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## Gratitude

Jennifer Polanz



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It's often hard, in the moment, to find the spare time to practice (and express) gratitude. I've found it's something you actually do have to practice and make a habit.

It's also hard when you've been bombarded by negativity, whether that's through day-to-day operations (and interactions with other humans), via social media or the neverending news cycle. And as a reformed newspaper journalist who's still obsessed with news, it's hard to escape.

Instead of dwelling on the negative, I wanted to focus on the positive in this column. For you, May is done, and for better or for worse, it happened and you can breathe a bit now. Think about how many lives you improved by helping them to surround themselves with beautiful plants! Think about the good you put out into the world with

perennials, shrubs and trees that (hopefully!) will come back year after year. And the gifts you helped facilitate for many celebrations, from Mother's Day to graduations, birthdays, anniversaries and more.

Think about the kids who may have helped their parents plant or who learned about the benefits of the new plants going into their outdoor spaces. They could have worked with plants in May through a school gardening program. Heck, one of them may eventually grow up to work at your store or go on to major in horticulture in college.

On a personal note, I'm grateful for the place I have in the industry and for the people I get to work with every day (they are ah-mazing!). Though I work from home, I come into the Ball offices in West Chicago several times a year, and it's always reinvigorating and restorative (especially when the grounds are in full bloom).

I think practicing gratitude not only helps you remember how far you've come, but also guides you to where you want to be. And speaking of where we want to be, let's talk summer and full inspiration for outdoor spaces. You've sold your customers the plants, but that's not always enough to create the livable outdoor environments they crave.

We're focused on outdoor décor. I've cast a wide net here, encompassing casual seating, outdoor art, fun and funky stakes, statuary, bird accessories, and more that can let customers create their own vibe. You can find tips and trends, then merchandising inspo, and a preview of the Casual Furniture Market and Gift Market in Atlanta this July.

Then we turn our attention to this year's field of *Green Profit*/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award finalists. Every year we ask our three finalists to write an essay and this year we had them tackle work-life balance.

One of last year's finalists, Samuel Di Rito, appears in this issue, too, with a guest column on the factors they consider when buying live goods. They don't have a point-of-sale at their third generation retail store, so they must

pay close attention to details to know what to buy.

And, finally, while we're grateful for many things, theft and shrink are not among them. Bill McCurry is tackling a three-part series on the topic, which has lots of different threads related to it.

Two more things I'm grateful for are you, my dear reader, and our wonderful advertising partners who help us help the industry. Without either, we wouldn't be here, so thank you for your continued support!

Here's to being grateful for another go. **GP**