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Features

12/31/2025

Celebrate—With Plants!

Maria Zampini



Christmas trees, wreaths and poinsettias: Most likely, you're usually up to your eyeballs in traditional holiday stock. But once the seasonal madness—and sales—end and you've had a minute to catch your breath, what's going to sustain sales until, and then after, spring?

Start the New Year off right with a beautiful blooming amaryllis.

Fortunately, with a little planning and creative POP displays, you can benefit from a slew of lesser-known holidays and life celebrations to promote plant sales. I'm not talking about the biggies, like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, or Easter; I know you've got those covered. Instead, look for opportunities to celebrate lesser-known holidays, as well as major life milestones, where plants make the perfect gift.

Let's dive right in with New Year's Day, shall we?

Once all the twinkle lights and sentimental holiday décor are packed away, our homes look rather bleak just when we need a bit of brightness and cheer during cold, dark winter days. New Year's Day provides the perfect opportunity to promote houseplants, forcing bulbs and even those leftover amaryllis. In fact, my friend Julie never starts her amaryllis bulbs in time to flower for Christmas—she waits a bit later, so she'll have blooms to brighten her home after all the holiday pretties are packed away. Encourage customers to choose a colorful blooming orchid or houseplant with fabulous foliage to give as a New Year's Eve or Day hostess gift—or to buy as a little treat for themselves to celebrate the New Year.

Leaning In on Unique Holidays



While Valentine's Day (February 14) is one of the biggies for the cut flower industry, it's also a terrific time to promote long-lasting floral and foliage gifts.

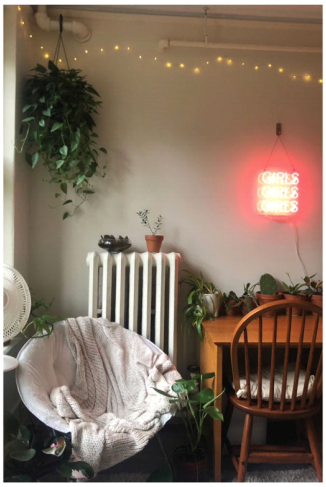
But you already know that.

Instead, to supplement your February sales, Lunar New Year (February 17) offers a great opportunity to elevate auspicious plants in your displays and promotions. From bamboo and money trees to jade plants, bonsai, orange trees, peace lilies and anthurium, you'll find a wide range of plants traditionally tied to good luck, financial well-being and renewal to jumpstart Lunar New Year. (Who doesn't need a little luck in our lives, courtesy of a pretty plant?)

Set the mood for the spooky season with goth gardening using dark-leaved plants like this Mangave Black Magic.

Ready for Spring

If you've surrounded yourself with auspicious plants, you'll be ready to dive into the busy season by the time spring rolls around in March. Since customers crave the return of longer days and thawed soil, why not throw a celebration on March 20 for the First Day of Spring? From seeds to get the garden started to frost-tolerant flowers, like pansies, violas and hellebores to blooming shrubs for instant gratification, customers will adore special displays filled with beautiful blooms after a long season of gray days. Consider hosting a spring garden party—an event offering giveaways, garden speakers and activities for the kids. Anytime you can positively connect with the community, you'll build additional loyal customers.



And if you'd really like to connect with your local community, consider hosting an Earth Day event (April 22). By promoting the planting of flowers, trees and shrubs, you'll help educate local homeowners about how plants benefit the ecosystem. Consider creating a display of pollinator-friendly plants, showing how they benefit native bees, butterflies and birds. Host a talk about how to create welcoming habitats that not only benefit wildlife—but look great in the landscape, too. For the youngest visitors, let them plant a few seeds in a recycled container to take home. Grow the next generation of gardeners by nurturing kids' natural interest in all things messy. (Their parents will appreciate the kid-entertaining activities, I promise.)

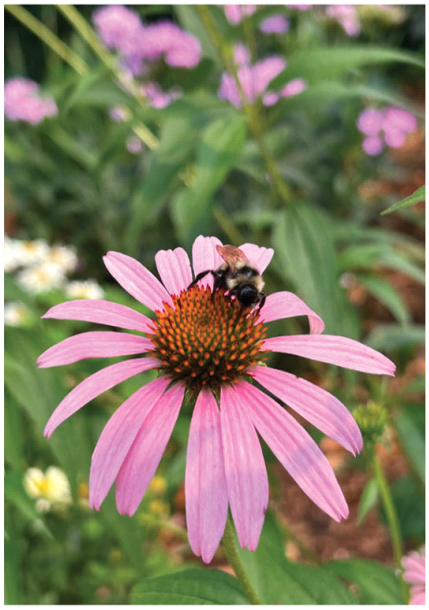
Give the gift of greenery and well being to a student or teacher for back-to-school.

