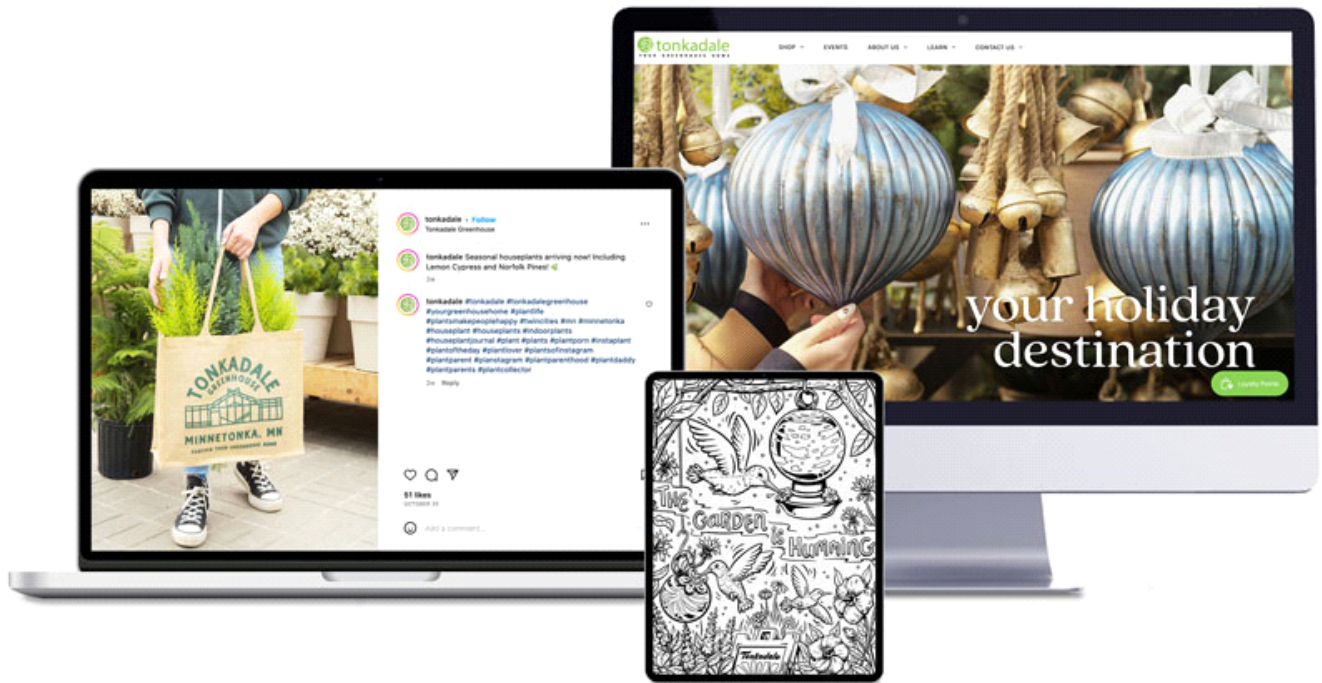
That's it, that's us. We love what we do and believe we create joy and meaning in our community and in the lives of our customers and staff members. That belief is the building block for amazing content creation. So get going! **GP**

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Visit [Tonkadale's website](#) to see the online shop, "Learn" page and more.



*Laptop: An example of a social media post about a new product for sale.*

*Tablet: An example of a coloring page posted on the website.*