

Ready to Grow On?

By Amanda Long

New plant parents mean new plant questions, and you can only be so many places at once. Here is advice from our featured florists on how to train your team to field questions and guide customers more effectively.

Start Basic. Ask customers key questions to help find their perfect-fit plant: How much light will your plant get? Will your plant be near a window? How much space will your plant have — and in which direction will it be able to grow (vertically vs. horizontally)? Do you have kids? Pets? Are you an “overnurturer” (who might overwater) or a forgetful type (who might rarely water)?

Be honest. Share which plants aren’t easy to keep alive, and steer new plant buyers to the hardier ones. “People are always asking me why their succulents are dying,” said Nicole Palazzo of City Line Florist in Trumbull, Connecticut. “They have this idea that they’re easy to take care of. We want to make sure plant lovers know what they’re getting in for — so they keep coming back.”

Get fancy. Use stylized language and descriptions to sell plants, particularly online, via social media and over the phone. Pepper your pitch with words such as “premium,” “upscale” and “impressive.” Use trendy design lingo to describe your containers (“modern,” “clean,” “boho,” etc.). Remember, being both precise and vivid can help you capture added revenue while delivering top-notch service.

Find and share info. If you don’t know pest management or in-depth plant maintenance, pair up with a local garden center to be your “care partner,” said Eileen Weber, AAF, of Lake Forest Flowers in Lake Forest, Illinois. Follow plant influencers and join Facebook plant groups. When you re-post plant-care information on social media (and you should do so often), source them and tag them. Post watering charts and train new employees on them, making sure to update when new inventory comes in.

Cross-train. “As a fast-paced retail florist, generally everyone in the shop is cross-trained to do just about every job,” Palazzo said. City Line, however, does devote a few designers to double as greenhouse go-tos who are plant and horticulture experts. “Although their main job is to be a designer, if you can't find them, I can guarantee they are taking a minute in the greenhouse, probably for serenity,” Palazzo said. “It's unbelievably peaceful in there.”