

# GROWERTALKS

First

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## WIC Syndrome

Jennifer Polanz



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It's actually spring. Well, as I write this, it's still March and it's snowing outside my window. But by the time you read this it will actually be spring.

I have to say, while this winter has been mild in many parts of the country, it didn't make it any less difficult to get through. See, I suffer from WIC Syndrome, otherwise known as Winter In Cleveland (yes, I totally made that up, and yet, it's a thing). It's gray, it's cold and it's blah. Every year right around the end of February I ask my husband (each time less facetiously than the year before), "Why do we live here again?"

I suppose it's the awakening at spring and the gorgeous fall colors that keep me here, along with some decent (albeit hot and humid) summers along Lake Erie. Also, I'm not down with all the bugs down south. So it's seed catalogs featuring big, juicy tomatoes, mailings like the Proven Winners

Gardener's Idea Book and dreaming of all the new plants in store for me that gets me through those dreary months.

I'm not alone, too, especially when it comes to vegetable plantings. In case you missed it, in a recent consumer survey by Axiom, nearly 58% of respondents said they would plant more vegetables (29.1%), and expand their veggie plot and plant more (28.8%). Nearly 35% said they would plant the same amount as last year. Veggies are going to be even bigger this year—are you ready for it?

I think it's important we rethink the potential in the veggie category. It's not just packs or 4-in. pots that sell. Consumers will need supports, the right soils and fertilizers, containers if they're looking at smaller spaces, pest and disease controls, tools with which to garden and harvest, canning and freezing supplies, and more. Some customers are looking for plants that already have fruit on them, too, which can sell at a premium.

We can help with a lot of that. First off, we have industry expert Lowell Halvorson's look at veggie plants perfect for small-space patio gardening. From compact tomatoes, cukes and peppers to early and late-season options, Lowell covers the gamut.

Roll right from his story into Danielle Ernest's rundown of veggie products gardeners recommended. These products cover seed-starting through planting.

I highlighted some of the more natural ways consumers can fight pests in their garden, including a very helpful list from Sierra Biological of plants that attract beneficial insects.

There's so much more inspo in this issue, too (and who doesn't need some inspo right about now?), like Katie Elzer-Peters' story on working with local makers and Wendy Komancheck's trip to Flourish Flowers.

Our columnists always bring their best and this month is no exception. From Bill McCurry's take on leading by learning to Amanda Thomsen getting more eclectic (and comfortable) by the minute—complete with a Spotify playlist—and John Friel finding the positive even among the small “g” in Home & Garden, there's a lot to digest.

So grab an increasingly rare quiet moment and enjoy this issue. And thank you for providing all the beautiful plants that await us all this spring (and curing my WIC Syndrome)—you are truly appreciated!

Here's to spring—finally! **GP**