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Making it Count

Jennifer Polanz



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Throughout the past couple of months, as we all experienced roller coasters of emotion and stress, I would come across quotes that resonated with me and I jotted them down as they came.

“Perfect is the enemy of done ...”

“Proceed as the way opens ...”

“The comeback is always stronger than the setback ...”

I feel like these really defined the months of March through June, when what happened wasn't always perfect, and at times became a massive slog, but in the end the job got done. Not perfectly, but done. Retailers were a little bit like a star running back, looking for those openings through which to take off and many found them through online offerings, curbside services and other even

more creative avenues. Some of which had up to this point seemed impossible until they were the only choice left.

And then the comeback began. Oh my, did we see people flocking to garden centers. My family was part of it, too, as we doubled the amount of gardening we typically do with a new raised bed garden. We've already spent more time on our back patio eating out and enjoying fires than we did all of last summer.

There's something truly therapeutic about tending to living plants and being surrounded by their beauty in such troubling times. Another quote I found recently was from Mike Heckart at Galloway Farm Nursery in Miami, explaining to a local reporter why more people are gardening: “It's glorious to take care of a living being. It definitely makes you more connected. There's this realization that none of us exist in a vacuum. We are connected to the world around us and it's not just people.”

So perhaps this is a blip or maybe we can make it into something more. Maybe we can capitalize on the interest to help people understand their part to the larger world around us and the beauty (and importance) of nature through pollinator education, biophilic designs and the grow-your-own produce movement, among other opportunities.

The question is, how do we seize this opportunity and build on it? We've started to work on those questions a bit with a series of essays we're running this month. You'll find the opinions of five green industry specialists who reflected on the impact of COVID-19 and where we go from here.

Continuing that garden excitement means showing customers new products and you can't get more new than the

varieties our editors “saw” virtually through interviews with all of the CAST breeders this spring. For even more new varieties, flip over to the *GrowerTalks* side.

This spring also saw a resurgence of interest in the independent garden center and shopping local to support businesses that have been a long-time member of their communities. IGCs have the ability to set themselves apart even farther from their big box competition by creating their own brands to increase their value. Freelancer Katie Elzer-Peters provides the options available.

Here's my final quote, which, cheesy as it is, undeniably fits here (it's from one of my all-time favorite movies, “Titanic”—yes, from that erstwhile philosopher Jack Dawson): “I figure life's a gift and I don't intend on wasting it. You don't know what hand you're gonna get dealt next. You learn to take life as it comes at you ... to make each day count.” **GP**