

6/30/2017

A Blast from the Past

Jennifer Polanz



Jennifer Polanz

It's been 20 years since the first issue of *Green Profit* landed on your desk and what a wild ride it's been ever since. In preparation for this landmark column, I asked a member of our publishing staff to send me an original copy, seeing as how I was slogging my way through my senior year of college at the time of publication.

In the some-things-never-change category, our Editor, Chris Beytes, was heavily involved in writing the magazine, and behind the scenes, Kathy Wootton glued the pieces together then as she does now as our Production Manager.

However, so much has changed in those 20 years: breeders and growers have been consolidated or gone out of business, *Green Profit* editors have come and gone, and retailers of all shapes and sizes have similarly arrived and departed.

A quick review of stories in that issue brought back some mass market blasts from the past: Builder's Square, Frank's Nursery & Crafts and Cub Foods, among others. But it's not just the market that's changed—it's society in general. There's not one mention of any sort of technology or the Internet in that first issue. Of course, it was 1997: the start of President Bill Clinton's second term in office, "Titanic" at the box office and an Internet in its infancy. Though Amazon.com had gone online officially two years before, no one knew yet what it really was—or what it would become.

Obviously, a lot has changed in 20 years, and today, we see the shocking statistic that 55% of all online product searches begin at Amazon.com. That's right—not Google—Amazon. That's a reality every retailer has to face in today's world.

So how do you face it? Let's turn our attention away from the past now and look to the future. I explore the vast world of online sales. There's no easy answer here and I don't expect there to be one anytime soon.

One way your technology already works for you is by collecting data, but do you know how to analyze that data? Read Mason Day's piece on collecting and using the information already at your fingertips. Data is

great, too, until it's compromised. Columnist Bill McCurry recently attended the CNP Expo for website security experts. Read what he learned there.

And once again, some things never change: In our inaugural issue, readers turned to page 32 for a report on what's new for 1998 from the California Pack Trials. In this issue, you can turn to—I swear we didn't plan this—page 32 for a report by editors Ellen Wells, Chris Beytes and Jennifer Zurko from California Spring Trials on the retail-ready plants that will make a splash in 2018. In 1997, Chris visited 14 different trials highlighting more than 200 new and improved varieties. This year, the Bobblehead crew, as they're affectionately referred to, visited 16 locations featuring 69 exhibiting companies, seeing more than 1,000 new and improved varieties. Something else that's changed since 1997? Those editors sent six e-newsletters during the trials, and uploaded 45 videos during and after the trials highlighting what they saw for an unprecedented amount of coverage. You can view these videos at the *GrowerTalks* YouTube page at www.youtube.com/growertalks.

In short, you can count on us as much today as you could 20 years ago. Some things never change. **GP**