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We're a Hit—Now What?

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The recent houseplant trends webinar from *FloraCulture International* (FCI) and the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) was an incredibly informative panel discussion on a topic we all hold near and dear. Houseplants having a global “time to shine” moment to the point of decreasing supplies? “It’s a good problem to have,” someone on the webinar mentioned.

I jotted down a bunch of noteworthy thoughts from the four panelists to share with you here. They include:

Leo De Vries, director of KP Holland: The “greenify your environment” consumer sentiment is strong, especially during the ongoing pandemic. We all need to keep this sentiment going, whether that’s through collective promotional campaigns or some other means. We all should be taking this opportunity post-pandemic to work together on the ongoing concerns around sustainability. Whether it’s geothermal energy, plastics and alternatives, now is the time when all segments of the supply chain can and should dedicate time to making advances for change.

Joseph Roberts, CEO of young plant supplier ForemostCo: He saw demand certainly starting to increase prior to COVID and it keeps growing, with a 60% increase in Q1 2021 over Q1 2020 for his own company. He believes expectations should be tempered; don’t start over-producing and certainly don’t send out poor-quality plants. Joseph suggested starting to increase prices now to move toward sustainability and to use this time of scarcity to reorganize the supply chain.

Alice van Veen, commercial manager of retail plant supplier Royal Lemkes: The positive aspect of plants isn’t a trend in the consumer viewpoint—it’s a lifestyle. And along with that lifestyle, consumers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their own behaviors. We need to address those concerns as that’s the direction consumer belief is headed. Also, regarding the availability issue, Alice said it’s the joint responsibility of the plant suppliers and retailers to help those retailers fulfill their price per square foot expectations.

Michael Perry, UK-based Mr. Plant Geek socials: The younger and newer gardening demographic will be the ones to drive change within the industry. Yes, there was a big jump in demand last year, and Michael does expect some drop in demand with consumers increasingly heading back into the office. But he suspects some of the interest in indoor plants might move to outdoor plants. As for keeping the interest in plants going, Michael believes education is

the best way for consumers to not fail at plant growing and we should all be cooperating in helping to make plants even more mainstream. Enlist a celebrity!

If you missed the June 30 webinar, you don't have to solely rely on me for a rundown of it. You can find a recording of this event, hosted by the folks at JungleTalks, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf70CKvz3yQ. **GP**