

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Rolling With the Changes

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During the last few months, we've all had to adjust our personal and professional lives to keep ourselves, our families and our co-workers safe.

I've been working from home for two straight months and I have to say I've settled in nicely. The task of cleaning up the guest room/office that my husband and I have put off for months was all of the sudden tackled in one afternoon when I just couldn't work at the kitchen table anymore. Now, I have a nice space to myself to work in peace with no distractions (unless you count the cat barging in to nap on the bed). Although it's not the same, it's been a nice change.

That's a bright spot in what's been a daily occurrence of changes, good and bad. I don't necessarily miss having to get up early to doll myself up to be presentable for the office, but I miss seeing my Ball Publishing peeps and Ball besties at the lunch table. My daughter used to lament

about having to go to school; now she realizes how much she took it for granted.

And I'm starting to come to terms with the fact that we're all probably going to have to wear masks when we go out in public for the foreseeable future, but I hope and pray every day that we can at least see our friends and family who we know are healthy. I can live without seeing a concert or swimming in the public pool this summer; not hugging my mom or friends for months is a change I couldn't get used to.

Another major change to my summer plans is no July weekend in Columbus—as I'm sure you've heard, Cultivate will be virtual. It was a good decision by AmericanHort, but it's still a bummer. A grower friend of mine calls Cultivate his "Horticulture Christmas," so a lot of us will be missing the education and camaraderie we like about attending the show.

What I really feel bad about is that our Young Grower and Young Retailer Award finalists won't get to attend the show and have a fancy dinner with Anna Ball. That part really stinks, but we're all dealing with various levels of disappointment (just ask the class of 2020 in every school). Like with every other event lately, our awards ceremony will be virtual and we're going to do our best to make it fun and celebratory.

Every year, we ask our three Young Grower finalists to write an essay based on a specific industry question that usually focuses on an aspect of horticulture in their lives—the companies they work for, their customers, their

career paths, etc. But this year, we felt it was important that the question was about the COVID-19 pandemic and how they feel it will affect our industry and communities. All three of them pointed out the changes and challenges their businesses have had to face, but I found it interesting that they were also able to find some positives to come out of this.

If you've found yourself confused about how to change your operation to ensure that your employees and customers stay safe, read what two wholesale growers have implemented to address health concerns and follow CDC guidelines.

And if you're worried about finding labor moving forward, learn how climate control systems have changed and how they've helped growers embrace automation.

Dealing with change has been the theme of this pandemic ... and some of us are having a hard time adjusting. That old saying about people showing their true colors during weddings and funerals now applies to COVID-19. Based on people's Facebook posts, I can tell how they would react if we ever experienced a zombie apocalypse. These unprecedented times have certainly separated the ones who would be part of the survivor's group to help others stay alive and the ones who would have no problem using you as a zombie shield. I have since made the change to use Instagram more and Facebook less. **GT**