

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

1/1/2025

The Complications of Instant Gratification

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A friend was surprised that I do about 80% of my Christmas shopping between Black Friday and Cyber Monday and all online. It's a practice I started during the pandemic year and it's slowly crept up to the point where I just go to Target to pick up stocking stuffers and gift cards. Of course, the main reason is because the deals are great. (I mean, I got Beats Solo 4 headphones for my daughter for half off!) And, yes, avoiding the mall during the holidays is always good advice, but it also means I don't have to go anywhere at all. While I was working and running errands and doing my thing, everything quickly and conveniently came directly to me.

But how was all of that able to happen behind the scenes? I admit to being totally in the dark. But I imagine that it was pretty complicated.

We are in the age of instant gratification where we can get pretty much anything we want anytime we want it. We don't think about what it takes to get something to our front porch or in the store, let alone how the thing was made in the first place. Even though we like to focus on locally made, I highly doubt any of us really pauses to think about how the goods we consume are produced.

When I discuss work with my non-industry friends, I remind them that the Garden Center Fairy doesn't just wave her magic wand and the plants—POOF!—appear. I explain that it's a rather complicated process with many steps and many players involved. I would say this with conviction in my voice and a stern look in my eye.

I realize now that I had no idea what I was talking about.

I've been in this industry for over 20 years, working for the same breeder/distributor company, and I don't think I was even prepared for how complicated the process is to get unrooted cuttings from off-shore to growers in North America. I kinda knew the process just hearing about it during company-wide meetings and hearing Ball FloraPlant co-workers chit-chat about the farms at the lunch table. And, of course, I knew about Ralstonia and what happened back in 2003. But until I went and visited all of the production farms in Mexico during Week 45, I really had no idea how complicated it was.

It wasn't just the sanitation process—I visited Darwin Colombia early last year, so I was relatively prepared for the changing of gowns and boots and gloves. But what it takes for a geranium to get to the garden center is impressive and complicated. And what the production farms and suppliers go through to prevent disease is daunting. Add in

labor issues and a bunch of USDA regulations and you've got a mixed bag of pressure on many levels.

This month, we've also got information on other complicated topics, like how nitrogen impacts plant growth, getting full optimization from your growing media and having a closer microbial look at soilless media.

We're all so busy and caught up with our everyday lives that it's hard to take the time to sit back and realize that the things that give us instant gratification are complicated. And that we shouldn't take for granted the other good things in our lives that require a little extra work.

I don't make New Year's resolutions because those always seem to be easy, temporary fixes. I'd rather focus on coming up with goals that require more effort that offer me the chance to be better—whether it's as a colleague, mother or friend.

After a rather complicated year, one of my goals is to be a bit more strategic when making choices this year and not taking anything for granted. For a couple of years, I've allowed my heart to silence the things my brain was screaming in my ear. I never sat back to think about how those choices were really going to pan out. In those moments, I chose to ignore the fact that life is complicated. This year, I hope not to forget ... and that my brain speaks a little louder. Maybe next time I'll be smarter and actually listen. **GT**