

GROWERTALKS

Acres & Acres

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The Roller Coaster Season

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The 2018 *GrowerTalks* Spring Weekend Survey started out in early April with me writing, “The Spring weekend ratings have begun! Now, if only spring would begin, as well.” What I should have written next is, “Be sure the safety bar is lowered securely across your lap” because we were about to embark on a roller coaster ride worthy of Cedar Point.

The first survey weekend was Easter weekend, which scored a dismal 5.3 in the U.S.—the lowest Easter score in eight years of doing this. Conversely, Canada’s 6.4 was the strongest early April score I’d ever seen for that country.

Next week’s headline read, “How was April 7-8? You Don’t Want to Know!” The national averages were 4.4 U.S./4.8 Canada. The lousiness of the weekend was illustrated by a record 21 zeros, in addition to a bunch of 1s

and 2s. “The worst April weekend in the eight-year history of this survey,” I wrote.

Could it get worse? Yes. For April 14-15, the national averages were 4.1 U.S./3.5 Canada. You sent me 28 zeros (22%).

Did I mention my scale only goes down to 1?

The roller coaster began its climb April 21-22 when the U.S. scored 6.5 and Canada 5.4. Suddenly, a 7 was a good score! Eleven of you scored it a perfect 10 and only three of you scored it zero. The next weekend improved a bit more, to 7.6/6.0, with 26% of you rating the weekend a perfect 10.

My headline for the first weekend of May was, “Last Weekend was Super! Fabulous ... for the vast majority of you anyway” (the Ohio Valley was still suffering). The scores were 8.2 U.S./8.4 Canada, with 36% of you rating it perfect. Many of you set sales records and some of you said you’d already made up for the lousy April. Trevor Woldhuis of Illinois wrote, “Best single day ever on Saturday and best week we’ve ever had.” Jerome Vite of Michigan wrote, “Beautiful weather and record sales for the first Saturday of May! We have caught up to last year’s YTD sales.”

The roller coaster continued climbing on Mother’s Day, with the highest scores for that holiday (8.8 U.S./9.5 Canada) I’d ever recorded. Seventy-four percent of you scored the weekend 9 or higher. More records were set, more lost April sales made up for. This was the thrilling part of the ride where you raise your arms in the air and scream with joy.

May 19-20 was Canada's three-day holiday and they didn't waste it, scoring 9.4—just 0.1 point behind their best weekend score ever (set the previous week, as well as Mother's Day 2012). Down here in the U.S., the roller coaster plunged as we scored a soft 7.4 due to rain up and down the Eastern Seaboard.

Memorial Day was a virtual carbon copy of the previous weekend. Canada, at 9.3, continued to ride high, while the U.S., at 7.4, hit the loop-the-loop, in large part due to an unseasonable heat wave, with scores ranging from 10 down to 3. Wrote Abe VanWingerden of Metrolina Greenhouses, "Gave back some of what we gained May 1-15. Classic up-and-down season, but the troughs have been deeper and the peaks have been higher than normal even for an up-and-down season."

And what of June 2-3? I wrote, "The season continued its psycho roller coaster ways last weekend, with scores ranging from 10 (and only 7% of you rating it perfect) down to a 1 from Newfoundland, where my correspondent drove through three hours of snow after visiting customers. Yet one of those 10s came from North Pole, Alaska. Truly, this is a season to remember! Or perhaps to forget!"

As of this writing, I'm still accumulating scores for June 9-10 and they're looking like typical early summer: decent in the far north (10s from New Hampshire) and quotes of "Hot, hot, hot" coming from the south. Looks like the averages will be 6.8 U.S./6.3 Canada—down a bit from last year's 7.6/8.4 for the same weekend.

So, the question is: Would any of you get back in line and go around again? Or would you prefer something tamer, like the kiddie boats or merry-go-round? **GT**