

7/31/2026

Refresh and Renew

Jennifer Polanz



Jennifer Polanz

Sometimes Cultivate in Columbus comes at just the right time. It breaks the daily routine of summer days, and jolts us out of the steady drumbeat of chores and tasks to invigorate us with new ideas, new products and new people. It's a welcome change that always stresses me out right up until the time I get there.

There's always something else to finish back home. A project around the house. A weekend activity that gets put off (hint, hint, AmericanHort folks—we love the show dearly, but Monday-Wednesday wouldn't be awful). A deadline that's looming (in this case, finishing this issue, which we seem to have done since you're reading it now).

But once I leave and get to the convention center, see all those old friends I haven't seen in a while and start learning new things, it makes all the stress worthwhile. Because I'm moving forward and gaining new insight.

Hopefully, you're fresh off of Cultivate, too, and ready to open your mind to learning new concepts and considering ways to refresh your stores. In this issue, which we deem the "Prep for Next Year Issue," I wanted to highlight some ways that making investments can change not just the look and feel of your store, but the whole vibe related to customers and employees. In two different stories, we talk about changes that can help improve efficiencies, increase morale and make employees proud to work where they do.

To get started, I talked to four retailers about their new greenhouse and garden center structures, which is a big investment, but also offers up a big payoff. It was interesting to hear about all the benefits of the new structures, which weren't always tied to immediate returns, but will result in happier customers and employees longterm.

If you aren't in the market for a new structure, I also wrote about what an investment in new benching can do for you if you're searching for a fresh look. Again, there were some intangible benefits that I hadn't thought of that will still bring big returns.

Sometimes a refresh requires taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture first. Retailer Sarah Beach contributed a great guest column on steps you can take to make your plan going into next year cohesive and effective. Sometimes that means reconnecting with your staff and creating a stronger team. Megan Taylor Morrison wrote about coaching and offsite activities as ways to provide opportunities for rejuvenation.

Our triple threat consultants who are authoring the Adapt or Die series have taken on another location to refresh: your website. They look at why that's so important and what you can gain from it.

Retail is a process, too—one that takes time and experimentation to get right. Dave Williams recently visited a small, unique New Jersey garden center with a great story: La Serra Gardens. Find out about owner Lisamarie Suriano's journey to get to where they are today.

There's lots more to read in this issue, but the overarching theme is to continue on that path toward renewal to give customers something different to look at and provide a place where employees are proud to work.

And while it was a lot of work getting this issue done before we hit the trade show floor at Cultivate, it was worth it to be able to go there and find new concepts and products to bring back to these pages in future issues. This is our goal, too—to give you something new and different to look each month and take away some nugget of information for future use. I hope we are successful, and if you ever want to let me know what else you'd like to see in these pages, please email me at jpolanz@ballpublishing.com. I'd love to hear from you!

Here's to a new look! **GP**