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Back to the Fundamentals

Jennifer Polanz



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It's been a weird spring all around. COVID is gone, but still here. Shipping and the supply chain are still wonky and driving prices up. Gas prices are ridiculous, which may (?) work in our favor by keeping people home this summer. The weather—ugh, the weather.

And so this roller coaster of retail continues up and down. I talked to retailers who had record-breaking Mother's Day Weekends, but was it enough to make up for a late start? In Chris Beytes' annual weekly surveys, the results were mixed depending on the week and the weather. How is it possible to finish strong with all this turmoil?

After consulting some industry experts (more on that later), our conversations reminded me of my high school volleyball days (ah, the joys of a stiflingly hot gym in the middle of August). Whenever our team was thrown

off kilter by the other team's offense, my coach would counsel, "Go back to the fundamentals. Bump. Set. Spike." It's something I've kept with me long after I stopped playing: when in times of trouble, go back to the fundamentals. These are the skills you know work to get the results you want. I know sports metaphors are generally trite and not useful, but I do find myself coming back to this one a lot.

In this issue, I talked to several people about those fundamentals, and how our industry can approach pricing (by increasing prices, number one), and add value to get consumers to think less about that price, and more about how much they want and need the product.

Part of adding value, too, is offering new live goods that help consumer be more successful. Our editors who traveled to California Spring Trials (Chris Beytes, Bill Calkins, Jen Zurko and our new video producer Osvaldo Cuevas) highlight the new intros they thought would be best for independent retailers.

Part of creating excitement at retail, too, is spotting new trends and incorporating them where they fit. When Katie Elzer-Peters told me a couple of months ago that dried floral is becoming a thing, I started seeing it in more places. It's a natural fit for our industry and can help retailers keep the excitement going once those cut flowers bloom (or you can create the excitement by helping consumers cultivate a new cut flower garden for this very reason).

We also have two spotlights on retailers this month. The aforementioned Jen Zurko visited Willow Oaks Farm in Brownsville, Tennessee, this spring and wrote about how the 75-year-old business has survived and thrived. And Ellen Wells wrote about her visit to Kerby's Nursery in Seffner, Florida, and how they're creating a community-

focused location that people want to keep coming back to.

One more item of note: I want to be one of the first to congratulate our long-time columnist Amanda Thomsen on her foray back into retail as she opens her very own Aster Gardens retail shop. **GP**