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Shop Corner: More Response to Cancellations

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We're starting up a new segment that will appear here each month, focusing on houseplant shops. In this space, we'll highlight business tips, marketing, buying and other topics told from a variety of angles that will help smaller shops make their businesses more effective. To contribute your thoughts, please email me at jpolanz@ballpublishing.com.

Gary Hennen of Oglesby Plants International wrote in response with a really interesting perspective. Here's what Gary had to say: "As a tissue culture producer and young plant grower, I thank you for bringing the consequences of order cancellations to the floor. Those of us who work with both internal and global suppliers of tissue cultured plants understand that months, if not years, of planning and commitment are required for each plant we offer. An order from a customer triggers a cascade of events months in advance of the delivery time. No matter how timely an order cancellation is, many of the costs involved in preparing an order cannot be recovered. One observation about the current plant business is there does not appear to be upward or downward trends anymore. There is on and off. We have embraced the digital '1' or '0.'"

And more from Sam Cowie of Leaf and Limb, an orchid grower from the bustling metropolis of Kin Kin in Queensland, Australia, who wrote in to lament the impact of cancellations on a crop that has mind-bogglingly long production times: "Order cancellations are worse in the orchid industry (except for Phals with their short production time). From lab submission to flask shipment is 18 months, then add another two to three-and-a-half years in production for the finished product. So I'll look into my crystal ball and work out what the retailers want in four years so I know what to submit to the labs now!

"The crazy thing about our orchids is sometimes you have to wait for the stock plants to have the right size shoot on them. You may want to submit shoots in January, but the stock plant won't have shoots ready until June. Add to that the occasional lab submission failure and I question my sanity in what I do.

"If what I'm hearing from my associates in Europe is true, then a few orchid greenhouses have already been bankrupted. Phals have been impacted hard due to their heating requirement, but I don't think anyone is getting off scot-free with the gas prices. So glad I don't have heating requirements in the lovely subtropics." **GP**