

# APRIL SHOWERS

## Really Do Bring

# MAY FLOWERS

Garden centers all across the country weighed in on the 2007 spring season. See the results and how you compare.

By Catherine Evans

**S**pring: a time when birds return home, gardens start to grow and your stress level rises. However, from the reports I have received, it seems that spring went pretty well for many garden center retailers. This year, there were fewer rainstorms and flooding (East Coast) and it got a bit warmer earlier (Midwest) than last year. Overall, it worked out much better for retailers this year.

Recently, *Lawn & Garden Retailer* surveyed retailers about their 2007 spring season. In the information below, you will find out what sold the best, some new marketing ideas for the season and so much more. Answers were anonymous so garden centers could respond more freely. The survey responses seemed pretty positive, with a few complaints about April, but overall customers were shopping and registers were ringing.

### How was your 2007 spring season?

- “We had a great start for March and early April. Very cool weather caused traffic to stall just when it should be strong. Sales soon rebounded with a great May and early June.”

- “Slow start, as the first two weeks of April were more like January. Once the weather broke, sales were fast and furious! We had the best year ever.”

- “It was a very cold and wet spring. It was hard to get any work done with the weather. I had a hard time keeping plants warm and able to sell for the Mother’s Day weekend; when it did finally warm up, it got hot!”

- “Our season was outstanding! No rain on the weekends helped. High gas prices are keeping people closer to home thus spending more on the yard.”

- “Our spring season was a seesaw of opportunity. Early spring was right on schedule with the cool

crops and then our weather change and mid-April the low temps at night were 21° F. Now the rest of spring was great! Many new customers and container garden plantings!”

- “The late April freeze killed sales for two weeks, and things like Japanese maples are only now looking good enough to sell. No rain to speak of since the end of April, so that hasn’t helped. People are only decorating, and big projects seemed to have been put on hold.”

- “Spring season went well, with lots of Mother’s Day purchases the Saturday before. Organic veggie starts and herbs are hot, as is anything grown without the use of pesticides. Edible landscaping is trendy.”

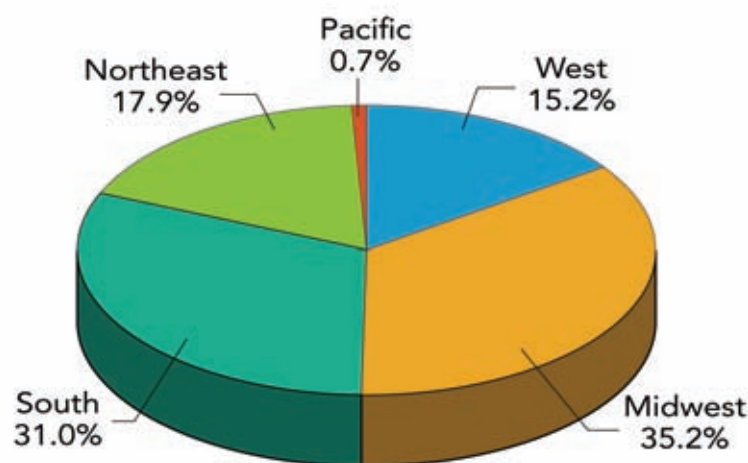
- “Very happy with our increased sales for 2007. It was hot in March, then cold and then cloudy for two months. It is still raining, but that extended our season. Since we were so dry last year with threats of water rationing, we will deal with and be happy with the moisture we are receiving.”

- “Spring started with one of the best Marches on record, followed by one of the worst Aprils on record. Then May rebounded very well, and June has been about normal.”

