

Flowering Creations

Most people probably go to Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida, for the fun rides and games and yummy theme park treats, but during the annual Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association meeting held in the city in May, there was one attraction on the agenda: topiaries. The massive topiaries created by the staff at Busch Gardens take months to complete. The largest topiary at the park, called “Spirit of Spring” (top), includes more than 160,000 individual plants and weighs over 34 tons. At 18 feet tall, the topiary took two months to complete with a full-time team of 10 employees.



Do Your Homework

Want to impress a client who needs a consultation for his or her front yard? Better study up! According to a recent landscape study by Houzz, **41 percent of homeowners want a new front yard that’s extremely different from their neighbors.**

So when thinking about how to sell services that will increase a client’s curb appeal, first check out what their neighbors are working with. Then plan upgrades for your customer. Consider improvements that more than half of those updating their front yards are looking for: the addition of beds or borders, **new shrubs** and planting perennials.

Another popular item to help make a client’s front yard stand out? Lighting, of course. Nearly half of homeowners making outdoor renovations are updating lighting, and 73 percent are choosing LEDs. Keep this in mind, too: **1 in 5 homeowners want smart lighting they can control from a computer or their mobile device, according to the Houzz study.**

55% of homeowners spent more than **\$15,000** on overhaul projects

48% spent under **\$5,000** on major projects

73% spent under **\$5,000** on minor projects





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5 Digital Marketing Tips

Earlier this year at the Northeast Hardscape Expo in Providence, Rhode Island, PMC Media Group presented to a group of landscape design professionals ways digital marketing can help your business. Here's a breakdown of tips from Emily Hattub, operations manager, and Amanda Brayman, social media director.

1 Focus on SEO
Develop a content marketing strategy that helps drive your website keywords so organic search will improve and your business will move to the top of Google listings.



2 Find your audience
Determine who your online target audience is. Learn more about who you're bringing in now to your website or social media, and who else you want to capture, depending on your business goals. Even if you have a big audience, engagement is the key. So craft your online presence so it's one your followers want to interact with.

4 Use hashtags
Research which hashtags in your field are the most popular and stay on top of it, because they'll change often. PMC advises to avoid market confusion by staying away from hashtags that correlate to your business. For example, don't just use #VMAs because the Video Music Awards are trending on Twitter.

3 Choose your platform
PMC Media says that you don't have to be active on all social media platforms, so choose the ones you will maintain regularly. You can set up a schedule and prepare posts ahead of time, so you're not "panic posting." You should also set up a protocol for how you'll respond to your audience's comments, whether they're good or bad.

5 Link your accounts
Hattub and Brayman's No. 1 suggestion: Don't forget to link your social media accounts to your website. Google likes it if everything is tied together. "It's the freakin' 'Hunger Games' here, people. Everyone is fighting for attention," Brayman says.

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Backyard Makeovers Wanted

What is the most popular reason why your clients are asking you to spruce up their backyards so far this season?



- 39% Defined gardening space
- 33% Spend more time with family
- 14% More seating areas
- 14% Desire to cook outdoors