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Back to Work

Jennifer Polanz



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I don't relish what I'm about to say. I know you just finished what a lot of you have called an extremely grueling spring season, exhausting your mental, physical and emotional capacity.

I (truly) hope you were able to take some time off in July and August and recharge because it's time to get ready for the second wave. I'm not talking about the pandemic (although that's a distinct possibility). I'm talking about the fall and winter holidays, which I think are going to take as much effort as the spring did. I could be WAY off, and I may eat crow come January, but I think retailers will continue to see real interest and sales this holiday, especially ones that offer traditions like pumpkin patches, hot apple cider and holiday décor like Christmas trees and porch pots. Fair warning: I have no data to back me up; it's more of a gut feeling.

Why do I think that? Let's talk about berry picking this year. An anecdote from a local farm this June—they would open at 8:00 a.m. and were routinely picked out by 8:15 a.m. with cars lining the long drive to get in. This seemed to be a scenario replicated at strawberry fields across the Midwest.

Here's another reason for my thinking and it comes from David Wilson, director of marketing at Overdevest Nurseries in Bridgeton, New Jersey: I recently had the pleasure of speaking on the same webinar with David for the Perennial Plant Association and his talk was fascinating. He started by talking about growing up in Northern Ireland during The Troubles and how, despite the violent terrorist attacks gripping his city, people still came to the nursery he was a managing partner at to buy plants. In fact, they needed plants more during that time.

"They needed an outlet. They needed a release," he says. "What was interesting for us is they felt safe coming out to the garden center. They were looking to us, really, to help them, provide an outlet to this despair."

Our industry continues to be essential (there's that word again) in helping customers relieve the stress of all the things they can't control. There may not be big gatherings this fall and winter, but traditions will continue to help people cope. People need these traditions more than ever and I predict they'll spend more to continue to make their homes a respite from the outside world. Will holiday ever top spring? No, and it probably won't ever come close, but it can create a nice stop-gap until spring comes 'round again.

So how do we help them (and how do we at *Green Profit* help you help them)? Glad you asked! We tapped Katie Elzer-Peters to continue plumbing the depths of curbside pickup and online ordering to get more details from a

retailer that's making it work (and work well). It could come in handy this fall and winter.

As you can see on the cover, we're definitely in the holiday spirit, and I've taken a look at some key areas where retailers can be more profitable this season, while helping that tradition along. Check out the gardening gifts and kits that will make all of those brand new gardeners jump for joy this holiday season. And, finally, it's not the holidays without events. But, obviously, in-person events may be limited or nonexistent this year, so Ellen's got some creative ways to bridge that gap.

On a note related to traditions, I want to congratulate our flip side, *GrowerTalks*, on the 1,000th issue! Talk about a long-standing tradition in the industry, the magazine is 83 years old (and still looking fabulous, I might add). Flip over and read how it came to be through the words of Ball Horticultural Company President & CEO Anna Ball herself. **GP**