

4/1/2021

What's Gonna Work? Teamwork

Jennifer Polanz

Anyone with a child or grandchild in their early teens might recall that catchy, sing-songy jingle from the animated series "Wonder Pets," in which an unlikely trio of preschool pets (a Guinea pig, a turtle and a duckling) worked together to solve a myriad of challenges.

We bring that little nugget out often when Team Polanz does something successful together. It's been stuck in my head lately because it's taken a whole lotta teamwork in our household to get through this pandemic. From being respectful of everyone's Zoom meetings (no screaming through the hallways, please) to the kids helping out and making dinner for the family when mom and dad are still working, it's taken a lot of communication, patience and pitching in on everyone's part.

Teamwork is also what will continue to help our industry through what can be considered some hefty growing pains. As in, we're growing our audience, big time. By the time this issue hits in April, I think most retailers across the country will be fending off customers begging for tomato and cucumber starts (it's up to you if you want to sell them that early—my dog's not entering that fight).

You know what will also work? Communication. Lots of it. It's been suggested to me, and as a messenger I'm passing it along to you, that retailers should talk with their staff early on about positioning substitutions. You already know there are going to be varieties you either won't get in or will sell out of very early. Your staff can either shrug their shoulders at the next customers coming in asking for it or they could have a suitable sub ready to go. It's going to be important to have those subs pre-determined to continue to sell what's still on the benches.

Remember, many of these new gardeners might cling to the varieties they know, but if you suggest something different and provide the education to make them successful, they'll likely trust you (at least once). Perhaps it's even in the form of signage: if you like this, you'll definitely love that.

Speaking of education, that's what we're looking at in this issue when it comes to pest and disease controls and plant food. Ellen looks at the most common fertilizer issues consumers are facing and how to walk them through those. I break down what we're seeing consumers talk about with pest and disease concerns and how to position those products to help new gardeners be more successful.

On the tech side, we know e-commerce will continue to play a role in sales this year, so we asked Katie Elzer-Peters for tips from the three-part e-comm Mastery Series she did for AmericanHort earlier this year. We also asked tech expert Joe Dysart to talk a bit about measures industry operations can take to secure their computer networks (something that's becoming a bigger challenge for all companies, big and small).

In his column, John Friel wrote the ultimate tribute to teamwork—a testament to how interconnected all the segments of this industry are and how one can't work without the other. Meanwhile, our team here at *Green Profit* won't quite be the same, as our fearless leader, Ellen Wells, will be stepping back from her role writing for the magazine. Fear not, though—she will continue to visit your email inbox with her newsletters. **GP**