Dear Tim...

HELP ME PUT POINSETTIAS ON A PEDASTAL

Customers complain to my staff about poinsettia prices, claiming that they can get “the same plant for a lot less at the big box stores.” What’s the best way to deal with this?  BRIDGETTE MILLS ARNOLD | OWNER | POSEY PEDDLER | JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

Florists just “jack up” the prices on the same plants, right? Sadly, many customers think this way. Even sadder: The typical florist’s response is to squirm and apologize. But not this year!

Here are some plans to help change customer perception and empower your staff to educate customers instead of kowtowing to them.

Dress for Success
Too many florists unload the paper-wrapped poinsettias from the wholesaler and place them on the floor — maybe, just maybe in a speed cover. If a customer comes to your store, then he or she expects something more interesting than what you were selling back in 1995.

I have seen successful florists present their plants in stylish baskets and add branches (glittering or otherwise), pinecones on picks and more. And yes, they charge considerably more than a customer would ever pay at a big box store. What’s the hook? Simple: Those smart florists are offering customers a unique gift choice that’s only available at a flower shop, and they are not afraid to charge for their creativity and labor. Customers will spend more if you just let them! If they wanted a plain poinsettia, they would have gone to a grocery store — make them happy about choosing to shop at your store!

Educate, Don’t Apologize
Even with the razzle-dazzle elements added to your base poinsettias, some customers will still view them as the same plant being sold where they buy their paint and tools. Look at this as an opportunity to educate shoppers: “We have great new options this year, including our ‘Holiday Splendor Poinsettia.’ We add holly branches and pinecones to the plant and present it in handwoven basket.”

Remind them: “Our poinsettias, artfully decorated by our designers, really make a statement!”

More ammunition for the price-shopper mentality: “Our poinsettias aren’t just the plants you see everywhere, we add (mention embellishments) so they are truly a holiday gift!”

Don’t Say: “I’m sorry our poinsettia prices are a bit higher.”

Do Say: “Yes, these are a bit more, because we have chosen the newest and best varieties that you won’t see everywhere else!”

Tim Huckabee is the president of FloralStrategies, which provides sales, service and POS system training. Tim has spent the last 17 years traveling the globe and educating florists of all sizes to engage customers in bold new ways while learning how these successful shops operate on all levels. tim@floralstrategies.com

Got a sales or service challenge? Tell Tim about it, and he’ll tackle it in an upcoming column. Email tim@floralstrategies.com, or call him, (800) 983-6184.