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# SO ARE THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

**H**ave you every noticed that this industry is like a soap opera sometimes (not in the your-wife-is-pregnant-with-twins-and-each-one-has-a-different-father way)? It's like a soap opera in that it seems like sometimes you can't get a break. It seems like there is a new issue popping up that is going to affect your business like immigration, minimum wage, the big box war (for more on that, turn to page 26), the slow housing market, consumers spending less, weather and the list goes on and on. It is kind of like you don't know what issue to deal with each day.

## Having A Bad Day?

I have visited a number of garden centers recently. While I was at a fairly well-known garden center in the Midwest, the owner told me an interesting story as we walked around the store talking about some of his recent improvements. On Memorial Day weekend (which happened to be a great weather weekend for the Midwest), the store was packed. In fact, the garden center owner hired off-duty police officers to help direct traffic.

As these guys were working the traffic, one of them noticed a few guys that looked familiar. So he went and talked to the garden center owner and told him these guys looked suspicious and he was going to call the police department and see if he could get more information. It turned out one of the three guys had a very hefty record that included armed robbery, and it also turned out these three guys were casing the garden center for later in the weekend. They were arrested onsite but created quite a scare among garden center staff members.

The OFA Short Course is coming up July 14-17, and *Lawn & Garden Retailer* will be presenting a special session on the "State of the Garden Industry." This session is based on proprietary research (co-sponsored by OFA) that will provide growers and retailers with insight into the current status of the garden center industry. Make sure not to miss it Tuesday, July 17, from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m.

## Changing The Subject

Yes, I know it is a little dismal sounding, so this is when I turn a negative into a positive. Though it might be hard to imagine, there are good, smart, dedicated people out there working on ways to help you with these issues. Luckily, our friend above had those police officers at the store that day. You also have all of the lobbyists working on political problems in Washington, D.C., and at the state levels. There are industry people working with each and every one of you on how to deal with big box competition, how to improve your store to make it more customer friendly, etc. (We are still working on a consultant that can fix all of your weather problems.)

Consumer spending will go up and down forever and so will the housing market. This is just part of owning a business. You are lucky unlike a lot of other independent retailers of all kinds; basically, the product you offer is proven (even by university studies) to make people happier. It puts people in a better mood, a better place and a better time. Only you can do that. All you need to do is build off of that and you are golden. Remind your customers about the flower and happiness factor, and it will work like a charm. We are a charming industry; why not use it to our advantage?

## One More Advantage

We are all here to help, too. This industry has lobbyists, industry experts, academics, master gardeners and even editors. Yes, I am talking about us. My job is to bring you the information you need to have a successful business. The articles we produce, the ideas we have are for you. I travel as much as I can to shows and to see your garden centers and tour everywhere I possibly can to make sure the magazine is giving you what you need. That is where you come in.

Since I am here to help you, I want you to tell me where you need help. Our friend that told the story about the possible robbers wanted me to get the word out to you.

If you have articles you would like to see, ideas you have or feedback on things we are doing, please fill me in. This magazine is here because you want it here, and for us to continue making it a good source of information, I want to know your needs. All you have to do is give me a call at (847) 391-1050 or E-mail me at cevens@sgcmail.com. Happy idea sharing!

# LAWN & GARDEN Retailer

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