

Approach and background information for consumer communication during the coronavirus crisis

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Note: Where the table of contents includes an (R) behind the topic, the background information refers to Research.

1) GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION AROUND FLOWERS, HOUSEPLANTS AND OUTDOOR PLANTS

These guidelines have been drawn up to provide insight into which approaches we do and do not want to use for communication through the Flower Council of Holland's consumer channels. We have looked at what flowers, houseplants and outdoor plants can do for you, with appropriate sensitivity during the coronavirus crisis. That has led to the following:

- We will continue to share inspiring content, where the focus will be particularly on more general inspiration and knowledge that we share about flowers and plants +
- We will look at the benefits of flowers and (outdoor) plants that could be particularly relevant now.
- We will steer clear of benefits that may be sensitive (air purity).
- We will explore what role flowers, houseplants and outdoor plants can play in people's lives at this time.
- We will share content that cannot be offensive.
- We will take into account of the cultural differences between countries.
- We will take into account of the varying availability of flowers and (outdoor) plants in each country.
- The right tone of voice is important now more than ever. Remain positive, without being deaf to the general mood. We will adopt a more muted approach, instead of shouting from the rooftops.

NOTE

- The information below is NOT copy, but can serve as inspiration for creating content.
- The input should not be copied literally, but used sensibly in keeping with our consumer channels and in keeping with the times.
- The background information has been collated from various external sources. When this document is used internally and externally, it is up to the user to check the information and sources themselves carefully.
- No rights can be derived from using the input provided below.

2) TOPICS

We are currently using the following topics to communicate. Each topic in turn can be broken down into multiple pieces of content.

a. Flowers

- Positive effect of flowers
 - o Example: A bouquet helps you shake off your morning grumpiness. Because we should at least start the day positively.
 - o Example: Treat someone to a smile with flowers (flowers instantly produce a genuine smile (Duchenne) on a person's face.)
- The symbolism/message of flowers (focus on: gratitude, appreciation, strength)
 - o Example: Lisianthus represents gratitude
 - o Example: Gladioli represents appreciation
- The symbolism/message of bouquets
 - o Example: White bouquets create peace in the home
- Flowers enhance your immediate surroundings
 - o Example: Bouquet recipes
 - o Example: Upgrade your bathroom and bedroom with flowers
- Get to work with flowers > DIY
 - o Example: DIY home spray with the scent of spring flowers
- Knowledge update: practical flower information
 - o Example: These are classic spring flowers

b. Houseplants

- The positive effects of plants
 - o Example: Plants in your home reduces stress
 - o Example: How to restore equilibrium to your plant, and thus also yourself
- The symbolism/message of plants (focus on gratitude, appreciation, strength, hope)
 - o Example: Aloe represents patience
 - o Example: Clerodendrum represents opportunity
 - o Example: Yucca represents protection
 - o Example: Cymbidium represents friendship
- Plants enhance your surroundings
 - o Example: How to create a green home workspace
 - o Example: Turn your bathroom into a home spa
- Get to work with plants > TO DO
 - o TO DO: Teach your child (and yourself) more about plants
- Knowledge update: practical plant information
 - o Example: These are houseplants that don't require much care

c. Outdoor plants

- The positive effects of outdoor plants
 - o Example: Work in the garden to clear your head (20 minutes in your garden reduces stress)
- The symbolism/message of outdoor plants (focus on gratitude, appreciation, strength, hope)
 - o Example: Jasmine represents strength
- Outdoor plants enhance your outdoor surroundings
 - o Example: Create a peaceful oasis on your balcony or in your garden
- Get to work with plants > TO DO
 - o TO DO: These are the spring jobs for in the garden and the balcony
- Knowledge update: practical outdoor plant information
 - o Example: These are outdoor plants that will do well for years

3) Background information FLOWERS

a. Flowers offer a powerful symbolism

Nearly all flowers have symbolism. These are also listed in every flower guide. The symbolism can help you communicate a message. To say that you are thinking of someone, to thank someone, to offer encouragement, etc. For instance, the pink [rose](#) represents appreciation, the [delphinium](#) symbolises protection, the [gerbera](#) brings joy, a [lisianthus](#) represents gratitude and the [gladiolus](#) symbolises admiration. The associated symbolism is listed for each flower in our flower guides.

b. Flowers are a positive emotion inducer

An Environmental Approach to Positive Emotion: Flowers

(Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/147470490500300109>)

Three different studies show that flowers are a powerful positive emotion inducer.

Flowers elicit a genuine smile (Duchenne) in women

In study 1 flowers always elicited a Duchenne or genuine smile when presented to women. Women who received flowers reported more positive moods 3 days later.

Flowers encourage more positive social behaviour

In study 2 a flower given to men or women in a lift elicited more positive social behaviour than other stimuli.

Flowers enhanced episodic memory in those aged 55+

In study 3 flowers that were presented to older participants (age 55+) resulted in positive mood reports and enhanced episodic memory.

