Retail Nutrition: Quality Control

Jennifer Zurko

If you’re looking for a way to ensure your plants maintain their quality at retail and help your customers be more successful at the same time, use this idea from Jerry Quaal and Phil Banning: Give them a Dosatron injector.

For years, Dan & Jerry’s Greenhouses in Monticello, Minnesota, has been providing their supermarket retail customers with their own Dosatron system at no cost. And this isn’t the only service they provide. Not only do they give their customers the fertilizer and heating systems for their greenhouses, but they also organize formal training for the retail staff on how to use the heaters and injectors. This way, the retail staff knows how to prevent the plants from freezing during early spring and give them enough fertilizer to maintain a high-quality product—two things they’ve struggled with in the past, Jerry said.

Geremia’s Greenhouse in Wallingford, Connecticut, offers similar services to their independent garden center customers. Phil said that they also provide training on how to use the watering and feeding systems given to their customers at no cost—intangibles that may not have a dollar amount attached to them, but certainly pay off in the long run.

“The thing is, we’re asking our customers to take our product and sell it for us,” said Phil. “They work seven days a week to maintain our product. So we’ve been doing things for years in terms of holding seminars, helping with greenhouse design, watering systems, providing Dosatron (injectors). I’m not oblivious to the fact that the success of the garden center is directly related to the success of my business.”

And it is an investment that not all growers can make. Jerry explained that with the injector, fertilizer and delivery, the costs total about $800 to $900 per customer. However, since Dan & Jerry’s has been offering free Dosatron systems, they’ve noticed there has been less shrink.

Phil agrees. “We feel the sell-through on the material is better, more guaranteed, with fertilizer than without it. We really don’t want to see the garden center throw away one plant.”
So is handing out Dosatron injectors to all of your customers the answer to additional sales? Maybe. But Phil says any support you give to the retailers will positively affect your business.

“I think anybody supplying plant material to a garden center should offer some kind of support if they don’t already,” stated Phil. “I think probably 99% of the growers out there offer some type of support. It’s ultimately what they can afford to do for their customers.”