

GROWERTALKS

Acres & Acres

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Nothing Gets You Down

Chris Beytes



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The stories you've been telling me this spring as I've collected your weekly sales survey scores have been fascinating. This hasn't been an easy spring—a more-bumpy-than-usual roller coaster ride of crazy weather, cabin fever, concerns over the economy and running out of plants. Many of you broke records, while others may have felt like you'd go broke if conditions didn't improve. But one thing remained unbroken: your indomitable spirit.

Take Jay Holasek of Fred Holasek & Son Greenhouse in Lester Prairie, Minnesota, for instance. He sent me a score of 6 for Easter, writing, "Friday was pretty good, about on par with last year. Saturday was about half of what we did last year in sales.

We got hit with some bitter cold wind and with the Easter weekend I don't think anyone was thinking of doing anything in their garden. Definitely one of the slower starts we have had in recent years, but some good weather is coming and we hope to see some excellent sales days ahead."

That's optimism! And Jay's positivity paid off because by Mother's Day he was writing this to accompany his score of 9: "Strong sales both Friday and Saturday. Favorable weather. Did not shatter any records, but we will always take strong and steady sales. The hope is that we can continue to have good sales numbers through the next three weekends and that we don't see a drop off post-Mother's Day like we did last year."

Minnesota was a wild place to be doing business this spring. When I look back at the scores from March 29-30 (the first weekend of this year's survey) through Memorial Day (about when I'm writing this), I see weekly scores of 7, 8, 6, 7, 8.5, 9.8 (Mother's Day), 3.2 and 8.8 for an average of 7.1. The best place (as of this writing) to be doing business? North Carolina, which has averaged 9.0 through Memorial Day. Oh, and Saskatchewan, at 9.4, but I only have one reporter from that province, Lucille Bouvier from Plant Ranch in Regina, and she only sent scores for May, which was fantastic, with Mother's Day being her biggest weekend ever. The next weekend was Victoria Day in Canada; Lucille scored Saturday 10, Sunday and Monday both 7 (averaging 8), writing, "Most rain we've seen this year, so good for the farmers."

Even when it rains on you, it simply means the glass is half full.

But back to North Carolina, where long-time reporter Judy Mitchell of Mitchell's Greenhouse wrote about Easter, "10-plus. Saturday was the second-biggest day ever and Friday was the third-biggest day ever." Also in North Carolina

(but reporting for the 14 states he sells to), Abe VanWingerden of Metrolina Greenhouses gave his home state a 10, too; his big-box retailers in NC were up 24.2% over previous year.

The very next weekend, April 26-27, Judy again gave a score of 10, this time writing, "Rain shower or would have been better."

How does it get better than 10? Oh yeah, 10-plus. Abe, meanwhile, had to drop his NC score to 7 because his sales for that state were up only 4.1% over previous year.

Again, optimism on overdrive.

Mother's Day was one of the best we've seen since the pandemic, with the U.S. scoring 8.9 and Canada at 8.5 (the 10-year average is 8.3/8.6). Naturally, your comments reflected that, with many of you reporting record-breaking results.

The next weekend was May 17-18—the one Minnesota scored 3.2. David Vos from Vander Giessen Nursery in Lynden, Washington, scored it a 6 (his state averaged 6.5), writing, "Cold, wet weather really put a damper on sales for the weekend. The rain is needed after a dry April, so I don't want to complain too much—and this week and weekend is looking beautiful in the forecast—but the weather really kept people out of their gardens last weekend. Hoping the better weather that's coming gets people excited to get outside and work in their gardens again!"

Does nothing get you guys and gals down?

Let's jump ahead to the end of the month, May 31-June 1, and check in with Kate Terrell from Wallace's Garden Center in Bettendorf, Iowa, who scored her weekend a solid 8.5:

"I can only judge from Saturday up to 2:00 p.m., but the weather was perfect. Our parking lot was completely full when we had to evacuate for fire. Judging from weather and the customer vibe I would say we would have had a perfect weekend for the last weekend of May."

Evacuate for fire?

Nope. Nothing gets you down. **GT**