

SPRING IS NOT CANCELED

I'm an eternal optimist; it's probably one of my most annoying qualities (according to my husband). So, never in a million years did I think I'd be writing about a global pandemic in my very first editor's letter. As reports from news media seem to change by the hour, it's hard to get a good grasp on the full effect COVID-19 has had and will continue to have in the U.S. and abroad.

This devastating virus hit close to home last month when all exhibitors announced they were cancelling their participation in the 2020 California Spring Trials just a couple of weeks before the event was set to begin. I have to admit I did not see this coming.

The optimist in me still wants to believe this is not as bad as it seems, but I can only play ignorant for so long. As I sit here today, attempting to be productive, I've got one screen open for this very document, another screen monitoring my retirement fund dropping, all while supervising my kindergartner who will be home schooling for at least the next few weeks. And I know I'm not alone. Bright side: I'm lucky to even still have a job right now; others aren't as fortunate.

I worry about businesses — big and small. I worry for our industry. The state of the economy is declining, but that optimist in me wants to believe most will recover. The cancellation of one of the industry's biggest events seemed catastrophic at the time, but as of press time, breeder companies are busy coming up with ways to salvage what they can.

For many, it's easy to think the worst. It's easy to panic. The cancellation of CAST has certainly spurred conversations whether the event will recover for next year and beyond. I spoke with Jim Devereux, vice president of Green Fuse Botanicals, and he said it best: "I think it'll not only be back, but it will be rejuvenated!" After speaking with numerous customers, he said they are all in agreement on the importance of the event and confident in its comeback.

"At this time, I don't foresee any long-term repercussions to the horticulture industry that cannot be overcome," shared Joe Cimino, Sakata's head of ornamentals. "Our industry has survived and persevered through other major challenges throughout history and most recently the housing market collapse in the U.S. in the mid-2000s."

I also received a message from Nathan Lamkey, vice president of sales and marketing for McHutchison. He said, "Even as the world seems to be very out of sorts, I saw a huge glimmer of hope today ... From my personal experience this weekend, even as the weather was not perfect, I saw more families spending time together outside walking their dog than ever before. This gives me hope that this quarantine has the potential to produce the likes of a 'Spring Fever' ... and our greenhouses and garden centers need to be prepared."

I guess I'm not the only optimist out there! And that makes me happy. Whatever happens from here, we must remember this will not last forever. Lamkey ended his email with this lovely tidbit: "When our society returns to the new normal, people will be searching for ways to reconnect with their humanity, and gardening is one of the purest expressions of a civilized world."

Spring is NOT canceled!



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