

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Hardgoods Showcase

Anne-Marie Hardie

Every grower wants consistent, quality products and choosing the right hardgoods can help make getting there that much easier. The right products could increase productivity, minimize loss, save time and reduce overall costs. This season, GrowerTalks surveyed several manufacturers to get the scoop on the products that can make your lives a little easier.



Watering without a twist

Imagine being able to water freely, moving your hose back and forth without having to fight it. With Damm's brass hose swivel, this is now possible. Kinks in hoses will no longer seize up when watering, as the swivel permits the hose to untwist.

The concept of a brass hose swivel isn't a new one; however, it's never been applied to the growing industry. Made from heavy-duty brass, the brass hose swivel allows the hose to swivel under pressure, seamlessly freeing the wand from the torsion created by the hose.

"It's a very simple piece," says Kurt Becker, executive vice president of Damm. "The main comment when I show it to growers is, 'What took you so long?'"

Say goodbye to overwatering

When it comes to watering, there seems to be no perfect solution. Automated systems increase the risk of plant damage from over or underwatering. Conversely, hand watering can be both labor intensive and time consuming. It was this challenge that inspired Jared and Jordan Dekker (owners of Dekker Brothers Greenhouse in Hudsonville, Michigan, and the cover story of our October 2015 issue) to work with Len



Logsdon to perfect a product that would take the guesswork out of watering. Their solution was the Control DEKK Oasis.

Pictured: The Control DEKK Oasis system weighs each basket and waters it according to its predetermined weight. It works on any automated basket conveyor line and can be controlled at the conveyor or from a PC or smartphone.

Designed and patented to work with automated basket conveyor lines, Control DEKK's Oasis will give growers the peace of mind that all plants will be uniformly watered. As each basket passes through this sleek system, its weight will be determined. If under the predetermined weight, the smart controller will open the water valve for the time specifically needed to reach the grower's target weight.

"There is definitely a need for this," said Jared Dekker. "Our product works in conjunction with an automated basket conveyor line, weighing the basket to determine if it needs watering."

Constructed of stainless steel and enhanced UV-stabilized polymer, this 5 in. x 7 in. x 18 in. system can be installed on existing cable conveyors. A controller and local user interface permits the grower to control and monitor activity either at the conveyor or from an office PC or smartphone. The end result is a reduction in water use, production costs and labor with the added benefit of overall plant uniformity.

Still in its pilot phase, Jared and Jordan will be installing and trialing the system both in their own greenhouses and with some local growers.

"We are taking time with it because we want to make sure that we do it right," said Jared. "It's going to be a game changer."



Build stronger roots

A strong root system is the foundation for resilient plants all season long. However, using the right growing mix can make the difference between flourishing growth and flailing. RESiLIENCE is Sun Gro's patented growing mix that's enriched with silicon.

Once taken up by the plant, RESiLIENCE accumulates in the cell walls that in turn help strengthen the plant tissue. It's these stronger tissues that not only build a sturdier plant, but also prevents damage from disease and insects. As an added benefit of RESiLIENCE is it also polymerizes and turns into a gel, reducing water loss. The end result: compact plants, with thicker, stronger stems, increased root mass and better resistance to wilt.

Take your plastic pots to the next level

The floor industry seems a strange place to inspire a new pot design, but for Derek Mueller, president of McConkey, that's exactly what happened. Inspired by the flooring technology used in luxury vinyl paneling, Derek wanted to see if it was possible to transfer this technology to a plastic pot.

"When it comes to pots, most growers go one of two routes: plastic or decorative wood/concrete," says Derek. The advantages of plastic are numerous—it's cost effective, lightweight, durable and disease resistant. The challenge is that when it comes to a pot material, plastic is aesthetically unappealing.

The solution for McConkey was to adapt the current flooring technology Bondshell, traditionally used in luxury



vinyl paneling, for horticulture use. The end result is all of the productivity benefits that come with plastic paired with the aesthetic appeal of natural products. Made in the USA, McConkey will be launching both a slate-inspired series, called Harper, and a photo-realistic wood series named Jasmine. Both series will be available in a 10-in. hanger and a 9-in. planter.

