

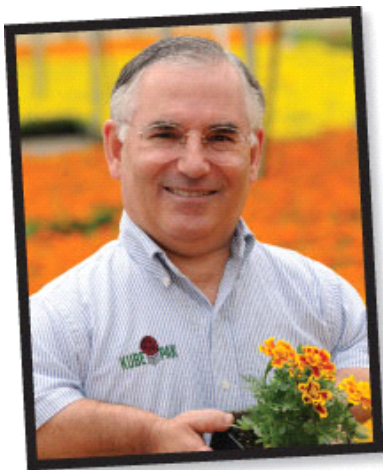
# GROWERTALKS

## Growers Talk Business

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### Attitude Adjustment

*Bill Swanekamp*



**BILL SWANEKAMP**

We all must answer to someone and when I write this column I have to answer to my boss, the editor, Chris Beytes. Overall, he's a pretty good guy, but he often reminds me that I need to have a more positive attitude or just see the good in every situation, especially as it relates to our industry. So I decided to take this past spring season and spin it from a half-empty attitude to a half-full attitude. Let me know what you think!

First, let's talk about the weather. Since January we've had record snow and rain in New Jersey. Over the course of March and April, we had a snowstorm almost every week.

Now, that's really good news—think of all the money our landscaper customers made plowing snow. Of course, during this time, they didn't want any plants, but that's not the key point. They made a ton of dough pushing

that snow into big piles. Oh, I just remembered that we had to dump about 5,000 flats of pansies, but really that's not too bad a thing; think of all the fine mulch we created for the worms.

Also, the rain: it's rained every weekend since the first weekend in April. Now this is really good news; there will be no talk of a drought this summer. In fact, we're considering starting a bottling company so that we can import our pollution free, Jersey Fresh, water to Las Vegas where they're having a hard time providing water to the parched desert. You never want to overlook prime opportunities staring you right in the face.

Second, let's talk about the temperature. March, April and May were very cold and cool. This meant we had to use more energy to heat the greenhouse when it was almost completely full. I think we used a record amount of natural gas for each month. Forget about that! You cannot believe how much I saved on my electric bill at home. We didn't have to run the A/C hardly at all. Big savings for us.

Third, by the time we got to the end of April, we were over \$700,000 behind in sales. But on a positive note, we made it all back by the 11th of June. Now, that's some accomplishment. All we had to do was work extremely hard and long with lots of pressure for six weeks. In addition, we had to pay a lot of overtime to our hourly employees. Let's not get bogged down here in the details—just think of how this benefited our employees. They put a lot of extra cash in their pockets, which, hopefully, they'll spend on buying some of our plants. It will also boost the overall economy, which benefits everyone.

Fourth, because spring came so late, we had to hold many plantings two or three weeks past their normal ship date.

This might seem like a challenge, but our growers became experts at using growth regulators. Yes, sir, they sprayed those wonderful PGRs day and night. I cannot tell you how proud I am of them for attacking this problem head on and coming out victorious. Who cares that we spent a small fortune on PGR chemicals? It all works out in the end. The consumer gets a plant that still looks good and grows, and the chemical companies just love us. Maybe I'll get a free trip to Disney this summer.

Finally, let's talk about trucking. It's been predicted for years that there was going to be a shortage of truck drivers. Guess what? We saw the reality of that this spring. We used at least three different driver leasing companies and were still short of drivers. Sometimes they were very good, and other times, they just didn't show up for work.

On a positive note, who cares about that? We recruited from within and outside our company to man our fleet of trucks. Not a problem. This created a higher demand for the unemployed and gave an opportunity for those who don't want to work to find a job they don't want to keep. Just fantastic.

So, in summing up the 2018 spring season, I would say it was a smashing success. But the biggest benefit of this season was the attitude adjustment I made: see the positive, ignore the negative. **GT**

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*Bill Swanekamp is president of Kube-Pak Corp., Allentown, New Jersey.*