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## Growing for the Future

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People who grow plants are, by their very nature, optimistic. The planter enters into a tacit agreement with the plant that, with the right conditions, some love and a little luck, over time the plantee will offer up beautiful blooms, foliage and/or some delicious fruit. I would argue those who plant tomatoes year after year are *\*hardcore\** optimists. With all the things that can go wrong—from blights to blossom end rots and even those tomato hornworms that really seem to freak people out—it's amazing we get any fruit at all at the end.

But I think landscape architects and designers might be the most optimistic of all. To take a look at a landscape and see it not just for what it is now, but what it might be in 20, 30, 40 years—that's true visionary thinking.

How is the retail landscape looking right now? At the moment, pretty darned good, by most accounts. But let's look to the future, like those visionary designers. What do we want to see for our industry in the long-term? The choices we make now decide that. To quote the greats: "The future is not set. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves."

That quote is actually from "Terminator 2: Judgement Day," but that doesn't make it ring any less true. Retailers have tough choices. What products will keep customers coming in and checking out what's new? We have you covered on that front—see what manufacturers sent us in lieu of trade show coverage this year.

What about new varieties? We asked the breeders for their special traits to help you sell them to customers. Then see what some retailers and consultants told freelancer Katie Elzer-Peters about how to plan for next year (the million dollar question).

But there's more than just how we're going to stock the stores. There's also how we're going to take this opportunity to move the industry forward long into the future. By now you know I'm a movie buff, so I have another for you: "Wonder Woman." I watched it in the theater and found myself tearing up at a rather unusual moment: a battle scene called No Man's Land. It's a moment where Wonder Woman showcases her true powers, which aren't just strength, but also compassion, in trying to save a village that no man could. I wasn't the only one impacted, either—women all over the world felt the same.

It's just a movie, but it's also representation of a strong female character on screen that up to that point had been all too rare in my life. I can count on one hand the strong female characters who graced the screen (Princess Leia,

Ellen Ripley and Furiosa come to mind). The next day I took my daughter to see “Wonder Woman,” so she didn’t have to wait 40 years like I did. I know Marvel fans of color saw the same powerful representation in “Black Panther” (RIP to actor Chadwick Boseman who brought T’Challa to life).

Representation is vital, even more so in real life where people shop and live their lives. Our industry has an opportunity to bring in people of all walks of life, all races, religions and sexual orientations; to create a welcome environment and show how great it is to work and live in the green industry. To that end, we asked long-time garden writer Teri Speight to write a guest column on how we can be more inclusive and why it’s so vital to our future.

This year, we’re welcoming more gardeners into our fold than ever before. Let’s make sure we’re representing all their wants and needs, and building a trust that lasts long into the future, like that diverse landscape designed by the great architects of our time. **GP**