



MEDIA MASTERCLASS

Winning workshops WITH CLAIRE BICKLE...

So what's the trick to delivering a winning workshop and who am I to tell you?

In a nutshell: Know your audience. Know your subject. Be enthusiastic. Be organised, prepared and engaging.

Having worked in retail horticulture for 17 years and then teaching for another six, one gets to have a reasonable level of skill and know-how when imparting knowledge to others. I think there is always going to be a certain level of natural talent or flair when it comes to standing in front of people and engaging them with a mix of humour, energy and relevant information on a specific topic. Remember, know your strengths and weaknesses. Some people are natural entertainers and educators and others can learn with practice. Develop a style that suits your personality.

The audience: When delivering a workshop consider who is going to be on the receiving end of your presentation. Children, people within the industry, general public or peers.

Adjust your language accordingly:

Keep in mind the level of technical horticultural language that is appropriate to your audience. For example, the use of plant common names when dealing with children or general gardening folk, with a reference to botanical names on the PowerPoint or handouts might be best. But when speaking, or workshoping, to members of the industry, or peers, the use of botanical names consistently is more appropriate.

What's the goal? A workshop without a clear goal will just waffle along and is really a waste of time. Are you going to have a practical activity, a talk or both? This needs to be decided on when drawing up the outline of your presentation. List your main points and then break it down.

Break it up: Use visual aids, discussions and activities. Yes, death by PowerPoint can still be a good thing, as long as you

have it pitched at the right level for your audience and of course have relevant content. Keep in mind when educating others, people have different learning styles. Some are tactile learners, who are more hands-on and find it easier to retain information through doing. Some prefer to read it, which is where a PowerPoint can be handy, while others retain information far better when hearing it from others. So I find having a mix of speaking, visual aids and activities works well for me.

Timing: Is important too. People may feel a bit put out if they've come along to a two hour workshop and it finishes in one and half and vice versa. Always allow time within a workshop for people's questions to be answered and maybe even allow for a break in the middle if it is a two or more hour workshop. Be flexible enough to stray from your prepared banter. If it looks like the audience is getting bored, have a backup plan.

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