

## **There is no Sugar Coating This**

As I write this piece, the coronavirus and the insidious Covid-19 effects have resulted in changes to our lives that were unfathomable just a few weeks ago. It is no longer something we read it about in other places, in fact, it has become an animate object that is full in our faces. And like objects in the side view mirror, it is closer than it appears. You are probably tired of hearing about it but for better or worse, we are living history. How we respond will be part of our legacy.

### **We Are in a War.**

We did not declare this war, we did not cause it, yet here it is. It may have been a stranger when it first arrived but we know the consequences and we know how to fight. There are no bombs, no bullets, no IEDs or trenches, this war is the safest of any war we have fought – all we must do is stay home. We are both its target and its kryptonite. If you are not smart enough to stay away from the gym, the bar or the mall, you allow it to attack me. Stay away and it will perish. I am scared for my kids; my kids are scared for their children - the virus does not discriminate. This has nothing to do with luck, this with being smart. We can only win this war if you and I “change the me to a we”.

We may escape the health implications, none of us will escape the financial hardships. There is no way to sugar coat what happens when people don't leave their homes, there is no way to sugar coat the loss of jobs, the inability to pay for basic needs and the huge psychological toll this time in history will exact. Do not for a second believe that congress will solve this problem. What congress does will hopefully alleviate the problems. However, in this war, our fate is in our own hands.

If people can't get out, they won't buy, even landscapers are going to suffer, as are the producers who supply them. Garden centers are in a battle just to be allowed to stay open, but innovations such as drive- through gardening will be far more common at independent garden centers in the next few months than ever before. Some businesses will be shuttered. Everyone in this industry is going to take a hit.

### **Gardening is Part of the Solution**

However, we need not cower; we need not live with dread. Let's all of us spread the word that gardening is one of the few exercises people can enjoy without fear. Spreading the word by actions and deeds may even soften the reality on the ground. Gardening provides mental and physical exercise and without doubt provides therapy. Oh my, how we all need some of that!

As for me, my battles will be no different than many of us in this business. I plan on getting the message out to as many as I can to let them know that our industry, our products and our people are part of the solution. These will be awful times, but with each of us sacrificing and taking care of each other, and with congress helping people to at least stay afloat, we will get through this. If we stay strong and stay informed, we will win this war by staying put.