

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Opportunity from Turmoil

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

The chaos that is America right now has forced a lot of us to burrow deep into our feelings of what we think “normal life” is or should be.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made wearing masks in public a regular occurrence and shed a glaring light on our rickety healthcare system. The social unrest that’s been unfolding on American streets in all 50 states has made us think about how some of our fellow citizens are treated in this country and how most of us are ignorant of the anger and frustration felt by them.

Whether you think the coronavirus isn’t as bad as the media makes it seem or that the protests are a pointless distraction, you can at least admit that both of these crises have opened up a way for us to have some serious conversations.

And that’s not a bad thing—it seems like every generation or so, America needs a wake-up call. We become too used to things being the way they are, are adverse to change or deny these issues even exist.

It also allows us to compare and contrast ... because in many ways, we’ve been through something like this before. My parents keep telling me that they feel like they’re back in the ‘60s, with the Civil Rights Movement and protests against the Vietnam War in full swing.

I was too young to remember, but from what I understand, the height of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s was also a very scary time. The ways to contract HIV and COVID-19 are vastly different, obviously, but the anxiety and fear from the general populace is the same—especially in the beginning when health experts were baffled and the public was getting mixed messages on how to protect themselves against it.

But with turmoil comes true innovation and change. It may not solve all of the world’s problems at once, but I really believe that it opens the door to more opportunities to be better and do things differently. No one knows this better than you.

Growers found themselves cancelling orders and tossing early spring product only to turn around and frantically try to fulfill the extreme demand a month later. Some retailers’ doors were completely closed one month, then when they were allowed to open, they experienced two months where literally every day was Mother’s Day (Groundhog

Mother's Day?). No wonder all of you are totally knackered.

But the turmoil and chaos around the coronavirus pandemic has also offered us a chance to reflect on our actions and reactions. What did we do right? Did it force us to be more flexible and open-minded to change? What new systems or processes did we implement that we're keeping because they worked better than expected? Are we coming out of it stronger and better prepared for the next crisis? What are the lessons we learned?

These are some of the points addressed in this month's cover story. Now that our COVID Spring is over (as it's still hanging around during our summer), all of us can stop, take a deep breath and ruminate. We asked a few industry notables to sit down and actually put their thoughts down on paper to get their feelings on our industry's reactions to the pandemic. We asked different questions—everything from planning for next spring to how it will affect us economically. (For a retail perspective, we did the same thing on the *Green Profit* side.)

Not having a Spring Trials also forced us here at Ball Publishing to re-think how we provide new variety information to our readers. Because of Zoom and help from the various breeders, we were able to pull it off and include the regular Spring Trials coverage in this issue like we always do.

But, I'm telling you, covering a virtual CAST was a lot harder. I never thought I would miss being on the road for a full week of 13-hour work days, but there you go. I'm looking forward to getting back to my regularly scheduled complaining during Spring Trials next year. Eh, the more things change, the more they stay the same ... **GT**