

# a sweet premium

How much are you willing to pay for a dozen chocolate-covered strawberries? On Thanksgiving morning, I was gathered with family around a continental breakfast table at the Comfort Inn in Tom's River, New Jersey, with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on in the background.

Another patron of the hotel sparked up a conversation about her Thanksgiving plans and happened to mention that this little candy store across the street has "the best chocolate-covered strawberries ever."

We nodded our heads as we were not in the market for any such desserts, having made a number of pies the previous night. The woman walked away, but then our group looked at each other and decided that maybe we should just see if they're open if they really are "the best ever."

We called up the number — two minutes before they opened on a normal Thursday — and there was no answer. We decided they must be closed for the holiday and figured it wasn't meant to be, until five minutes later the phone rang.

The employee saw the missed call and wanted to see if we had any questions. That was good service, and instantly Mrs. Hanna Krause's Homemade Candy became a stop on the day's agenda.

This employee was the owners' son who opened on the holiday when his parents were away. He proceeded to tell the history about this being the second store of a candy company started in 1929 by Alfred Krause who learned to make candy in Germany before coming to the U.S. as a teenager.

The end cost of the strawberries, and a few other treats, was much more than expected, but at that point we were not leaving empty handed. Our reasoning: this fourth-generation employee had hooked us from the return phone call, the retelling of their business's story and the great service on a holiday. We were willing to pay whatever he was asking.

And yes, the strawberries were a huge hit.

The reason I share this story is because I constantly hear retailers concerned that price is the primary factor in customers' purchasing decisions. I will never disagree that it's one factor, but in 2019, I say that we all ask ourselves what else can contribute to a customer saying they'll pay a premium, whatever the price.

## the year ahead

In this issue, we have many forward-looking articles for 2019. Have you started making plans to promote plants that align with the 2019 Pantone Color of the Year Living Coral? Turn to page 8 to learn more.

On page 14, Jessica DeGraaf takes you through "7 Steps to Craft a Merchandising Plan for 2019." Some of these are quick to implement, and it's never too late to look into substantial merchandising changes for the spring either.

Each year, The Garden Media Group releases a Garden Trends Report. For 2019, it's titled "Rooted Together — Reconnecting with the Natural World," and you won't want to miss the eight trends that are bound to impact your business, some this year and others further down the road.

On page 70, there's information on the National Garden Bureau's 2019 "Year of" plants and how you can use their resources to help boost sales, while on page 74 there's more than two dozen plants that are new for retail this year.

Nothing really changes between 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 31 and 12 a.m. on Jan. 1 except for the year, but the switch of the last of those four numbers is always a good excuse to look at things with fresh eyes.



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