

## A SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE FOR FLORAL RETAILERS AND WHOLESALERS

### Case Study: Riverview Flower Farm and Florida Friendly Plants

#### Company History

Established in 1982, Riverview Flower Farm started with just a 3-acre operation producing 4-inch annuals, garden mums, and poinsettias for the local independents. In the late 1990s, the owner Rick and Dave Brown developed what has become one of the most recognized and successful mass merchant brands in the industry and they started by keeping the tables full of high-quality, good-performing color and native plants that can grow well in Florida. Riverview Flower Farm is currently one of the largest green goods suppliers to 144 Home Depot stores throughout Florida in USDA Climate Zones 8-11, with nearly 30 million units sold under the **Florida Friendly Plants** (FFP) brand.

The marketing for Florida Friendly Plants started with just a single tag. It did not take long before Riverview Farm decided to trademark the name and capitalize on its popularity by putting it on signs, tags, banners and trucks, etc. Even though the initial marketing campaign was rolled out in small steps, the success of the program was significant: Florida Friendly Plants vastly outsells the same non-branded product at competing big boxes (some are even located at the same major intersections). In order to sell more total product, Riverview Flower Farm also allowed flowers and plants from other brands to sell under the FFP brand if the plants could survive in the humid and hot Florida weather conditions.

The relationship with its exclusive retailer, The Home Depot, has also contributed the success of Florida Friendly Plants. The VMI (Vendor Managed Inventory) program allows Riverview to drive the volume of the business and keep the shelves full and fresh. Another key success factor of the FFP program is that it ensures that all retail locations have sufficient tools to relay pertinent information to the customers. FFP provides employees a 36-page pocket-sized guide containing photos and information about Florida Friendly Plants for helping customers. Of course, because the guide contains answers to most consumers' questions and has improved the training of store staff, this has enhanced FFP's reputation.

The success of the FFP program has enabled some plants to be marketed at a somewhat higher price, and the company can adjust the product mix based on various regional demographics and buying trends.

## Success in Social Media

As for the adoption of social media, Riverview Flower Farm has introduced a blog and updated their popular website to reinforce their FFP goal, which is to help Florida gardeners be successful with plant selection, use and design. Since there is so much plant and gardening information available, general gardening information has little benefit to Floridians gardening in their subtropical climate. The goal of the blog is to get gardeners to come to the retail locations and ask for plants that can perform well for them. Additionally, to enhance better communication with consumers, the blog posts and subsequent questions that are raised by blog followers (including the garden associates in Home Depots) provide timely tips regarding Florida gardening.

Besides that, an important use of the blog is to direct customers to featured plants that can be found in stores season by season. This pull-through strategy helps the company augment their reputation with the large retailer by getting customers into the store and they might buy other items as well. Rick Brown, co-owner of Riverview Flower Farm, mentioned that "...the blog took a tremendous amount of thought and time, but it is headed in a direction we feel will be effective in our marketing." Another emphasis of the blog is the eco-systems services benefits of using environmentally-friendly approaches to Florida gardening.



In addition to blogging, there is also a FFP Facebook profile where the blog articles and videos are linked and reaching users of Facebook. This not only enables messages to be seen using multiple social media channels, but also encourages higher levels of customer engagement. Users can provide comments and share their experiences and pictures in a mutually beneficial way, and most importantly,

Facebook allows the staff managing the social media platform to learn more about their followers. They can also identify social influencers (folks who seem to have credibility among the gardening public) on its blog and Facebook page who write back and forth constantly in the comment section to increase traffic on each other's blogs. Those users themselves are usually garden professionals who have many other users looking to them for advice as well.

Despite all of these positive attributes, using social media tools does not always guarantee positive results. One of the problems companies struggle with is maintaining a consistent message. Riverview is able to overcome this problem by being actively involved himself in the social media implementation for his business. He posts pictures frequently and uses them to increase the exposure of his business. It's his knowledge, reputation, and his voice that carries the messaging. People like the fact that they get to interact with the actual owner of the business. According to Rick, "They want to connect with your business and they want to know who you are. If you're bouncing all over the place and you've got different people doing things and are inconsistent, you're not sending a clear message that people are interested in and they'll just walk away from it. There are so many other things going on, they won't spend any time there."



facebook 12 Search

**Florida Friendly Plants**

Wall Info Photos Discussions Links Video +

What's on your mind?

Attach: Everyone Share

**Florida Friendly Plants**

*Bluestem Flower Farm's Florida Friendly Plants*

Flowering Perennials Native Wildflowers

Edit Page  
Promote with an Ad  
Suggest to Friends  
Remove from My Page's Favorites

Write something about Florida Friendly Plants.

**Information**

Founded: 1982

**Insights** See All

**3.8** ★ ★ ★ ★ Post Quality

**66** Interactions This Week

Most Active Countries

**United States** 22 View All

Insights are visible to page admins only.

**100 Friends Like This**

6 of 100 Friends See All

|                          |              |                  |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|
|                          |              |                  |
| Elizabeth Ludeman Kraker | Shem Duffy   | Sally Thompson   |
|                          |              |                  |
| Laura Wright             | Draem Echter | Susan O'Halloran |

**Florida Friendly Plants** Another Florida Friendly butterfly plant.

**Secrets of a Seed Scatterer: Texas Lilac Vitex, Another Cool Purple**  
seedscatterer.blogspot.com

Texas Lilac Vitex is also known as Mexican lavender, lilac chaste tree, hemp tree, monk's pepper, Indian spice or Vitex. Vitex agnus-castus is not a native plant in the US.

Yesterday at 7:21am · Comment · Like · Share · Promote

Bill Ray likes this.

Susan Gillespie I have the pink version and it is a very busy place for wildlife. I love the smell of the flowers as much as the bees do.  
Yesterday at 7:46am · Delete · Flag

**Florida Friendly Plants** We have a cardinal nesting in our patio umbrella in our pink themed area.  
Yesterday at 9:02am · Delete

Susan Gillespie cool  
Yesterday at 3:56pm · Delete · Flag

Write a comment...

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**Florida Friendly Plants** Susan is in the pink this morning.

**Simply Susant: PINK-a-licious**  
simplysusantplace.blogspot.com

To a self-confessed "girly-girl," pink really is a delicious color. And, the combination of pink and green is my all time favorite. When I see the two colors together, my heart goes pitter-patter and my soul sighs with satisfaction. ...

Yesterday at 7:00am · Comment · Like · Share · Promote

Susan Gillespie Beautiful  
Yesterday at 7:44am · Delete · Flag

Margies Cottage Florist so vtry beautiful.  
10 hours ago · Delete · Flag

Write a comment...