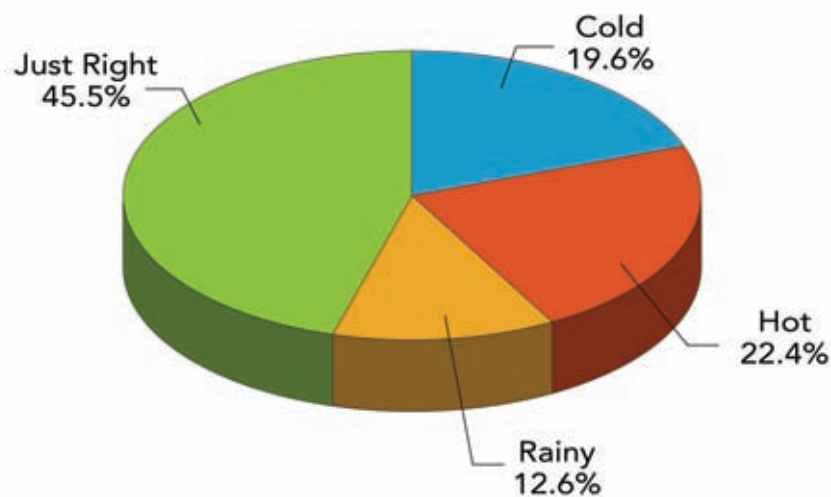
- “We had a terrific season. Weather was great after a bumpy start. We had a warmer-than-normal March, which got everyone in the mood. Then snow storms the first two weekends in April. After that, we got wonderful spring weather with rain as we needed it.”

“Weather was much more normal this year. Season buying started in April, which caught us off guard. People started working in the gardens, and we couldn’t keep some products in stock.”

### Where is your garden center located?



### How was the weather in your area?







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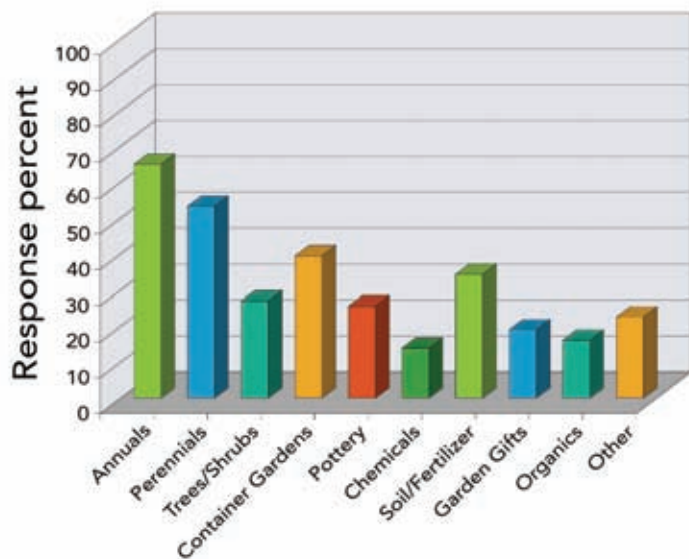
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## MANAGEMENT

### What were your best-selling items this spring?



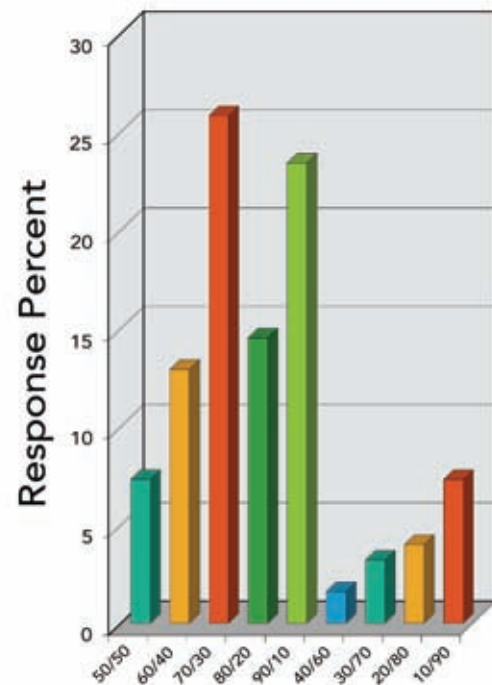
#### Top Three "Other" Best Sellers:

