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First

9/1/2020

The Magic of Tomatoes

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There's something about eating a tomato that came out of your own garden that's truly magical. It's a feeling that never gets old.

I've become a canning and harvesting heart-er. Every time I fire up social media and see pictures of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and other harvests, along with jars of salsa, pasta sauce, pickles and jams of all types, I click that heart. I love it all and I love that people so happily share the fruits of their labor. To me, that's the true power of social media.

We saw an unprecedented number of people across the country become gardeners this year (some reports put it between 15 and 20 million new gardeners). Whether it was houseplants, flowers, fruits, vegetables or herbs, they bought it, planted it (or potted it) and reveled in it. Now, we need them to share it, just like the ones I heart on social media. Why?

Sharing harvests shows a measure of success. Sure, the cabbage loopers ate some holes in the cabbage leaves this year (okay, it looked like Swiss cheese). Or maybe the Japanese beetles ate through the eggplant or green bean leaves. We won't worry about those issues—let's celebrate the successes. The pounds of tomatoes and peppers, or miles of cucumbers and zucchinis (did you know there's even a National Sneak Some Zucchini Onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day? It will be Sunday, August 8 next year, in case you need to plan ahead).

If we encourage customers to share their bounties, their friends are guaranteed to be slightly jealous. And if Kaitlyn next door can grow pole beans, just maybe another neighbor will be empowered to try it for him or herself. So let's flood social media with harvests and donations to area foodbanks (visit AmpleHarvest.org to find a food pantry that takes fresh produce near you). Let's build a gardening community that inspires others to share the joy and the bounty.

If you need more inspiration, turn immediately to our cover story on this year's *Green Profit*/RBI Young Retailer Award Winner Lindsay Squires. Her amazing story of making connections and building communities—whether it's rural Nebraska, southwestern Romania or her current home at Tagawa Gardens in Centennial, Colorado—is definitely worth the read. Our industry's future is in good hands with the likes of Lindsay.

For more ways to inspire your own customers, we have some tips and new varieties to help create traffic-stopping color at retail. That story is a great lead into freelancer Katie Elzer-Peters' necessary information on how to create process documents for actions like who's going to own and maintain the curbside plantings program (or how to

complete a curbside pickup order from start to finish).

Sometimes it takes a lot of work on the back end to make the upfront look so easy. Just like it takes months of labor to grow that beautiful tomato I’m about to slice up for lunch. **GP**