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7 Steps to Communicating Sustainability

Jennifer White

Over at Sustainabloom.org, Melinda Knuth, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, shared a series of excellent tips on how to communicate environmental sustainability to consumers. Here's the high-level view..

1. Translate your production practices by framing them as outcomes for the consumer (and society at large). Instead of technical descriptions of your water recycling, explain it as a benefit. However, that doesn't mean vague claims (because ... read on).
2. You still need specific terminology to describe what you're doing and to create transparency, trust and credibility. Melinda suggests providing verifiable claims, using third-party certifications to back up claims and to offer traceability.
3. Frame sustainability as a value, not a trade-off or just a technical feature. Melinda writes, "In sustainability communication, particularly within floriculture, this involves linking environmentally responsible practices to outcomes that consumers care about, such as product quality, longevity, cost-effectiveness and alignment with personal values."
4. Use storytelling. This improves consumers' memory retention and often helps them create an emotional connection. If you share the story of how your greenhouse adopted IPM practices, it's both relatable and creates that all-important credibility.
5. Know your audiences and recognize that different segments view sustainability in different ways. This means tiered and targeted messaging.
6. Talk about your progress. Consumers are more receptive to transparent stories about improvement than they are claims of perfection.
7. Integrate sustainability into your brand identity. This builds trust and makes your claims more authentic than a one-off label claim.

That's the high view. **GP**