- Mowers/lawn equipment
- Concrete items (statuary, etc.)
- Mulch

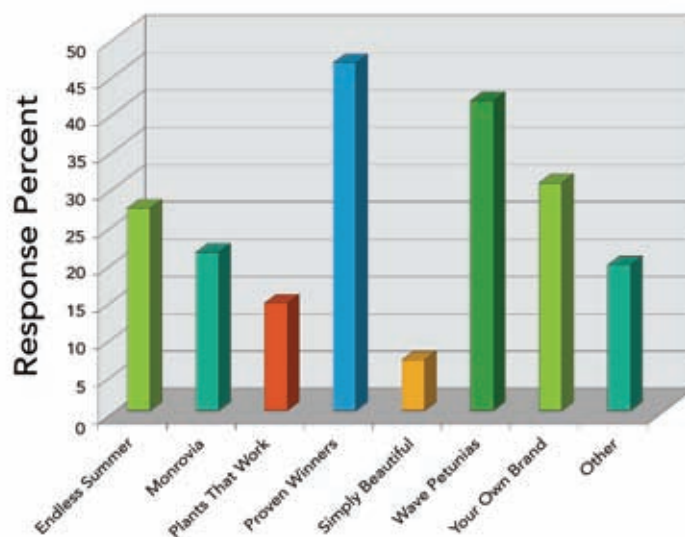
### What trends did you notice this year?

- Less flat purchases, more 4-inch and above
- More younger people
- Container gardens
- Custom containers
- Organics
- More interest in unique plants
- Lots of instant color
- Pottery
- Gardening things seen on TV or heard on radio
- Vegetables
- Perennials
- Home décor
- Price not a factor

### What percentage of your sales were live versus hard?



### Which were your best-selling brands?



#### Top Two "Other" Best Brands:

- Nonbranded
- Knockout Roses





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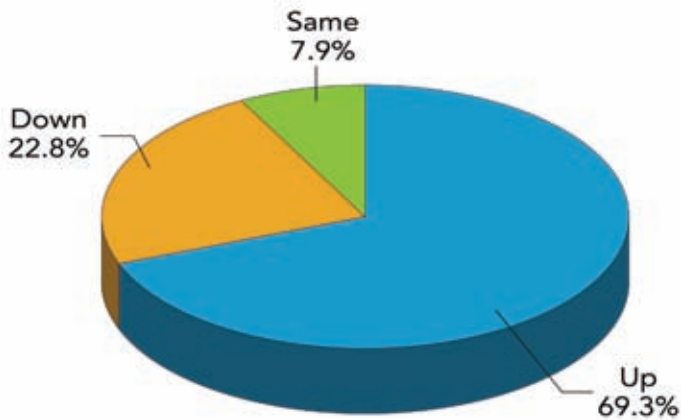
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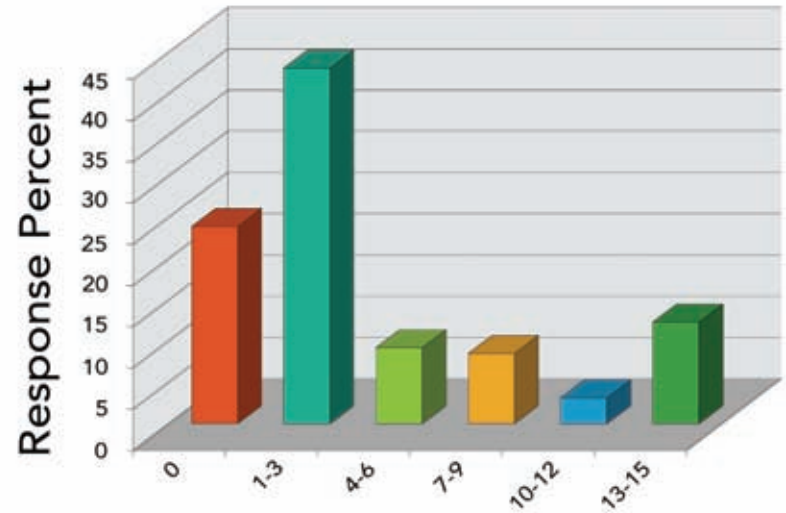
## What do you plan to do differently in 2008?