Comments

Flowers have immediate and long-lasting effects on emotional responses, mood, social behaviour and even memory for both men and women. There is no theory to explain these findings in any discipline. We suggest the cultivated flowers are rewarding because they have evolved to trigger positive emotions in people quickly, just as other plants have evolved to cause various behavioural responses in a large variety of species that lead to the dissemination or reproduction of the plants.

c. Flowers bring happiness

(<https://aboutflowers.com/quick-links/health-benefits-research/emotional-impact-of-flowers-study/>)

(The Emotional Impact of Flowers Study was carried out by Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones PhD, Professor of Psychology, Project Director, Human Development Lab at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Dr. Haviland-Jones is a psychologist and authority in the field of emotional development in human behaviour and non-verbal emotional signals and responses.)

Flowers bring pleasure and gratitude

Flowers have an immediate impact on happiness. All the participants in the study showed 'genuine' or 'excited' smiles when receiving flowers, which demonstrated exceptional pleasure and gratitude. This response was universal and occurred in all age groups.

Flowers have a long-lasting positive effect on moods

In particular, the participants in the study reported that they felt less depressed, anxious and stressed after receiving flowers, and that they showed a higher level of enjoyment and satisfaction with life.

Flowers create intimate bonds

The presence of flowers led to more contact with family and friends.

Place for flowers

The study also investigated where people display flowers in their homes. Bouquets were placed in parts of the house that are open to visitors - such as halls, living rooms and dining rooms - which suggests that flowers are a symbol to be shared. “Flowers trigger positive emotional feelings in people entering a room,” said Dr. Haviland-Jones. “They make the space more hospitable and create a shared mood.”

d. Flowers reduce stress

(<https://aboutflowers.com/quick-links/health-benefits-research/stressless/>)

With so many sources of stress nowadays - from finances and health problems through to our apparently never-ending to-do lists - most people can feel they're in a constant frenzy. Research by the University of North Florida shows that something simple like flowers can help. The findings show that people who had flowers in their home for just a few days reported a significant reduction in their stress levels and improvement in their mood.

The 2018 study entitled The Impact of Flowers on Perceived Stress Among Women concludes that adding flowers to indoor environments resulted in a statistically significant and worthwhile reduction in stress.

e. Flowers and older people

(<https://aboutflowers.com/quick-links/health-benefits-research/flowers-seniors-study/>)

A six-month behavioural study by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, into the health effects of flowers on older people shows that flowers relieve depression, inspire social networks and refresh the memory as we get older.

f. Flowers encourage compassion, reduce fear and anxiety

Harvard: living with flowers reinforces compassion and reduces fear and anxiety. With people's desire for peace and stress reduction being greater than ever, fresh research provides an insightful view of flowers and the important role that they can play in our daily lives. A behavioural study carried out by Nancy Etcoff PhD, of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, shows that people have more compassion for others, suffer less anxiety and fear and feel less depressed if there are fresh cut flowers present in the home. “Other research has shown that flowers make people happy when they receive them,” says Etcoff. “What we did not know is that spending a few days with flowers in the home can influence a wide range of emotions.”

Participants in the study who lived with fresh cut flowers for less than a week felt an increase in feelings of compassion and friendliness towards others. 2. Flowers dispel fears, anxiety and the blues at home. Generally speaking the people in the study simply felt less negative after just a few days with flowers in their home. Participants most often placed flowers in their kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms where they spend a lot of time at home. They reported that they want to see the flowers first thing in the morning. 3. Living with flowers can boost energy, happiness and enthusiasm at work. Having flowers at home can also have a positive carryover impact on our mood at work. The study showed that people were more inclined to feel happier and have more enthusiasm and energy at work if they had flowers in their home environment.

g. Flowers improve morning grumpiness

(<https://aboutflowers.com/quick-links/health-benefits-research/flowers-and-morning-moods/>)

Harvard Research: flowers are the perfect boost to improve morning moods. Research confirms that flowers are perhaps the perfect boost for millions of Americans who do not consider themselves to be ‘morning people’. Participants in a behavioural study carried out by researchers from Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital confirmed that they feel least positive early in the day, but reported that they were happier and more energetic after having looked at flowers early in the morning. “Morning grumpiness turned out to be a genuine phenomenon, with positive moods - such as happiness, friendliness and warmth - manifesting themselves much later in the day,” says lead researcher Nancy Etcoff PhD. “It is interesting that when we incorporated a small bouquet of flowers into their morning routines people cheered up.”

h. Giver of flowers is perceived as successful, caring and emotionally intelligent

(<https://aboutflowers.com/quick-links/health-benefits-research/power-of-giving-flowers-study/>)

Rutgers: People who give flowers are perceived as successful and caring. Congratulations, thank you, I love you, I’m thinking of you: millions of gifts are exchanged every day by people who want to give friends and loved ones a caring message. According to research by Rutgers University, the gifts that we choose to communicate our special messages say a lot about us.

