

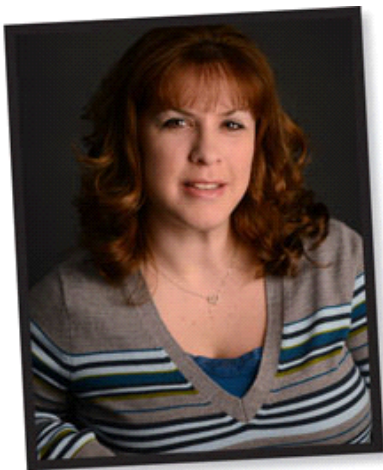
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

6/1/2018

Bright Lights ... Not Just in the City

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

When I was researching for this month's cover story, I found an academic paper published last year that discussed the effects of light pollution. The writer began with a line from a Robert Frost poem I wasn't familiar with, taken from the first part:

*I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.*

The goal was to start the conversation on how more city and suburban folks have to go farther out to actually see stars because the city lights have pretty much drowned them out.

And it's true—I have to drive out to our friends' place on the Illinois-Wisconsin border to see a truly clear sky. As a city dweller, you take the night sky for granted until you venture out into the country and really see it.

Most ornamentals growers have had to deal with complaints from the locals for one reason or another—too much truck traffic, too much noise from the machinery, etc. Very rarely do they get complaints about the lights coming from the greenhouse and disturbing the night sky. But it's a different story for growers of greenhouse lettuce/greens and other vegetables.

The latest statistics show that the total number of greenhouse vegetable producers in the U.S. has increased 115% during the last five years. And this isn't just entrepreneurs new to the industry—there are quite a few flower growers who have opened separate businesses to cater to the local finished produce market. Henry Huntington, a well-known and respected grower in our industry, is one of those who's taken the plunge into hydroponics (see what I did there?) with lēf Farms, which provides fresh lettuce mixes to local grocery stores and restaurants.

But with growing a new crop that needs a lot more light than your average annual, Henry is dealing with a new problem: the neighbors complaining about the bright glow emanating from the lēf greenhouses. Read how he handled the situation, and get some background on greenhouse light pollution regulations.

Speaking of light—but from the outside in—you can learn how knowing the variances between different types of light can help you manage it during production so that your plants get the best start.

Also, we have the essays from this year's *GrowerTalks*/Dümmen Orange Young Grower Award finalists. This time,

we asked them to tell us how growers can keep customers excited about the old reliable varieties, not just the new stuff.

I hope you had a great end to your spring (based on Mr. B's weekend ratings in his *Acres Online* newsletter, many of you said the early part of the spring could pretty much be described with a poop emoji). Here's to hoping that changed and that you were able to sit outside after work with a cold drink and plenty of lucky stars to thank. **GT**