

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Your Greenhouse “Tweaking” Checklist

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When you saw the title of this article did you feel as if you were stuck in a time-loop repeating the same information again and again?

The only way that the character in the movie “Groundhog Day” gets out of the repetition is through examining his priorities and then making changes. This is always the time of the year when we think of income tax and spring cleaning to look at the profitability of our operation.

Pictured: Adding roof vents—like a dual atrium with shade—can be much trickier and more expensive, but could be worth the effort and cost.



Perhaps it's not time to build a new greenhouse, but the one that you have is almost obsolete. What might you do to get a few more crops out of it or to make it more profitable? Making one of these changes might give you time to do the planning with your structure company to design your new greenhouse to accommodate the latest improvements and technology.

Roof covering: A new covering could make a lot of difference in your profitability. A covering that has aged might not be allowing the light transmission that would make your crop healthier and increase your production. Much improvement has been made in coverings to diffuse light and help you retain heat.

- You could use the same style covering. If today you have 8mm twinwall polycarbonate, as an example, you could change to 8mm diffused polycarbonate that would help lessen shadows and give you better uniformity of light. Most of those coverings are now available with some long-term warranties.
- You could upgrade your covering. Many growers are using double-poly coverings and changing out every four years. You could convert your roof to an 8mm polycarbonate or glass to give you the efficiencies you desire.

Heat retention/shade curtain system: A new heat retention system will make you a more efficient operation. Payback is normally two to three years in heat savings. The secondary benefits are more shade in summer months, relieving the stress on your plants.

Ventilation: The ventilation benefits available with sidewall vent options are almost endless. Adding roof vents can be much trickier and more expensive, but, if today you don't have roof vents, it could be worth the effort and cost. You can upgrade to an open roof-atrium style ventilation system. It will make a significant difference in keeping the air moving in the greenhouse and keeping it cooler in late spring. More air movement equals hardier plants.

Environmental control systems: There have been many advances in this technology in the past five to 10 years. The systems enable you to be much more efficient with heating costs and ventilation than you ever thought possible. There's much more functionality with the grower software packages that are available today. You can control your greenhouse from your home or even from your mobile device or iPad/tablet.

Benches: If you're currently growing on the ground, adding rolling benches will give you a more efficient use of your space. Space utilization can be up to 85% of your floor space. That's adding production area without adding any additional greenhouses. Having your plants on 3-ft. high benches makes it much easier on your labor.

Technology is moving along at a very fast pace. This checklist of things to consider could give you some more turns from your existing greenhouse, but will also serve as a starting point on your plan for your new greenhouses. **GT**

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