

EDIBLE ORNAMENTALS CASE STUDY

Company Name:	Edible Ornamentals
Contact Name:	Joanna Plumb
Email Address:	info@edibleornamentals.co.uk
Web Site:	www.edibleornamentals.co.uk
Nature of business:	Horticulture
Main product/service:	Growing chillies, fresh vegetables and manufacturing gourmet chilli sauces

The Effective Promotional Campaign

Background

Joanna and Shawn Plumb grew their first chilli plants when they lived in Texas, USA. In 2001, her brother, a commercial grower, was left with 3000 chilli plants following the cancellation of a major order by a DIY chain. Rather than see them composted, Joanna took over the redundant stock, visited local car boot sales and sold every plant, and Edible Ornamentals was born. For the next few years, Jo and Shawn grew and sold chilli plants, but in 2004 Joanna started pickling Jalapeno and Fresno chillies in jars and selling them alongside the plants. This developed into a range of gourmet chilli sauces which proved a real hit and they quickly outgrew their facilities.



In 2007, they purchased Cherwood, a derelict nursery in Chawston with a vision to develop the site into a centre where people could visit and learn about the exciting world of chilli peppers, fresh vegetables and terrific food. They erected five new polytunnels, built a log cabin for the farm shop, a new commercial kitchen, staff facilities, and on-site storage. All the growing and cooking activities have been consolidated at Cherwood, and to top it off, the nursery is open to the public who as well as buying chilli plants and sauces, can pick their own vegetables and nearly 50 varieties of chillies fresh from the plants.



Edible Ornamentals range of gourmet sauces

Objectives

The prime objective for 2009 was to conduct a PR and media campaign to create greater awareness amongst the public in the region and increase visitor trade to the nursery. A secondary objective was to establish Joanna and Shawn as the UK's leading chilli experts.

Methods

The campaign started in March 2009, when Edible Ornamentals was awarded a grant of £1000 from Bedfordshire County Council to help develop the business into a 'Pick Your Own Vegetable' Centre. A press release on the award was issued and distributed to local, regional and national trade press, on-line press wires and to local radio and TV stations.

The story received coverage in Bedford and Biggleswade local papers, but was also picked up and published in national dailies (Express, Telegraph, The Times, Daily Mail and The Mirror). BBC 3 Counties Radio also picked up the story and contacted Joanna who was interviewed on the Lorna Milton show in May, the Justin Dealy Show in August and has since become a regular contributor on BBC 3CR. Word spread within the BBC, and Joanna has also been a contributor to BBC Radio Cambridge, Radio Northants and Radio Scotland's Fred McCaulay Show.

The story was also sent to local TV stations, and BBC Look East and as a result Joanna was featured in a 5 minute slot on the breakfast, lunchtime, 6 o' clock and late evening news programmes.

A freelance journalist read the story in the Telegraph and contacted Jo and Shawn. As a result they received excellent coverage in an article on 'Chillies in Britain' in The Economist.

The release was circulated to national trade publications, and The Grocer, Fresh Produce Journal, The Grocery Trader and Horticulture Week all ran the story. From this publicity, Edible Ornamentals was approached by From My Farm, a subsidiary of Produce World, who supply leading supermarkets with fresh produce, and Edible Ornamentals was subsequently awarded a contract to supply fresh chillies to Morrisons' stores throughout the East of England.

The Morrisons' contract was the subject of a further press release which received coverage in the local press, Fresh Produce Journal and The Grocer magazines.

As a result of the media coverage, Joanna's reputation as a chilli expert grew rapidly. She was approached by BBC Television and featured on the first episode of the new BBC 2 series 'Economy Gastronomy' which was broadcast in August. Joanna was also visited by BBC Radio 4's 'You and Yours' and was interviewed on Radio 2's 'Chris Evans Show'.





Market Kitchen's Matt Tebbutt with Joanna outside the shop

Her reputation and enthusiasm for quality food was recognised by Slow Food International and she was awarded a bursary to exhibit at BBC's MasterChef Live at London Olympia and promote the benefits of fresh produce.

These events formed the basis of several further news stories which received coverage throughout the year in local papers, regional press, national trade publications and on-line news sites. Edible Ornamentals has also received coverage in a number of specialist chilli blog sites

With growing recognition of her passion for fresh produce and quality food, Edible Ornamentals was selected by Good Food TV and entered for Local Food Hero, a national award organised by their 'Market Kitchen' programme. Results were based on votes from customers and final selection by a specialist judging panel which included celebrity chefs Thomasina Miers and Brian Turner. Edible Ornamentals was awarded the accolade of East Anglian Local Food Hero, and a place in the national

final which was televised in December.

Results

Edible Ornamentals has received widespread press coverage throughout the year in local, regional and national publications. She has made several guest appearances on local radio stations, featured on local TV news, national radio and television programmes and Joanna now recognised as one of the leading UK chilli experts.

From a business perspective, visitors to the nursery have increased threefold from last year. As well as local customers, Edible Ornamentals is now also visited by keen chilli aficionados from all over the UK.

In addition to increased sales at the nursery and local farmers markets, Edible Ornamentals supply chilli sauces to Waitrose in St Neots, and fresh chillies to Morrisons' stores throughout in East Anglia and leading London restaurants. Their entire stock of chillies grown for the 2009 season was totally sold out.

The nursery is now building a reputation not only for fresh chillies and gourmet sauces, but for other fresh vegetables such as spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, sweet corn, aubergines and Swiss chard. The promotional campaign for the year was a resounding success and has laid a solid foundation for continued growth for the 2010 season.

