

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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The Wisdom of Joni Mitchell

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As a child of the '70s, the music of the era really shaped my memories of growing up and my musical tastes. My mom and dad listened to two different types of music. My mother liked showtunes, R&B and disco, so there was a lot of Barbra Streisand, Diana Ross, The Commodores, and Earth, Wind & Fire playing in the background while she was cleaning the house. (She likes to tell a funny story of when I was 5 years old and we were in the grocery store. I was singing all of the words to "Staying Alive" and it apparently impressed many nearby shoppers.)

My dad was into what is now considered "classic rock." Queen, Jethro Tull and Black Sabbath, but also the Eagles and the Moody Blues. (My sister and I used to love singing, "Feeling like a dead duck!" in the back seat of the station wagon.)

My parents weren't as in to folk music, but they dabbled in some, like Simon & Garfunkel, and Crosby, Stills & Nash. And I do remember a little

bit of Joni Mitchell, especially the song "Big Yellow Taxi."

Her words from the song have proven to be prophetic when anyone experiences the loss of something they've always taken for granted:

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you got 'til it's gone

As Q-Tip says in the Janet Jackson remix using samples of this song, "Joni Mitchell never lies."

After a year of living with the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of how much we miss doing things and going places goes far beyond anything we could have ever imagined. Not just the ability to go on vacations or to visit family in other states/countries, but we've missed all of our in-person industry events. I've been known to gripe a bit about Cultivate being over a priceless summer weekend ... never again.

There's been so much talk about how great most of the industry did in 2020, all of the new gardeners we saw and the optimism for this spring, but one group that's really had it rough are our industry associations. You may have had to deal with product shortages, and figuring out curbside pick-up and social-distancing protocols made you frazzled, but you didn't have to figure out how to take a 10,000-person event and transform it into an online platform. Or field

dozens of calls from people panicking about their businesses having to close and how the PPP loans worked. Our state and national associations were doing all of this at the same time they were taking financial hits directly to their bottom lines.

I asked a few of our industry associations how they were faring after their major sources of revenue pretty much went away.

I also asked for their thoughts on when we'll start having in-person events again. AmericanHort is planning for Cultivate'21 to be in-person in July and, Lord willing, it'll happen. As long as I'm vaccinated by then, I'll be there. As I write this, the vaccine roll-out in Chicagoland is picking up steam and all of my older loved ones have had at least their first dose. I'm starting to feel ... dare I say? ... hopeful for the future.

So, I vow here and now, never to take an industry event for granted again. I really didn't know what I had until it was gone.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that we should embrace the times when we can all be together again. Once we can, it'll be that much more precious and enjoyable. **GT**