Researcher Jeannette Haviland-Jones PhD, director of the university’s Human Emotions Lab, investigated what **the gifts that we choose say about who we are, and whether they influence how we are perceived**. The research shows that compared to other gifts, people who give flowers are viewed as **successful, caring and emotionally intelligent**.

More specific findings include: Both men and women who give flowers are seen as **happy, high-achieving, strong, capable and courageous people**; Men and women come across as being more emotionally intelligent; **they give the impression that they can express their feelings effectively and take the time to understand the feelings of others**; and female givers of flowers are viewed as having **greater appreciation of beauty and nature**.

“Our findings show that you can significantly influence and change what people think of you through the gifts that you give,” says Haviland-Jones. “That news is particularly important for those who are interested in **strengthening friendships and romantic relationships, and even business relationships**.”

Discovering the scientific power of flowers is nothing new for Haviland-Jones. Previous research by Rutgers University carried out by her team showed that flowers create immediate pleasure and happiness, and increase pleasure and zest for living. More specifically, after receiving a gift of flowers, the female study participants responded with a genuine smile and reported positive moods that continued for days. The presence of flowers also led to more contact with family and friends.

“Flowers have evolved to trigger people’s positive emotional responses,” says Haviland-Jones. “Every bloom can create a smile on our face and influence our view of a friend, colleague or loved one. That’s powerful. “

4) Background information HOUSEPLANTS

a. There is no life without plants

Plants are essential for life on Earth. The presence of plants releases enough oxygen into the air and provides food. As autotrophic organisms (that convert sunlight into energy through their ability to photosynthesise) plants are the main producers of oxygen, and therefore the basis for most food chains. The life of animals on land could therefore only begin after plants had colonised the land. Therefore, without plants there is no oxygen. Without plants there are no animals. Without plants there is no food. Without plants there is no life.

b. Less stress thanks to living plants

Various studies have shown that people who are around living plants are less stressed than people in a plant-free environment. Hence Charlotte Lelieveld of *Wageningen Environmental Research* (Alterra) says: “Plants lend an attractive look to buildings, which has a positive effect on stress reduction.” And the same applies in your home. Research by Lohr et al (1996) also showed that people in a room full of plants have lower blood pressure than people in a plant-free setting. Plants like jasmine and lavender also spread an opulent, calming fragrance, which makes it even easier to relax.

c. One with nature

Plants enable you to feel at one with nature. They're always there for you, as green points of calm in a world that is moving ever faster. They don't get upset about the issues of the day, but steadfastly carry on doing what they're good at.

d. Air-purifying (Note: this topic in particular can be extremely sensitive during the coronavirus crisis. Please be very careful with it in communication)

What you cannot see are the tiny pollutants in the air. [Formaldehyde](#) in particular is a very common substance. It's emitted by new furniture and floors, curtain fabric, some types of paint and wallpaper glue. Precisely the things that make a room so cosy and colourful. Washing them away won't work: disinfectant cleaning products contain this invisible gas, and vacuum cleaners emit particulates. Help - indoor pollution! Don't panic, but it's a fact that too much of these substances can be unhealthy. Plants help remove these substances from the air and then convert them to clean oxygen. Obviously ventilation is also a must, but not always possible when the weather is very hot or cold. Plants are champions at Particulate Removal (through their leaves) & Humidifying. So decorate your room with plants.

e. Natural temperature controllers

Plants are the perfect temperature controllers. For example, it is recommended that you keep the temperature in a nursery around 18 degrees Celsius. Tricky? Leave it to the plants - they have a natural cooling effect.

f. Plants in the workplace

Research shows that everyone who works with a screen for four hours a day is more productive and demonstrably feels better thanks to plants in the workplace. It is also the case that a large plant for every two employees or a large plant for every 12 m² of office space has a positive effect.

People who work in a room with plants call in sick 20% less.

People who work in a room with plants call in sick less (a reduction from 36% to 16%)*. This is an average of 1.6 fewer days off sick per employee per year.

5) **Background information OUTDOOR PLANTS**

a. **You experience less stress in nature**

Spending at least 20 minutes in nature reduces the level of stress hormones considerably. This can be done by walking in nature or by sitting in a spot in a natural environment.

b. **Royal FloraHolland green factsheets**

Definitely also look at valuable information about the benefit of greenery in the Factsheets from Royal FloraHolland which can be found at:

<https://www.royalfloraholland.com/nl/over-floraholland/duurzame-gezonde-toekomst/duurzame-gezonde-toekomst/de-groene-agenda/factsheets?>

Royal FloraHolland's Green Agenda has developed various factsheets in collaboration with various parties:

- The Green Agenda Factsheet 'Plants and General'
- The Green Agenda Factsheet 'Plants and Learning'
- The Green Agenda Factsheet 'Plants and Working'
- The Green Agenda Factsheet 'Plants and Living'
- The Green Agenda Factsheet 'Plants and Healthcare'