While spring lures ambitious gardeners to shop early—even if the temperatures still hover in the freezing zone—by May 1, everyone is ready to spend more time outside. Consider promoting May Day. Once celebrated as the perfect time to leave a tussie mussie secretly on a neighbor's doorstep, today's May Day can evolve into dropping a sweet spring gift of a potted plant or cute blooms for a garden bed on a porch. In today's divided climate, a thoughtful, neighborly gesture of an anonymous flowering plant helps bring kindness to your community. After all, who doesn't love a sweet surprise?

Celebrating Life

And what's a sweeter surprise that an invitation to a wedding celebration? While June traditionally reigns as the prime wedding month, these joyful celebrations take place anytime. To celebrate the happy couple, consider not only picking something practical from their registry, but add a personal touch by gifting them a houseplant that can grow

along with their love. Choose something low maintenance and easy to grow: Christmas or Thanksgiving cactus, jade, pothos or a monstera. As the couple celebrates anniversaries, your gift will become a treasured family heirloom.



As we roll into sweltering July days, your displays fill with all things red, white and blue. But as the last fireworks fade, how will you draw customers as the temperatures rise? Consider promoting World Nature Conservation Day (July 28). Not only is it a perfect opportunity to promote pollinator and native plants, but it's also a good time to push some of your hardgoods: rain barrels, bird feeders, bat boxes, organic soils and compost tumblers. If you really want to draw a crowd, invite a local wildlife rehabber to speak at your event—and encourage them to bring a few furry friendly ambassadors.

Families will adore the chance to learn more about wildlife conservation.

Earth Day, on April 22, is a great time to give the gift of pollinator plants, like this echinacea.

And in the blink of an eye, it's back-to-school season. In 2024, American families spent $38.8 billion on back-to-school essentials, with the college crowd spending more than $12 billion. While this author will never understand the current trend of hiring professional dorm room decorators at a cost of $10,000, we can all agree that the typical cinderblock shoe boxes our kids inhabit for four years need some hominess. So why not promote plants as the perfect items to send back to school? Not only will a pretty houseplant brighten a dreary dorm room, but it also helps boost a student's mood.

A study published in the Journal of Physiological Anthropology found that active interaction with indoor plants can "reduce physiological and psychological stress" in young adults. With beauty and health benefits, promoting plants for back-to-school makes good sense. (Plus, consider promoting a small plant as a lovely gift for a teacher's desk. Goodness knows teachers need all the de-stressing tools possible.)



Getting In a Mood

As we roll into fall, I know you've got the traditional mums and pumpkins covered, but are you taking advantage of the Goth Gardening trend as we lean into the spooky season? Gather your darkest plants, those with the purple and near-black foliage—like Dark and Handsome Helleborus, Viola Sorbet Black Delight, Dark Side of the Moon Astilbe, Mangave Black Magic, Black Pearl Heuchera and Summer Wine Black Ninebark—and let your imagination fly as you create a creepy Halloween display. After all, consumers spend approximately $13.1 billion on Halloween, according to the National Retail Federation. Why shouldn't the green industry lean into the Halloween hype?

Money Tree makes a great gift for multiple unique holidays, like Lunar New Year and even Tax Day. Photo credit: Costa Farms.

National Plant a Flower Day, National Hydrangea Day, Houseplant Appreciation Day, Random Acts of Kindness Day, National Orchid Day …with hundreds of little-known specialty

holidays on the calendar, you'll find plenty of opportunities to promote plants. Scan the QR code to check out National Garden Bureau's comprehensive list of garden-related holidays to choose ones that appeal to your company. You might even celebrate Tax Day with plants. Depending on how well your accountant uncovered hidden deductions, a plant is a nice thank you. Or, if you're licking your wounds over a hefty check heading to Uncle Sam, perhaps you might treat yourself to a Money Tree, as a gentle reminder to be better next year.

But one holiday I hope you'll consider—that we all can benefit from right now—is World Kindness Day (November 13). Create a display encouraging customers to pick up a plant to give to another. Maybe a friend needs a little cheer. Perhaps a hairdresser went out of her way to fit in a client. Maybe a child's teacher spent extra hours helping him understand Common Core math. Or consider surprising your favorite barista with a green treat. After all, everyone needs a little kindness in these crazy days and you can remind customers how easy it is to spread joy—with plants. **GP**

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