

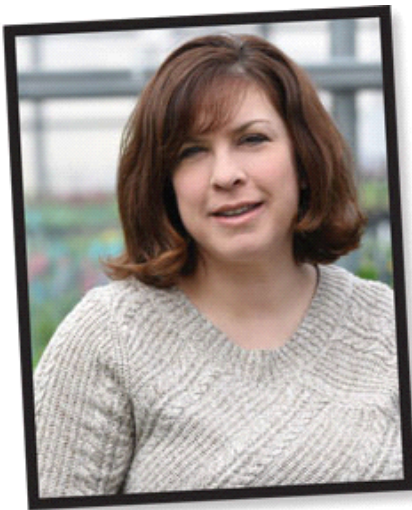
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Resolve to Try Something New

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

Many people use the start of the new year to look back at the previous 12 months to reflect on the positives, but also the missed opportunities to do or be better. That's inevitably when resolutions are made for some self-improvement.

A resolution a lot of people seem to make is to try something new, usually because they see someone else doing it and they think, "That would be cool to learn." Like wanting to take salsa dancing after watching "West Side Story." Or learning to paint in watercolors because you're a fan of Bob Ross. Or picking up woodworking because Nick Offerman is awesome and you want to be like him.

I have a perpetual goal of learning how to properly cook risotto, but so far, I haven't done it. Probably because I haven't made the time to actually learn. Life always seems to get in the way of my self-improvement. But it's never too late to try something new.

Those in the growing biz seem to do their reflecting in the fall, when you look back at how the spring and summer ended up shaking out, and start planning ahead for next spring. Growers have told me they use this time to resolve to be better, whether it's with a specific process or crop. You ask yourselves, "How could we have made this better/avoided this problem?" I guess you could call those "greenhouse resolutions."

There's a perception that our industry doesn't embrace change well, but I think it depends. When I talk to growers about their future plans, it almost always includes trying something new, and that can mean implementing a lean practice, adding automation or trialing a new crop they've never grown before.

One possibility you may not have thought about before is seed cut flowers. I feel like cut flowers are a nebulous product that only certain growers have the desire to produce, but I'm sure some of you remember when you added foliage plants to your production a few years ago when the houseplant trend exploded. You never thought you'd do that either, right?

Since you already have the experience and infrastructure in place with your existing growing operation, maybe adding cut flowers isn't such a weird idea. But it will take some groundwork and research to determine if it's something that can actually become reality. I spoke to two cut flower growers—one a young up-and-comer with an operation in Michigan (and editor of our Bloom Beat newsletter, Lindsay Daschner) and one a veteran with an

established 30-year business (Frank Arnosky)—for my cover story this month. If you're interested in dipping your toes into the cut flower pool rather than diving in head first, seed varieties are your best bet.

We've also got the latest information on how to make your URC production as successful as it can be. And if you haven't tried it yet, our resident marketing tech contributor Katie Elzer-Peters discusses how an SMS text program could help you better serve your B2B customers.

Even Michael DeBerti, senior grower at Mast Young Plants, talks about how you should be trying new varieties for the coming spring season in his column.

Maybe this winter I'll actually try to learn how to cook risotto without it ending up the consistency of oatmeal. But I'll need some taste testers. If you're brave enough and will be in the Chicago area soon, let me know and I'll invite you to the test kitchen. You just might experience the best Italian oatmeal risotto you've ever had. **GT**