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Throw a Party

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We are not party people in our household. We don't entertain a lot, and our home is a mostly quiet sanctuary (aside from the occasional dance party in the kitchen). But when my daughter graduated high school, it was cause for celebration and time to party. Which made me stop and look around a bit.

Yikes.

Here's a peak at some of the pots that popped off for the party, along with the front bed (Bright Red Beacon Impatiens for the win!).



We don't like clutter, so there's not a lot of that around, but there was definitely some sprucing up work to be done inside and out, and some work that just wasn't going to happen in time (like repairing all the damage to the door frames the dang cat has caused). We focused mostly on the outside, since we were hopeful we'd have good weather, which we did. It was a beautiful summer day filled with friends, family, food and fun (and it wouldn't be a Midwestern party without cornhole with new scarlet and gray bags, of course).

I need to take a moment to thank all the companies that sent me sample plants this year—American Takii, Bailey Nurseries, Benary, Burpee Home Garden, Concept Plants, Danziger, Dümmer Orange, PanAmerican Seed, Proven Winners, Suntory Flowers, Syngenta Flowers and Westhoff (and any one else I inadvertently missed in this list). Boy, did you all make me look good! I promise I'm taking notes and pictures

and will send you all feedback on how great these plants did. We received so many compliments on how beautiful everything looked, and that was still mid-June, before everything really started popping off.

It made me realize that inviting 50-plus people to your house makes you take a real hard look around to see what you look at on the daily with fresh eyes. I've heard this from garden centers, too, who are stops on industry tours. It's a LOT of work, but many of them say it's a great exercise to refresh the place, get the whole team motivated toward a goal and get excited. And they're grateful for the feedback, both constructive and positive, they receive from tour guests. That's the other benefit, honestly. Sometimes it's nice to hear, "Hey, the place looks amazing!" So, if you're feeling down, or need a little refresh, throw a big party!

I know three people who've made some changes to their retail operations in recent years and are in the party mood: my cover story subjects. In "Retail Revamp," I highlighted three businesses that either had a "glow up" (as the kids say) with renovations to their greenhouse, a new purchase or a new build. Take a look and consider what might be in your budget for the future.

Buying season for 2026 is upon us and there are two items here to mention: the second Made in the USA feature (the first was in the July issue), as we had too many submissions to get them all in! And the distributor show list. As I write this, we're about to head to Columbus, too, for Cultivate'25, so stay tuned in the September issue for retail products from the show.

For live goods, our Bobbleheads continue their coverage of California Spring Trials this month with edible options to entice customers. And Dr. Richard Ludwig gives us more options for replacing the lawn, a trend I'm seeing increasingly mentioned on social media. As we mention in that story, don't forget about Reduce Your Lawn Day on May 20. You can visit ReduceYourLawnDay.org for all the details.

There's so much more in this issue for you to peruse at your leisure. Enjoy. I've taken a break and now I've got three years to plan the next graduation party. Maybe I'll get those door frames fixed by then.

Here's to the joy of a good party! **GP**