



## NHPGA asks members, “How was your Spring?”



Mike McPhail, Farm Credit East, Bedford, NH

As I have talked with greenhouse, nursery, and garden center producers around the state this spring, the overall mood has been one of optimism. The spring sales season had a slow start given the long, cold winter but really seemed to take off with Mother's Day weekend. Sales results through Memorial Day weekend have remained strong, with most producers reporting significantly higher sales compared with sales for the same period over the past few years. In addition retail operations are reporting higher customer counts and higher sales per customer versus prior years. While these results are very encouraging, both for this industry and the economy in general, most producers remain skeptical that the results will hold throughout the remainder of the season. Let's do our part and support our local growers and garden centers throughout the summer!



Heather Poire, Territory Sales Rep.,  
Bailey Nurseries, Newport, MN

Hello summer! Here we are mid-June and although we've had a bit of rain, it's a whole lot nicer than this past winter. Overall, it appears the plants fared ok in spite of the weather and gardeners came out stronger and ready to shop. From the road I've been hearing the "edibles" category is very strong and looks like it's here to stay for a while. I was hoping to see more displays/departments featuring all types of edibles from trees down to ground covers helping the consumer with her choices. Small space gardening is going gang busters with a lot of grab and go material for instant color. Annuals take center stage for May sales and that category is strong. The nursery category seems to be holding its own although not as strong as in years past. Let's inspire her to plant up more trees and shrubs. Just as the annual world stepped up the marketing with inspirational pop and displays, I think the nursery category might be able to sell more

plants if we followed suit. Keep it simple for the shopper by putting together live examples of several small three season interest (throw an edible in there as well) plant groupings (3,5,7) that can be planted in small spaces in just a weekend. Not too overwhelming and very relevant.

The gardening season has just begun! We have plenty of days to play in the soil, share great gardening ideas with each other and of course sit back and take it all in. Happy summer!



Linda Zukas, Churchill's Garden Center,  
Exeter, NH

After such a cold, snowy winter, we were hopeful that customers would be hungry for spring and color and we anticipated a spring flurry. They were and still are hungry for color, but we did not anticipate that the cold would linger well into April like it did, and even in the seacoast, customers were shopping for pansies in their winter coats a lot of days. May brought some warmer weather and business greatly improved with a strong Mother's Day weekend, followed by some great weeks. May ended strong, and the beginning of June is holding strong as well. Great weather has been falling on the weekends, so people are able to plant and spruce up their yards for the summer season. We continue to offer fresh color in all areas of our business all summer long for our customers that want to keep adding to their containers or gardens, or are having a special event. Here's hoping for some great summer weather (not too hot!) and a great summer for all.



Robert Demers, Demer's Garden Center,  
Manchester, NH

Here at Demers Garden Center after a long cold winter we were looking forward to a warm, welcoming spring. By the first week of April we are normally unloading shrubs and getting the yard ready. This year we were selling more wood pellets than lawn fertilizer so you knew winter was not leaving us. By the third week of April we were getting to the point where we were starting to look like a garden center. Material was slow to come in and plants in the greenhouse were about 3 weeks behind with customers trickling in. May finally arrived with a few warm moist days and customers had had enough and it was time to shop. With the weather still not up to par we kept everything inside the greenhouses and did not take a chance putting anything out. It was a challenge to keep material coming in and shelves full. Customers stayed close to the greenhouses to keep warm and out of the wind so we did many displays of shrubs and trees near these areas because it was still too chilly to stroll the nursery area.

Here it is June and now we can start putting tender plants out and we also can add more color to the displays. We found the displays worked well for us and we added some more. We are running about 2 weeks behind on sales and we are still going strong. I am hoping the heat and humidity will stay away so all garden centers will keep going.



Chris Schlegel, D.S. Cole Growers,  
Loudon, NH

The focus at D.S. Cole Growers from January through March is on the production and shipment of young plants throughout the country. The mood right from the start of the season was one of optimism. Despite the cold temperatures and long winter, we experienced an increase in production and sales. We faced challenges shipping in cold temperatures and then our drivers battled unusually fierce frost heaves later in the season. Customers expressed concern about fuel prices and some delayed opening greenhouses for that reason. However the sales remained strong with customers continually adding to orders and often requesting new product offerings to expand their selection.

Demand for “finished plants” has also been incredibly strong since the start of that portion of our season in late April. Less traditional plants such as succulents, mandevilla, and gerbera daisies have been selling well. Herbs have also been a very hot item. Sales of begonias of all types and in all sizes of pots and hanging baskets have been brisk. We have seen a shift away from items like geraniums and petunias and an increase in annual combination pots. Color is key! It seems as though there is an endless market for bright and bold calibrachoa combinations. Last season we felt that the demand for “color” extended into the summer months. We added to later season production of annuals in larger pot sizes for that reason and crops are still selling out as we approach the later part of June.

### New Hampshire Plant Growers

**Annual Summer Meeting  
Wednesday, August 6th  
Lake Street Garden Center  
Salem, NH  
3-6:30 PM**

**Tour the garden center and see Lake Street Garden Center's new retail greenhouse. Rick Yates from Griffin Greenhouse Supply will speak on Pest Control in a Retail Greenhouse and BCA Compatible Pesticides**

**For registration information,  
Please visit [www.NHPGA.org](http://www.NHPGA.org)**

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