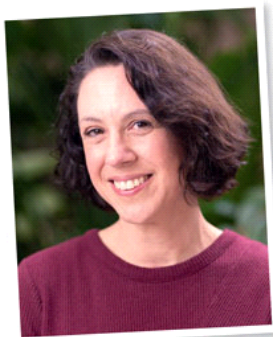


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The Perks of Being a Trade Editor

Jennifer Polanz



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Besides working with people who kick butt and take names on the daily, there are a few other perks to this gig (hint: it's not waking up at 4:00 a.m. to catch a 7:00 a.m. flight out of CLE for most travel).

One of them is boxes of sample plants from industry breeders during the spring. It's like Christmas morning when those boxes show up (sometimes with the clearly marked "This Side Up" pointing the wrong way). I've even trained my kids with the proper protocol for plant arrival—open the boxes, remove the plants and unsleeve them immediately, making sure they're not dried out. This comes in handy when I've just caught one of those 7:00 a.m. flights.

And while it's a very lovely perk to have beautiful plants on the patio and high-yielding plants in my raised bed (thank you to the breeders who send them!), it's also beneficial to my job. I can tell fairly quickly which ones are going to be showstoppers at retail and which will withstand the brutality inflicted by most consumer gardeners.

We all know the vast majority don't feed their plants regularly, and some quit watering by late summer, if they make it that far. Between busy summer schedules, vacation and work travel, I may also fit this description, though I try my hardest not to. So when something doesn't just survive my garden gauntlet, but thrives in it, I know it's special.

It's a pretty high bar we set, expecting plants to survive despite our best efforts, but in today's busy lifestyle plants have to withstand some abuse. And I think breeders are really stepping up to the plate with some tough and beautiful introductions to fit that bill. They're working on lots of aspects of plant health on the annuals side, from building disease resistance, improving branching and flowering, and addressing the length and strength of the blooms for bigger, bolder shows all summer. Breeders are also increasingly looking at shoulder-season introductions to give retailers (and their customers) more to choose from in early spring and late fall. There are lots of ways for you to check out these plants, too, at trial locations around the country to see how they do in your region.

You can read about all the cool new annuals intros our team saw at this year's California Spring Trials that have the potential to pop at retail. Then flip the magazine and see even more new intros. And stay tuned in the next couple of months for more introductions in different segments, like edibles and houseplants.

As you'll read in this issue, too, consumers are increasingly turning to perennials as longer-term solutions for pollinators and returning blooms. For that, Lowell Halvorson dives into perennials that are perfect for late summer blooming. And info on pollinator plants and other eco-friendly (think drought and stormwater runoff) landscape

options from Andrew Bunting.

One of the other perks of being a trade editor is checking in periodically with our Young Retailer finalists. This spring, I got to do more than that—I got to visit 2015 finalist Jenell Martin at her new garden center! You can read about her experience, including the plants she can't keep in stock.

On the business side, there are two stories you can't miss: Bill McCurry continues his excellent investigation on shrink, this time addressing theft specifically; and longtime garden center owner David Williams talks about the logistics and the emotions of selling his business. According to David, one of the perks is exploring the hobbies you hardly had time for as an owner.

Thank goodness my hobby is gardening! **GP**