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# WELCOME SPRINGTIME, WE HAVE MISSED YOU

**W**elcome to May! Spring has started off in this country with a bit of an oddity. Snow, snow and more snow plagued the nation in April, and garden centers were just not too sure what to do. If it was not snowing, it was cold in areas where it normally should not have been.

People in the upper peninsula of Florida were covering plants to protect them from frost damage. Crape myrtle trees in Georgia were frozen from the inside out, and the Midwest and Northeast were riddled with cold and snow all throughout April. As a matter of fact, the weather during the California Pack Trials was not much higher than the 50s and 60s, and that is a rarity for the Golden State at that time of year.

## Lessons Learned

I guess that is where the lessons learned part of this report comes into play. For the last several years, the weather has become a big factor for this industry. I know what you are saying, "Are you crazy? This industry is based on weather." I am aware of that, but what I am saying is that we have had such extremes, it has become something of a phenomenon. Whether it is torrential rains in the West, tons of snow in the Northeast, extreme cold in the South, lots of heat in the

Midwest, dry humid weather in the Pacific Northwest or major hurricanes or tornados along the coastal states, the weather has been anything but typical.

What does all of this prove? This industry is changing, whether it is actual weather patterns, the big box down the street, the online gardening suppliers and so on. It is time to jump on the garden center evolution bandwagon and grow and change with the times.

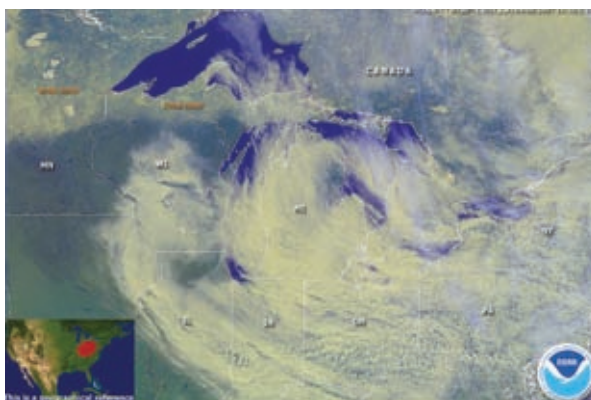
You often hear that you need to be unique and you need a niche. Well, look at all of those garden centers that didn't feel that way. Where are they now? They are no longer in business. I travel to so many garden centers throughout the year, and the majority of you are doing a really good job of establishing yourself as unique or having a niche. But there are a few that still need to figure out how to step it up a little.

Now, I am not a consultant, so I cannot give each and everyone one of you a tutorial on how to do it. What I do know is that presentation, display, customer service and even the dreaded price are all ways independent garden centers can prevail in this industry.

## Keep Up The Good Work

I know this is your busiest time of year, and sleeping, eating and even seeing your family is on hold for at least the next month or so. A little advice: take a couple minutes each day just to breathe. It might rain, the big box down the street might have a big \$.99 geranium sale or your town may just start a construction project in front of your store. It will be okay.

Plants will still sell, customers will still come in without a clue and rabbits will still be chomping on the newly planted garden. All I am saying is keep up the good work. You know what you are doing. Stay on top of the evolving industry and everything will come together in the end. Happy spring! 🌸



Snow cover from the blizzard of April 6-8, 2007 across the Great Lakes and Northeastern States is seen beneath broken clouds. (Photo: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Department of Commerce)

# LAWN & GARDEN *Retailer*

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