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Just in Case

Jennifer Polanz



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I fully admit the cover story for this issue may be irrelevant by the time you read it. Or it could be more relevant than even I know at this point, as the economic situation keeps changing. I feel like maybe a trip to a fortune teller is in order or—like on our cover—a good shake of a Magic 8 Ball. Or a third option I've been exercising lately is going outside and touching grass, quite literally.

In preparation for this story, I've been reading articles, scouring data and trying to figure out just what the next six to nine months will bring. It's really not very clear. Unemployment is ticking up slightly, but nothing worrisome (as of press time). Same with the Consumer Price Index for May. However, the National Retail Federation cited an analysis it did with the Federal Bank of Richmond surveying CFOs that showed

business sentiment is lower than any point in the past four years. Retail hiring is down, according to the NRF, and companies are pulling back on orders.

More questions abound. Will there be a recession? Will there be more staycations this summer? Will consumers keep spending or tighten it up? According to a late May McKinsey report, more than 60% of those surveyed said they either already have changed or are expecting to change their spending habits in response to tariffs. However, we all know what consumers say they will do and what they actually do are often two different things. Take spring—when weather was great, so were sales in the garden center, generally. People did spend—will they continue?

In my cover story, I focused on a few key areas just in case consumers start tightening up their wallets. If they don't, hold on to it for the future—the advice likely won't change. I asked people who've been through economic downturns and hardships how they got through it and what their indicators were looking back. I asked financial experts what their advice is for navigating uncertainty. And I tried to give a larger picture of how the tariff back-and-forth can impact our industry's small businesses and their relationships overseas.

I have to say, too, I'm pretty darned proud of this issue. It is JAM-packed with great stuff. We roll right into our Made in the USA feature, which got so much response there will be another one in the August issue. I got to interview world-famous photographer Anne Geddes—who was just a lovely person—about her photo shoot with 14 (yes, 14!) babies and a wide variety of gorgeous Wave Petunias to celebrate Wave's 30th anniversary.

Moving on to the plant side of the issue, we have our annual (ha!) recap of California Spring Trials, where our lovable

Bobbleheads distill down their picks for independents. (You can see more varieties on the *GrowerTalks* side, too.) Once you get those new varieties, display gardens are a great way to show customers what they'll look like. Find out more about creating those, and how to get in on receiving early intros. You can also find out more about trial gardens to evaluate those new varieties.

But, wait, there's more! Perennial expert Paul Pilon gives us a rundown of tried-and-true perennials that are long-blooming and long-lasting in the garden. Then Andrew Bunting highlights shrubs, trees and perennials that are great for low water conditions.

Yes, that's all in this issue, along with our fantastic columnists, PlantPOP, Consumer Buzz and more. I hope this issue helps you create a successful plan for the rest of this year and into next, whether it has to do with your financial planning, plant buying or product orders.

And seeing as this is our Cultivate issue, I want to invite you to join us at 8:00 p.m. Monday night (July 14) at the Unplugged event at Gaswerks for our *Green Profit*/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award, where you'll meet this year's three finalists and hear our winner announced. And don't forget to stop by the *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* booth at #2403 to say hi! Find out all the details about the show at cultivateevent.org.

Here's to a great second half of 2025! **GP**