



bridget white

# hear ye, hear ye!

**D**elivering good news is a rare treat. And this month, I get to do just that. So, first the good news, then the explanation.

The good news is ... research indicates that growers continue to thrive, and though constantly berated with bad economic news, they are remaining optimistic about the industry and its short-term future.

Not what you've been hearing? Let me explain.

Many of you already know that GPN and Summit Plastics annually sponsor the floriculture industry's most comprehensive State of the Industry Report. Well, the data from that survey, completed in February and March 2001, has just been evaluated. And the executive summary is just what I said: strong growth in 2000, with indications of continued growth this year. (Detailed analysis of the State of the Industry survey starts on page 12 and will continue next month.)

I know you're probably thinking that the surveys were completed before the spring sales delay or before the Dow dropped another 300+ points. True enough, but I don't think that's the explanation. Even though growth might not be as high this year as it has been in recent years, growers still have plans to expand; they are still hiring new employees; and they are still selling lots of plants.

My explanation is that the State of the Industry Report reflects an opinion I hear from lots of growers and seed companies. Namely, consumers like buying flowers and plants; they like gardening; and the economy will have to get a lot worse before people see a \$5.00 geranium as expensive and cut gardening from their budgets.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying anyone in floriculture believes they are going to get rich with the economy bad, but the growers we surveyed do believe they are going to continue making a decent living, which is more than some other industries can boast right now.

## FOLLOWING THE TREND

This year's State of the Industry Report also confirmed that growers are continuing to grow perennials and other "nontraditional" crops at an increasing rate. This is not a new trend; perennials have been gaining popularity with home gardeners for several years now. What is new is that everyone is starting to catch on.

Seed companies and plant breeders are introducing a staggering array of new perennials this year, as well as forming partnerships with existing perennial companies — all in an effort to meet the market's demand for new and interesting perennial varieties. (Next month's GPN will highlight many of these new varieties in the first of a two-part series on the best of the Pack Trials.)

Some of the "tried and true" perennial varieties on the market are being highlighted in a new promotional campaign sponsored by the Perennial Plant Association, "June is Perennial Plant Month." Though the information about this program will reach growers too late to impact planting, those growers who also have retail garden centers will be interested in the retail benefits of the program. GPN's coverage of the "June is Perennial Plant Month" program appears on page 64 in the new GNR (Greenhouse & Nursery Retailer) section of the magazine.

GNR, which is devoted to helping independent garden centers compete with the "Big Box" retailers, debuted last month and will become a regular feature in GPN. GNR will cover marketing, displays, promotions, consumer trends — any information that will help the independent garden center in today's more competitive marketplace. This month's article on innovative marketing strategies, such as the "June is Perennial Plant Month" campaign, typifies the kind of information that will be featured in GNR.

Comments or questions about the new section are welcome. 

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