

10/1/2022

On a Journey

Jennifer Polanz



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When I'm disappointed in how parts of my garden performed (which can be often), I have to remind myself that gardening isn't about the end, it's about the journey. It's why a garden is the ultimate act of hope—tomorrow is another day to try again.

I'm a bit of an intermittent gardener. I have bursts of activity followed by benign neglect (partially brought on by busy schedules, travel, etc.). I'm always looking for products that can help during these periods of inactivity, like moisture-retention products, slow-release fertilizers, plants that don't need deadheading or other fussing. Our industry continues to innovate to make life easier for gardeners, whether that's breeding to reduce stress, and pest and disease pressures, more drought-tolerant varieties, and/or smaller habits to keep them looking better longer, etc.

Another way our industry continues to innovate is looking for ways to reduce our carbon footprint, an area that continues to be a challenge for all of retail, not just us. Of course, the plants are great, but then we have packaging, transportation and the energy it takes to create the plants. It's all a work in progress, though, like all industries looking for a better way.

In this issue, we take a deeper look at a couple of these topics. Our cover story, written by Jennifer Duffield White, shows how retailers can work with their vendors who are improving their sustainability initiatives and how they can communicate that to consumers. Jenny writes Ball Publishing's *GreenTalks* e-newsletter about sustainability in the green industry and if you'd like to join her on that journey, visit greenprofit.com and click on Newsletters to sign up. On the *GrowerTalks* side, Chris Beytes took a look at efforts to use Ellepot technology as a more sustainable option for growing and even pulling through to retail sales.

This issue, we also have coverage of new products spotted at the inaugural Garden Center Show in Milwaukee, including a few that have sustainability messages.

Bill McCurry should be named the MVP for this issue, too, as he has three—count 'em—three stories! He was on the road a while back visiting Heeman's in London, Ontario, Canada, and you can see highlights from his time there. He also wrote his regular column about that time between buying product and selling it that can get a little dicey. And, finally, this month he started the first of a two-part series on employee retention and hiring that you can dive into.

There's lots more in this issue, too, from our editor's picks for Stuff We Love this year, my colleague Jen Zurko's travels through Tennessee and advice for "sprucing" up the winter garden from Andrew Bunting of the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society. There's even more, too, so get comfy and stick around for a bit.

After all, this issue is a bit like my garden—it's a journey. Only without all the Japanese Beetles and deer nibbles. **GP**