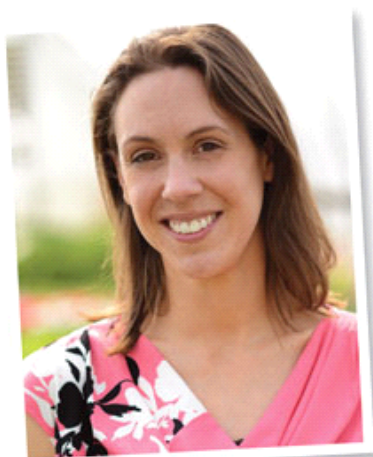


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Surviving Spring (and Beyond)

Jennifer Polanz



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It's here—that moment where the snow melts and the customers clamor for something fresh and colorful. Well, some of you are on the down slope now and I hope it all went as well as you expected (or even better). For those about to rock this May, well, I salute you.

I have no tips, no real advice. You know what you need to do—now it's just a matter of doing it. I do have words of encouragement and enthusiasm, though. And maybe a few motivating ideas to help this season along and possibly the next few. That's what this issue is all about: more ways to make money and homing in on the nuances of those plans. Plus, a little inspiration for bringing some excitement back to gardening.

Let's start with Ellen's story. She tapped a wide cross-section of retailers to see what their most profitable product or line is to share those with you. Of course, the caveat is not every product works for every location, but at least we can get an idea of how they take advantage of that hot seller.

Once you've checked that out, move over to John Johnston's piece on using rebates to your advantage. Are you leaving money on the table by not offering these manufacturer-provided incentives to your customers? He gives us a quick rundown on how to use these to get a leg up on the competition.

We also asked Kylee Baumle, Monarch butterfly expert and author of the new book, "The Monarch: Saving Our Most-Loved Butterfly" to provide some ways garden centers can promote milkweed and help customers feel good by creating Monarch feeding stations. That's a profit everyone can feel good about.

Our columnists turned in a powerful performance this month (as they normally do) with some fascinating perspectives. First, Bill McCurry shows us just how important it is to shut up and listen to the customer. Then check out John Friel's cautionary tale of providing only sizzle and no steak. And certainly not least, visit Amanda Thomsen's bulleted highlights for must-implement ideas for spring and a question on what Hogwarts house your employees may be (this author is a Gryffindor. If you don't understand the question, consider yourself a muggle).

Looking for those bits of inspiration? MSU Extension Educator Heidi Lindberg visited the iconic Philadelphia Flower Show and brought back ideas for how garden centers can bring that kind of showmanship to the sales floor.

This issue is chock full of good stuff, and whether you read it May 1 or sometime in July while sipping a Mai Tai on vacation, it's still relevant.