

Business Barometer August 2007

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Drought Drops Sales

Wholesaler in Mobile, Ala.

Things are leveling off here because of the water and drought situation. It's affecting water gardening sales considerable.

We have to be optimistic, but sales are really slow. This time of year usually is very good for sales. People still want to put water features in, but nobody's buying them right now.

Slow Summer Means Slow Sales

Nursery and garden center in Naples, Fla.

During summer, July is one of our slowest months. Our season usually starts around October 1 and runs through Easter. We're kind of opposite the rest of the country.

The past season was down a bit. I think it's because of the real estate market. When people are buying and selling houses, a quick fix is to add some plants or post for color. If they're not selling or buying houses, then they're not coming in for those quick additions.

Droughts were a concern for some people, but we started to get rain in the last few weeks, so drought is less of a concern.

The other thing with us is that the last two seasons for us were hurricane summers. That definitely altered our sales following the storms. Right after the storms, people were replacing damaged items, so directly after the storm, we sold extra cleanup items and some extras.

We're kind of back into the swing of things again and we're hoping the hurricanes will miss us again this year.

The Backyard Trend Continues

Nursery and garden center in St. Louis, Mo.

In about 50 percent of every project I do, there's some sort of water feature, such as a fountain waterfall or pond. For most of our clientele, if they can afford to have somebody install a new landscape, then adding a water feature usually is not an issue.

We aren't really in a drought situation, so there are no water restrictions here, and the business climate remains strong. The trends are going further into these complete rooms outside with the water features and kitchens and living rooms. That's a big market here.