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We're Pretty Lucky

Jennifer Polanz



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Independent retailers have it pretty tough overall. There are fewer resources versus the big guys, and you have to work really hard to get your name and your brand out there.

But there's one area where indies excel and that's becoming part of their customers' story. Looking back at this past holiday season, how many times did you have customers come in who always think of you during the holidays? How many events did you have where customers cherished their experience? That's now a part of their story—and you are a part of their story. It's why we go to the same tree farm every year to cut down our live tree the day after Thanksgiving, and take a horse-drawn cart ride back from the field for donuts and hot cider. That's part of our story.

Those are the ties that bind. And after a hard season—whether it's spring and summer or holiday—it's good to look back on the beauty and joy that you've helped spread, many of you for generations! And if you're reading this (and you have been reading this magazine), then we're a part of your story, and you a part of ours, too. I'm honored to be a part of it and hope we continue to provide what you need to keep your story going.

Having said that, what a doozy of an issue do we have for you this month. We have a couple different themes happening this issue and a couple of new features to highlight. Let's start with the holidays.

If you just finished up with the Christmas season, then it's a good bet you're not done at all and you're heading to the winter markets to shop for next year. If so, then we have a preview of what you'll see at market. You also know winter porch pots are growing in popularity and customers love to either pick up pre-made ones or build their own. Find out what makes a fab porch pot.

Our next theme is human resources, kicking off with our annual Wage & Benefit Survey results. It looks a little different this year, thanks to a new partnership with AmericanHort, and data collection and analysis from Industry Insights. Check out the new look. Then read real-world experience on the benefit of, well, benefits from Gardens of Babylon retail general manager Neil Anderson.

But wait, there's more! Bill McCurry continues to tackle the difficult topic of business succession with a look at unique scenarios (let's face it, many succession plans are not cookie-cutter). This is a two-parter that will continue next month.

Now for the NEW! We tapped long-time contributor Katie Elzer-Peters for a new column on applying technology for

garden retail called Tech Connection that will appear every other month. At the back of the magazine we now have Art Parkerson (who you may recognize from a quarterly column in *GrowerTalks* or his full-time gig running Lancaster Farms) writing PlantPop, a new feature showcasing plants in pop culture.

There's more, but I'll let you explore and find it all for yourself. Thank you for being a part of our story for so long and here's to many more!

Here's to a New Year! **GP**