



Creating and Using Social Media www.gardenclub.org

Definition of social media: forms of electronic communication (such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest for social networking) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (i.e., pictures and videos) Note: Social Media are free platforms. A Club can create a website at no charge, but often an inexpensive web design company can be located allowing for more creativity.

What do you want social media to help you achieve?

What are your goals?

How can you use social media to reach those goals?

Assemble a committee of people with interest in one of the social media platforms you wish to use (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

Determine Who, What, Where, and When (see below).

Create Guidelines for each platform:

- Who is your audience? Members, community, gardeners, floral designers, new homeowners
- What is the goal? Membership, information, publicize accomplishments
- What values are you providing? Information sharing, education, resources and/or friendship.
- What is the focus? Emphasis on information sharing while remaining responsive to social interaction
- What tone? Warm, welcoming, cheerful, energetic, and/or light-hearted
- Posting frequency? Daily, weekly, or 1-5 posts per week, with monitoring of subsequent interactions
- Content? Original material, shared material, photos, videos

FAQ: a list of questions and answers relating to a particular subject, especially one giving basic information.

1. **How do we choose a social media platform?** Poll the membership as to what platforms they use and how often. Facebook seems to be the most familiar to garden club members. Pinterest is also well known and used because it is a do-it-yourself idea site (great for floral designs). Instagram uses pictures with a very brief caption. Stats show that young people use Instagram consistently. Consider whether there are members who will update the platform regularly.
2. **How do we start?** Google the name of the platform you are going to start. Create an account. Record the usernames and passwords. Add names of several members to the account to act as administrators/ editors. Facebook Administrator: The role with the most authority and control. Editor: The second most authoritative role. Editors can do everything admins can except manage other page roles and settings. Moderator: This role is primarily for managing people, comments, messages, and ads. Best policy is to have 2 Administrators on Facebook.
3. **What can we post?** Social media is about exchanging information over a broad range of subjects that your membership thinks is interesting. Horticulture, floral design, events/speakers, schools, awards, projects, youth gardening, contests, etc. Encourage sharing original posts, by doing this it will build your numbers of followers. Pictures of your upcoming events and projects with local community members and your club members attracts engagement from viewers. Create guidelines for the posting committee that spell out exactly what is appropriate and what is not.
4. **What should we include in a post?** PICTURES, GRAPHICS and/or VIDEOS with appropriate attribution. Use your own pictures, if possible, to avoid copyright infringement laws. It is considered best practice to attribute a picture to the owner and site where you found it. This is a world of instant gratification. Everyone wants to see a visual related to the post subject. Facebook allows you to add many pictures to a post. It depends on the subject — one or two for an award or announcement post, but one to two dozen to display flower show exhibits. Add the state website URL, if appropriate, so non-members can find a club near their location (be aware that a non-member doesn't know where "Dig and Dream Garden Club" is located). Complete information on the Facebook page to include the website, city, state, phone, email, and other social media links, and do the same for Instagram in the biography where the website, location, phone, and email should appear. Remember that posts with pictures and less than 40 words are the most appealing to viewers.

5. **How often should we post?** Post often! Once a day on Facebook is not too much. Your followers may not see every post unless they are interacting with the platform regularly. Encourage users to “like” a post or respond to a question with a comment as that will bring future posts to their Facebook feed. Respond to people who comment on your posts. Look at your Facebook “insights” to see the day and time your followers are online. You can schedule the posts accordingly (probably not at 2:00am because it might be low on their feed by 10:00am). Post early in the day so your audience can check your page before their day starts. Schedule posts for a day ahead or a week ahead of time in the Business Suite on Facebook. Scheduling gives you the freedom of going on vacation and sleeping in.

6. **How can we increase the number of people who follow us?**

- Write or post a picture about different subjects.
- Ask your followers to invite their friends to follow the platform.
- Invite people who have responded to a post to “follow” you.
- Remind the membership about the various platforms in newsletters and emails and give them a direct link (see icons on the first page).
- Respond in your platform’s identity to other Facebook or Instagram posts.
- Use analytics to guide your strategy. (Keep in mind that if your page's post is a share from another page, then someone shares your page's post, your page name will not show on that person's post because only the original page will show.)
- Create a content calendar if there are several people posting.
- It takes time to build a following.

7. **Why use the “hashtag”?**

- Hashtags are, of course, used to categorize content into themes and topics. When people search for a specific hashtag on Facebook/Instagram they're super interested in a topic and looking to explore further content. Therefore, by using a relevant hashtag, you can put your content in front of interested users.
- Hashtags turn topics and phrases into clickable links in your posts on your personal timeline, Page or groups. This helps people find posts about topics they're interested in. To make a hashtag, write # (the number sign) along with a topic or phrase and add it to your post. Although you can use both upper and lowercase letters for clarity, hashtags are not case sensitive. #plantamerica. #PlayOutdoors

8. **Creating Original Posts**

Canva app: Canva is a graphic design tool that makes creating custom graphics easy. It's easily accessible by phone or tablet and is user friendly. Not only can you use it to spice up your social media content, but you can also use it to design things like presentations, newsletters and websites. The basic Canva app is free.

Photos: Some websites with stock photos to use in your posts: <https://pixabay.com/> <https://unsplash.com/> <https://www.freeimages.com/> Using stock photos avoids copyright issues on Social Media platforms.

9. Evaluating how your Social Media Platform is Performing

Facebook:

- Where to Find Facebook Post Data?
- Go to your Facebook page and click on "Insights" at the top menu.
- Engagement, how many views, how many comments
- Increase engagement by asking open ended questions

Instagram:

- You Should Track to Measure Performance
- Link Clicks
- Comments Per Post
- Instagram Stories Engagement

10. Maintaining your platforms daily

- Negative comments can be hidden or deleted.
- Respond to Questions
- Respond to Messenger promptly these are "Private" comments or questions

Visit NGC's Social Media platforms on a regular basis

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NGCSOCIALMEDIA/

Instagram: www.instagram.com/nationalgarden/

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/natlgardenclubs/

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUnNSWjpNiff8QuqH534bMA>