

new CRAVINGS



By Christina
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February reminds me of a few things in the garden center business and few of them have to do with hearts and chocolates. Flowers yes, but not imported fragrance-free roses and certainly not balloons or stuffed animals.

After the somewhat restful January with all of its hunkering down during inclement weather, making business plans and recovering from the holiday chaos, February often injects a strong craving for anything fresh and new. It's like there is now room in our lives for a brand-new design idea where there wasn't room before, or maybe there's an opening for inspiration available for a remarkable new plant or a new way of looking at things that was always right there and we never saw it before now.

In our mild Seattle climate, the primroses, bareroot plants, ball and burlap plants, seeds and houseplants start arriving at first in a slow agonizing trickle and, before you know it, you're unloading 18 wheelers and it's "Game on!" We're out there with gusto!

There's a current of new energy that flows into us that we missed at the end of the long busy year before. For some reason, it's like we see things with new eyes and it feels so good, even if it's your 30th year. I feel like that excitement never gets old.

I don't know about you, but I get all my best ideas in the shower. My brain just seems to be the most pliable and open there, so this time of the year, I'm listening hard. What's your fresh take for February?

Do you have a sparkling new state-of-the-art something that you can't wait to try out in 2019? Have you refined and refreshed an old tired process into a brand-new time-saving idea? Are you and your buyers



You and your staff can use 2019 as a new opportunity to welcome and propel fresh ideas.

playing with new plant introductions that have your whole team jazzed? Are you brainstorming and tackling an old idea in a whole new way this year?

I'm super excited about how my business is now maturing after all my years of hard work and even more excited that I don't feel like it's an unsupervised toddler running with a knife anymore.

Every year I pick a theme word for the business and this year I have two that dovetail: streamlining/simplifying.

I'm dumping the old and stale and upgrading to new systems in all areas to keep things easy and strategic, so I can focus on promoting good design and saving money, time and labor.

With weather patterns growing ever more, shall we say, "assertive", water getting more expensive and plant costs escalating for good reason, planning my focus for 2019 in how I style, what colors look radiant and exciting, and how I can bring the same level of inspired design are all added challenges, but thrilling ones too. In particular 2019 feels like we all need a good dose of uplifting and positive energy and I am ready to bring it on with gusto.

Maybe your garden center will be on a local tour or a national industry tour and you're making big plans to look like garden center rock stars to attendees. Maybe you're planning on attending one of these events and getting stupendous business ideas for 2020. Or maybe you are adding a "garden coach" position to your staff this year and you're working out the details for how to make it a wonderful new profit center. Maybe you're adding more garden art to your offerings in 2019. Clearly, I'd support all of the above.

I know for a fact that companies like Peace Tree Farm, Hort Couture, Upshoot, Bailey Nurseries, Terra Nova

Nurseries, Proven Winners and so many more are working incredibly hard to bring original and inspiring new products to market for 2019.

In 2018, I discovered some at a few shows that I couldn't live without and they immediately made their way into

my containers and landscapes with much enthusiasm from myself and my clients. I can't stress enough how using these new discoveries propels and motivates me to use plants in new ways and how the challenge stirs me on to ever more new ideas.

Big changes intersected my path in 2018 and one of them was changing my lifestyle and losing 50 pounds. In order to keep it off, I've also become a power walker/runner, but even more than that, it's meant re-assessing everything. To make sure my goals were big and scary

enough to motivate me, I committed to the Seattle Marathon the week of Thanksgiving 2018, which put a whole new spin on trying new things and it gave me the insight to understand when to tweak my perspective, ask my business coach for ideas and now in 2019 to make my life and business goals even bigger.

Employees Lead

For February 2019, I'd encourage all of you to be open to having a fresh new view of something that's always been done the same old way and see if you can find your own exciting new spin on it. Where will you find the inspiration? It might be from totally different industries, you might just find the next big winner idea from a very unexpected source.

Eyewear brand Warby Parker has a successful workplace program that allows the company's engineers to decide which projects they want to work on. The program creates more engaged and productive employees and leads to the development of ideas that deliver better results.

The increase in this kind of employee-led prioritization was inspired by a research paper on Cirque du Soleil, which showed that circus performers were better than the company's managers at choosing the most popular new acts.

Perhaps the clowns on the front lines have better insight into what will work with audiences and customers. Or maybe that simply empowering them increases their motivation. Either way, it might just add a smile to everyone's face.

Creative passions are such an excellent driver of innovation. The Beatles are a great example of this idea. Each member of the Beatles' interests outside of the band spurred their creativity within the group.

With influences as diverse as McCartney's love of poetry and Harrison's passion for non-Western music, the Beatles were able to create a unique sound that resonated with their fans. Feeding their passions outside of the work of songwriting, recording and performing allowed them to bring innovative new ideas to the table.

Do you have a story about a fresh new take on something you're trying in 2019? I'd love to hear from you. Please drop me a line. 🌱

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