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Crazy for Cut Flowers

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For the last couple of years, there's been a steady stream of cut flowers on our kitchen island. Whether they're from my own garden or the mini bouquets from Trader Joe's ($3.99 FTW!), just about every week or two I replace them with something fresh. I can't even begin to say how much joy I feel from such a simple thing as a small vase of cut flowers.

That's why I decided this year I'm going to grow more cuts. I started small last year, growing easy ones like a couple different kinds of marigolds. This year I'm adding more easy ones with zinnias and ageratum. I'm working my way up to the complicated stuff.

It seems I'm not the only one who's interested in providing their own little ray of indoor sunshine with cut flowers, either. We're hearing more about cuts—everything from brides opting for locally grown, sustainable flowers and consumers buying them at farmers markets to garden centers offering their own U-pick flower fields. And while statistics from the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) show only 16% of U.S. consumers regularly put cut flowers on their grocery list, Gen Z and Millennial consumers are more likely to have them on their list. That's why—for this industry trends-themed issue—I reached out to a couple retailers I know who've installed their own fields to find out more about what they're seeing and if the interactive nature of the fields is an attraction.

One of those retailers, Tina Bemis in Massachusetts, credits (and jokingly blames) Ball Seed's Cut Flower Specialist Dave Dowling for her entry into the market. She attended a workshop he led at a Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association meeting and was hooked on the idea from the start (he's apparently very persuasive!).

You can read more about what Tina experienced with her flower field, but one thing crystallized when talking to her and Jenne Martin of Jenne's Garden Center & Farm in Myerstown, Pennsylvania: there's a romantic idea of growing a flower field that's more sepia-toned and less, well, realistic. It's why people may be more likely to visit an existing flower field for cuts versus growing their own. Basically, it's tough to grow a field of anything, but it's especially tough to produce cut flowers en masse.

There will be some retail customers, though, who are up for the challenge, so we also have a story on great cut flower options for beginners from contributor Andrew Bunting. He's always done an excellent job rounding up plants that make great options for retailers to carry.

To continue with the industry trends theme, we've got our resident Trendspotter Katie Elzer-Peters in this issue talking about unique promotions and activities that can set your garden center apart—including dried flower activities, as well as a deeper dive into that 2026 Axiom Gardening Outlook Study we mentioned in the last issue from none other than Axiom Marketing Founder and CEO Mike Reiber.

But, wait, there's more! From new products we spotted at winter trade shows to smart uses of AI in an IGC and strategies to drive more container sales this issue is as packed as a Valentine's Day bouquet. Don't miss Amanda Thomsen's tale of fraud and the surprising change that occurred in her business afterward. There's lots more, too, but you can find those gems as you peruse these pages.

To make our way back to cut flowers, there's a lot of joy in giving and receiving flowers. So while the act of growing them can be a challenge, providing beautiful blooms during slower periods can delight your customers and keep them (and their friends and loved ones) coming back week after week in the summer and early fall. **GP**