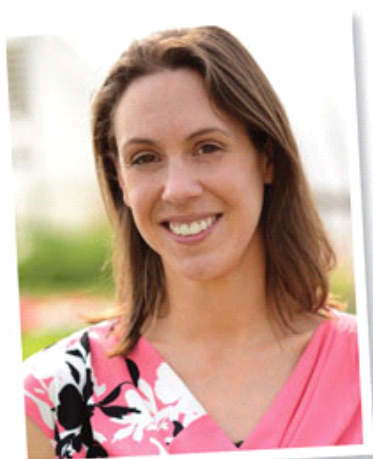


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## Look for Your Advantage

Jennifer Polanz



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This focus of this issue is Industry Trends and we often like to talk about trends because it's one way we can convey what the broad masses are looking for from retailers at any given time.

However—and I suspect you know this by now—not all trends work for all retailers. What works on the East Coast might not work in Cleveland, Ohio, and vice versa. Our hope in any given month is to give you a few concepts that you can put to work in your business. Take what works for you and leave the rest, if you will.

For example, the houseplant trend we've been talking about (and will continue to focus on throughout the year) is tailor-made for most retailers that carry live goods. Ellen Wells has been working on ways for retailers to take advantage of Millennials and others clamoring for indoor plants, and this month she focuses on the super trendy *Pilea peperomioides* (Chinese

money plant). Look for similar targeted monthly coverage on houseplants throughout 2018.

My story on home brewing and wine-making is a little trickier. Not every garden center is a perfect fit for this, depending on where you are, the interest in this niche and whether or not you already have a popular independent store catering to this market in your area. However, if you find there's interest and a gap in providing equipment, hops plants and grapes, then you might have found a nice niche market. Or perhaps you secure a liquor license and specialize in local wines and brews. Check out how to take advantage of it.

Things like mobile apps, augmented reality and online chat functions sound high tech and unattainable, but in many aspects, they're becoming ubiquitous in retailing. Long-time Green Profit columnist and industry consultant Bill McCurry headed to New York City this winter to take in the latest retail trends at the National Retail Federation 2018: Retail's Big Show. In this issue and the next he'll highlight where retail is heading and just how fast we're expected to get there.

Spring is either upon us or fast approaching, depending on where you are in the country. Jen Zurko and Ellen Wells flew in opposite directions to cover the MANTS and TPIE trade shows to see what trend-supporting products you might still want to order to entice your customers this spring.

And finally, it may not fit in with the trends, but it's a necessity, and that's your inventory. Specifically, how to get control of it to make it work for you, not against you (I think that's one trend we can all get behind). Industry

consultant Sid Raisch begins a two-part series this month.

Sometimes the trends favor us, sometimes they don't. But here's hoping this spring you can be the trend-setter in your town and reap the rewards. **GP**