greenPROFIT

First

3/31/2026

“What a Treat!”

Jennifer Polanz



That’s one of several positive exclamations I heard while eavesdropping on visitors to this year’s Philadelphia Flower Show and I concur wholeheartedly. What an absolutely treat.

The Philly Flower Show has been on my bucket list for quite some time and this year I decided it was important to head out there to see what was inspiring consumers (that delightfully checked box now moves the Chelsea Flower Show to the top of the list). Why did an estimated 235,000 people turn out over nine days to see more than 50 installations of pure horticulture joy?

There seemed to be many reasons, like the Polar Vortex that descended on a large swath of the U.S. this winter that kept people indoors (stir crazy is real, y’all). It could have been interest in the theme “Rooted: Origins of American Gardening,” which highlighted everything from pre-colonial plantings to modern landscapes. Perhaps it was the cut flower displays, showcasing gorgeous and dramatic arrangements. Or the competition classes that yielded award-winning specimens from gardeners of all skill levels. The Design Gallery also fascinated many (me included), with jewelry and art creations taking on greater significance the closer you looked, as you could see the individual petals and foliage used to create them. Some were there to meet, catch up and meander through the beautiful installations.

And then there was the ability to make something. In a future issue, Katie Elzer-Peters is going to write about two topics that this show really hammered home: maximalism and the importance of making something. Tu Bloom’s Potting Parties were full and he must be exhausted after conducting four a day for almost the whole run of the show! There were many different crafting options depending on what you wanted to bring home. The Bloom Bar was busy and I saw several people wearing the flower crown creations they bought there.

Floral wear is a whole other topic—I had NO idea I would see such fashion. From flower hats to floral-themed clothing, people came ready to be SEEN. I made a mental note to up my game considerably when I go back. What this all boils down to? People were having fun with flowers. It was an event and they understood the assignment and were here for it. And “event” is different than a “shopping trip.”

How does that translate to everyday retail? I think it depends on the store. If you’re a destination location, you’re far more likely to be able to turn those visits into events. If you’re a local garden center that relies on repeat visits from

the same customers, that's a deeper relationship. I do think hosting a "show" of your own could be a great way to bring in customers to inspire, educate and get them thinking about their own landscapes. For inspiration, Hicks Nurseries on Long Island just hosted their 36th Annual Flower & Garden Show in March.

If you're not able to host one, you could still participate in some of the other flower and home and garden shows hosted around the country. We'll have a story in the coming months, too, on what that can look like. But enough about upcoming stories—what will you see when you open the pages of this issue?

Ellen Wells gives us the rundown on fertilizer and strategies for getting customers to feed their plants this year. This is one area where there's plenty of room for growth in messaging and sales.

I tasked freelance writer Matthew Olson with finding a handful of unique options in a variety of plant categories that you can use to hook those looking for something different. His first foray is in shrubs and trees.

Andrew Bunting tackled fall-blooming perennials that can offer showstopping beauty to go along with those mum sales. And then turn to Megan Taylor Morrison's article on how retail leadership can help themselves and their workers find ways to connect and engage with the business in a more meaningful way. This is a great reminder as the spring season hits of why we're here.

And, finally, we're in the fourth part of the series Adapt or Die, where our three consultant contributors talk about data mining and the importance of looking at the numbers for garden centers across the globe.

I hope these stories can help you in some way be the treat a customer is looking for, whether it's on a grand scale or simply offering a plant that they weren't expecting, the same way the Philly Flower Show has become a treat for so many. If you're able, I would highly recommend a visit—I do not think you'd be disappointed.

Here's to the onset of spring! **GP**