

# WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD



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A few weeks ago, one of my local TV morning shows ran a piece about a new book that is supposed to help people de-stress their lives. During the interview, the author gave advice about prioritizing tasks, setting aside “down” time and other such things. I actually wasn’t listening too closely because most of my attention was focused on getting ready for work and making sure my cat didn’t fall off my shoulder, which can be a little tricky when she weighs 17 lbs. and is 13 years old. In the back of my mind I heard the author say, “People have got to stop multi-tasking.”

Almost before the words were out of his mouth, I was standing in front of the TV, cat on the floor, curling iron in the sink — he had my full attention. Multitasking is a major source of stress, the author argued over the course of his interview. It keeps our minds cluttered, dilutes our attention and inhibits the satisfaction of completing a job.

It wasn’t a bad argument. There certainly were elements of truth in it...don’t we all sometimes get overwhelmed by consistently doing four things at once? Still, as I bent down to pick up my cat while walking back to the sink and the curling iron, I shook my head and wondered, “What planet is he from?”

## Are You Guilty?

What are you doing right now? Are you sitting quietly reading this magazine with an uncluttered mind or are you waiting for a meeting to start, thinking about the inventory scheduled to arrive today and listening to the other conversations in the room? I can tell you that while I write this I’m also eating lunch and downloading photos from an Internet site. In between sentences, I listen to the sales meeting taking place down the hall and think about the phone calls I need to make.

Who can afford to do one thing at a time? Who has that much time or that many employees? Multi-tasking has become a way of life for most people. Every garden center owner, every employee, every manufacturer is being asked to “do more with less” — it’s the new buzz word for 21st-century business.

With Christmas 2005 barely a memory, many of you are getting ready for the spring peak while planning for 2006 holiday events that won’t happen for approximately another nine months. Good planning or unnecessary multi-tasking? You schedule some garden center visits while away at a trade show. Wise use of resources or unnecessary multi-tasking? I could go on and on because retail necessitates multi-tasking, even more so when you deal in live products.

## Sanity Check

Not only would those of us happily employed in garden retailing probably disagree about the evils of multi-tasking, but we must actually enjoy it. To remain in such a highly seasonal, must-turn industry, there *has* to be something more than tradition and pretty flowers keeping us here.

I think we thrive on the pressure; we take satisfaction in having lots of balls in the air at the same time. I think we’d get bored if we only worked on one project at a time. I think we’re born multi-taskers.

And by the way, the day I saw the interview about multi-tasking — the day I stopped everything else and watched the segment on TV, I missed my train and was late for work. At least for me, multi-tasking is a necessity. ☘

## By The Numbers

**200,000:** approximate number of books published in 2005.

**1,978:** average number of hours Americans worked annually as of 2001.

**52:** number of days between Mother’s Day and 4th of July, the peak gardening months for most of the country.

*Bridget C. White*

# LAWN & GARDEN Retailer

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