“Now growers can supply decorative containers to retail, but more in line with the commodity pricing that consumers expect from a retail container,” says Derek.

Inspired by luxury vinyl flooring, McConkey’s new pot designs combine the production benefits of plastic with the aesthetic appeal of natural products. The two series are called Jasmine (right) and Harper (left).



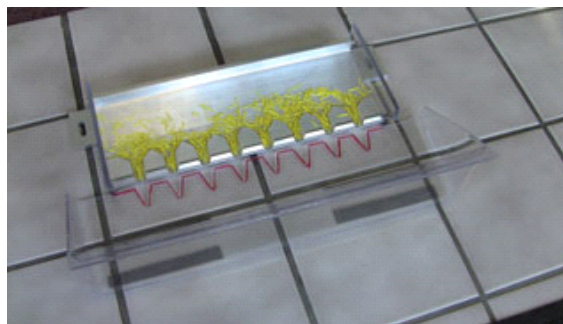
Solutions for hydroponic organic growers

Hydroponic organic growers are running out of options for organic plugs to be used in hydroponic growing systems. To respond to this need, Hort Americas partnered with Riococo to launch The Riococo Closed Bottom Organic Plug. Made from coir, this is a certifiable plug option that can be used for seed germination, plug and transplant production, growing leafy greens and culinary herbs. In addition, the CBOP works well in a

variety of growing systems, including 1020 trays, grow bags, nutrient film technique (NFT), raft systems, aquaponics and aeroponics.

Sow simple

One of the challenges of growing marigolds was sowing them at an acceptable rate and accuracy level. It was this challenge that led to the inspiration of the Marigold Kit for the Blackmore Cylinder Seeder. The kit is comprised of a slotted seed tray and notched seed catch tray. This seeder ensures high speed, accurate sowing of marigolds.



“When Beta tested, seeder operators were so happy with the results, there were reports that some started dancing,” said David Steiner of the Blackmore Company.



Locally sourced wood enhances growing media

Traditional peat moss is enhanced with perlite and vermiculite, and although beneficial, there’s a substantial environmental footprint. These enhancements are not only mined, but they often require importing and processing before being added to the peat. With fairly high production costs, Berger wanted to find a local alternative to enhance their peat moss and provide a greener alternative. Their solution was to enhance the peat moss with fine quality, Canadian pine wood fiber.

A natural by-product of the wood industry, Canadian pine wood fiber increases the overall wickability of peat moss while enhancing root development. In fact, Pierre Marc Champlain, technical services supervisor for

Berger, shares that these fibers seem to enhance the overall capillary action in the plant.

One of the initial concerns of using a wood fiber is nitrogen fixation. Both the manufacturing process and percentage of pine in the peat ensure that fixation doesn't occur. In addition, there's not a significant effect on the fertilization process. The end result is a growing substrate with a positive green story. Available in two formats—NF Wood 12.5 and NF Wood 25%. Both formulas offer growers a compressible, lightweight, low-density product.



Off to the right start

A healthy, well-established root system is key to fighting disease and insect infestations. To minimize the risk of exposure, most growers use a sterile soil mix to propagate plants. The challenge with this sterilized solution is that the soil is also void of the beneficial organisms. To respond to this concern, BioSafe developed TerraGrow as part of a sustainable greenhouse program. A proprietary blend of beneficial bacteria and fungal spores, TerraGrow helps establish a strong root system while increasing the absorbability of both macro and micronutrients.

For optimal plant and root resiliency, BioSafe recommends regular application of water-soluble TerraGrow to ensure a constant supply of beneficial bacteria. The end result is a higher-quality crop that will be equipped to fight off bacteria naturally. For additional oxidation of the soil, BioSafe recommends using TerraGrow in conjunction with TerraClean. TerraGrow is available in 10-lb. and 25-lb. containers. **GT**

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