

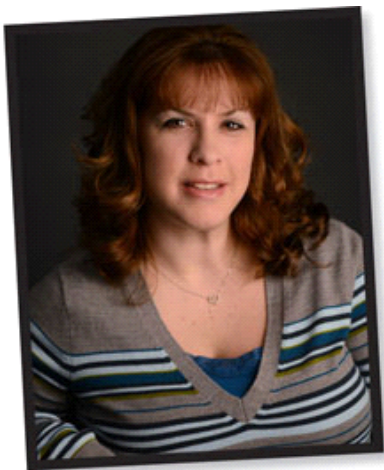
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Adulting

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There was a point in time (and I suspect a lot of people have felt this way) when all I wanted to be was “grown up.” I wanted to be “an adult” so that I could live on my own, not have to answer to anyone and go to bars ... ahem ... legally.

I don't know if everyone has that epiphany moment when they know they're officially an adult, but it happened to me. I knew I was finally an “adult” when my friend and I were on the phone, and instead of gushing about boys, we were raving about newly purchased kitchen appliances. It hit me like a runaway refrigerator.

But adulting is hard. When you're an adult, you have to do adult stuff, like wake up on time (relatively), go to work, buy a house or pay rent and deal with bills.

You also have to deal with adult problems, too, like when your car breaks down, or the furnace peters out or you get laid off/fired. And all of these things happen, but part of being a responsible adult is doing some preventative steps in order to make sure they don't happen often—you make sure your car gets a regular tune up and oil change, you change out the furnace filter on a regular basis, and you make sure you're not watching YouTube videos all day instead of working. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, goes the old saying.

Sometimes this means you have to bite the bullet and dole out some dough up front in order to prevent something horrible from happening at the most horrible time—like having your old transplanter or plug-filling machine crap out during Week 7.

The best practice would either be to make sure that those machines are in tip-top shape before the season starts or replace those old jalopies with a beautiful shiny new transplanter, which does require some up-front investment. But you should also do your homework to make sure that the return on investment helps your business. Don't know where to start? Turn to Chris Beytes' article about the economics of automation and how it can pay off for your operation.

I was actually inspired to write this column after editing Bill Swanekamp's Growers Talk Business column this month. He talked about biting the bullet and “letting the moths out of his wallet” in order to purchase a new plug-fixing machine. Hey—Bill is a self-proclaimed cheapskate, so if he can do it, so can you.

Trying to improve a process doesn't always have to require a big down payment, as some nursery growers showed me when I was visiting Virginia this past spring. See how Bennett's Creek Nursery and Lancaster Farms handled a problem by getting creative.

As you head into the thick of the holiday season, I hope you'll find time to escape from all the adulting you have to do with some much-deserved R&R ... until you have to be responsible and deal with the next crisis, of course. **GT**