

COUNTERING THE CHILL



Bridget White, Editorial Director
(847) 391-1004
bwhite@sgcmail.com

As a young girl growing up in South Louisiana, March was the best time of the year; it brought with it some of my favorite things: azaleas and daffodils in full bloom, a new dress for Easter and helping plant my grandmother's garden.

When I got older and bought my first house, still in the South but now in Mississippi, March remained one of my favorite months; it brought promise and possibility: planning improvements in my garden and seeing the fruits of last year's work, watching my world wake up and come alive.

Now I live in the frozen plains of the Midwest, and I struggle every year when March arrives. Every cell in my body tells me March should signal the rebirth of color and outdoor life, but I'm still wrapped up in my heaviest winter coat and gloves waiting on buds, birds and brilliance. Instead of digging holes in my garden and splurging on that statue I couldn't live without I linger at the garden center and settle for another houseplant or a new container. And I don't think I'm alone. I think there are plenty of people like me who start looking for spring long before it arrives.

The Early Bird

What an opportunity! Think about all those hard-core gardeners out there, your best customers. If they don't want to wait for spring's arrival, don't make them! I'm not suggesting you sell plants that you know will freeze or hype bird food for birds that aren't around, but there are other things you can do to help your customers get ready for spring...things that will foster the gardening impulse and hopefully bring those customers back to your store when the time is right.

Do you have an in-house landscaping division? Arrange an evening event where customers can schedule time with a designer to get pointers on their landscapes. Some of those customers will take your ideas and run, but many of them will purchase the necessary products from your store, and a few will even hire your landscape division for a more detailed plan and installation. Don't have a landscape division? There are lots of design/build firms that would jump at an opportunity to sit down with prospective clients.

Many gardeners use the weeks before spring actually hits to prepare their garden. This means cleaning and pruning. Early spring is the best time to sell mulch, soil amendments and the like. Encourage customers to prepare beds now so they gain time when the weather turns nice. Additionally, depending on your location, March is the perfect time to hold classes about how to transplant, divide and prune things like roses, daylilies, etc.

And don't forget those who still like to start from seeds or grow vegetables. If they don't get started soon, the first frost will catch them before harvest or bloom.

Garden centers should not be dead before spring arrives, and especially not independents! The box stores are not going to put out product before peak nor are they an inviting place to spend one's lunch hour. Taking advantage of this narrow window to extend the season is an opportunity for independents only. The question you have to ask yourself is are you going out there and create business where there isn't any or wait for the easy stuff to come to you? 🌸

By The Numbers

156: number of days in the official spring to autumn gardening period.

51: percentage of outdoor bedding plant purchases made by heavy purchasers, according to the American Floral Endowment.

11: percentage of gardeners in a recent Garden Writers Association survey that reported making no advance plans for their garden.

4: ranking of March in months consumers are most likely to buy flowers, according to the American Floral Endowment.

Bridget E. White

LAWN & GARDEN

Retailer

Editorial

Editorial Office:	(847) 391-1050
Bridget White	Editorial Director bwhite@sgcmail.com
Catherine Evans	Managing Editor cevans@sgcmail.com
Meghan Boyer	Associate Editor mboyer@sgcmail.com
Timothy Hodson	Associate Editor thodson@sgcmail.com
Jennifer Hubert	Assistant Editor jhubert@sgcmail.com
Kelley Murphy	Graphic Designer kmurphy@sgcmail.com

Advertising

Sales Office:	(817) 731-9352
Diane Pirocanac	Vice President, Group Publisher dpirocanac@sgcmail.com
Felix Schilling	Account Manager (817) 731-9352 felixschilling@sbcglobal.net
Tami Morrell	Integrated Accounts Manager tmorrell@sgcmail.com
Jan Varnes	Integrated Accounts Manager jvarnes@sgcmail.com
Judy Ann Paul	Sales & Marketing Associate jpaul@sgcmail.com
Donna Aly	Classified Advertising daly@sgcmail.com
Michael Mansour	Internet Sales Representative mmansour@sgcmail.com

Staff

Judith H. Schmuesser	Director of Production Operations jschmuesser@sgcmail.com
Scott Figi	Production Manager sfigi@sgcmail.com
Linda L. Lambdin, C.C.P.	Director of Circulation llambdin@sgcmail.com
Erica Rivera	Advertising Coordinator erivera@sgcmail.com

Editorial Advisory Board

Dale Bachman	Bachman's Floral Home & Garden
Kathleen Benken	H.J. Benken Florist and Greenhouse
Stan Pohmer	Pohmer Consulting Group
Judy Sharpton	Growing Places Marketing
Steve Vanderwoude	Spring Meadow Nursery
Jack Williams	Ecke Ranch

Corporate

Karla A. Gillette	Chair/CEO
Sheldon Schultz	Vice Chairman
Edward Gillette	President
Bill Clarke	Vice President, Chief Financial Officer
Ann O'Neill	Vice President, Human Resources
Halbert S. Gillette	Chairman Emeritus (1922-2003)

Lawn & Garden Retailer accepts no responsibility or liability for the validity of information supplied by contributors, vendors, advertisers or advertising agencies.

Subscription Information

Lawn & Garden Retailer magazine (ISSN 1540-9023) is published nine times a year in January, February, March, April, June, July, August, September and November by



Scranton Gillette Communications, Inc.,
380 E. Northwest Highway, Suite 200,
Des Plaines, IL 60016-2282.
Telephone: (847) 391-1000 Fax: (847) 390-0408.

Subscription rates in the U.S. are \$30 per year (Canada and Mexico are \$50 and all other countries are \$60 payable in U.S. currency). Periodical postage paid at Des Plaines, IL 60018 and at additional mailing offices. Reproduction of contents is forbidden. Copyright 2006.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Circulation Department, Lawn & Garden Retailer, 380 E. Northwest Highway, Suite 200, Des Plaines, IL 60016-2282. PRINTED IN USA.