- Cut back on selection
- Larger annual containers
- More container gardens
- More promotion
- Be ready earlier
- More organics
- More vegetables
- More employees
- More baskets
- Expansion/change
- More unique materials
- Better customer service

## How Were Spring 2007 Sales Compared To 2006?



## How many staff members did you add for the spring season?



## What are your plans to bring in more customers in 2008?

- Advertising (newspaper, radio and TV)
- Direct mail
- E-blasts
- Flyers
- Better signage
- Better discounts
- Add more container gardens
- Rewards programs
- New location ▶

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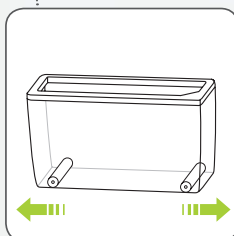
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"It was the strongest spring in years. Weather was a key component since the economy is still soft. People were more than understanding of price increases as well, which was a pleasant surprise."



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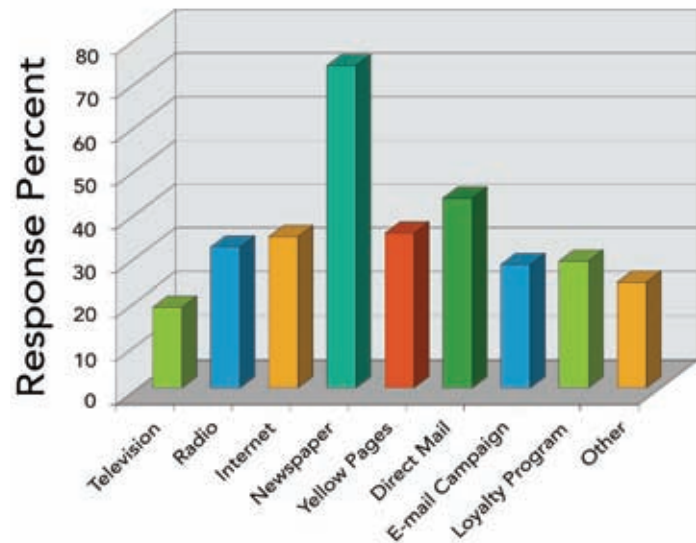


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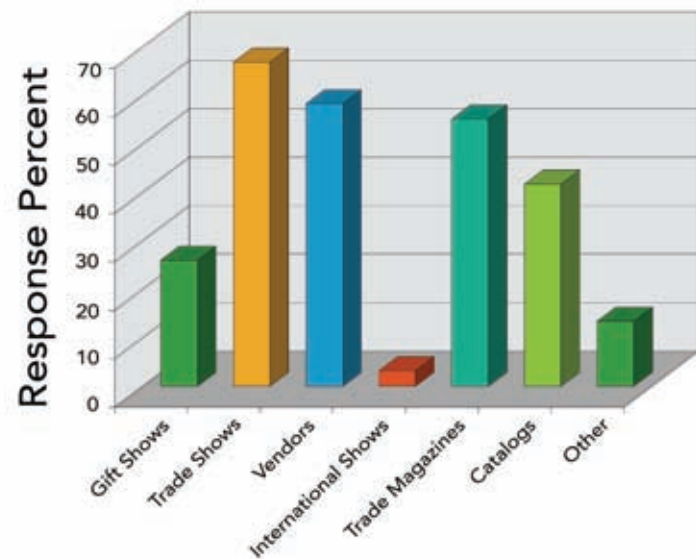
## How did you advertise this spring?



Top four "Other" advertising methods:

- Word of mouth
- Billboard
- Local magazines
- Flyers

## Where did you find the products you sold this spring?



Top "Other" source for new products:

- Internet

## What surprised you the most this spring?

- Drastic weather changes
- Interest in unusual plant materials
- Lack of objection to price increases, people were paying
- People doing fewer DIY projects
- Eagerness to buy container plantings
- Organic shift
- Demand for more color
- More male shoppers

For more information on this article, contact editorial director Tim Hodson at [thodson@sgcmail.com](mailto:thodson@sgcmail.com) or (847) 391-1019.

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