GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Solutions Up to Scratch

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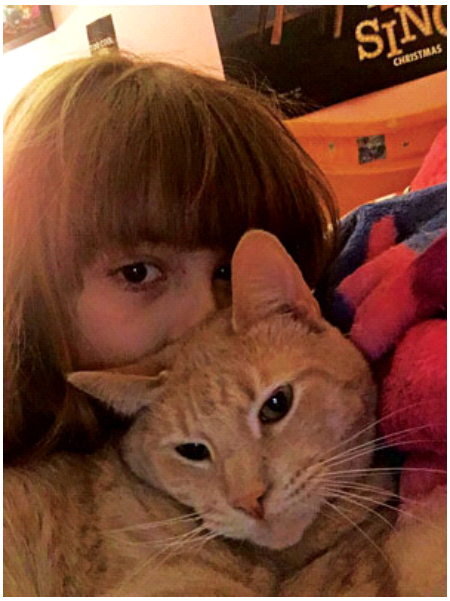
My family and I have a rather plump orange tabby cat name Peanut (short for Peanut Butter & Jelly) who lives with us. Or rather *we* live with *him*, as I sometimes feel that we go to extremes to cater to his lifestyle that doesn't always jive with ours.



For instance, we put up with his nighttime shenanigans, like when he decides at 10:30 p.m. (when we're getting ready for bed) that he's wide awake and sprints around the house like a maniac. Or he decides to take all the room at the end of the bed so you're forced to sleep in the fetal position for most of the night. I say "most" because he usually wakes you up at 5:00 a.m. (regardless of weekday or weekend) by jumping on your head, then walking on top of you to lay on your chest and purr loudly in your face (sometimes he faces the other way, which is worse!).

Besides a decent night's sleep, we've also sacrificed having nice furniture. Our loveseat now has one arm that dons a thick layer of pulled threads. He does have a scratching post—two, actually—but they apparently don't provide the same amount of satisfaction that ruining our couch does.

Recently, after one of my repeated scoldings to him to stop scratching at the couch, I turned around and said to my husband in a huff, "Someone needs to invent a couch that has arms made of scratching posts! Get on that!"

Cat selfie: Peanut and my daughter Olivia.

Has that ever happened to you, when you've been confronted with a repetitive problem and you just want a simple solution to help you stop the maddening pattern? If you've been in the growing biz for a while, you know all about that feeling.

Remember when you had to stand there in the greenhouse scratching your head, wondering if it was the light, water quality or temperature that caused the crop to fail? Luckily, you now have your choice of handy and—in most cases, inexpensive—tools to help you measure everything from what type of light your plants are getting to the pH levels in your water.

A group of smart people came up with chemicals to help keep your plants' growth under control, but other smart people also came up with the bright idea of adding wood to your growing media to provide a better root zone. Can

they co-exist during peak production without affecting the quality of your crop?

We also feature best practices on other tools and equipment that were developed to provide solutions to common problems and help you grow the best product possible, including fertilizer injectors, Brix Refractometers and LEDs.

You may be asking yourself why we put up with Peanut. The answer is because he’s adorable and snuggly and loves us. How do I know? He greets us at the door every time we come home, he misses us when we leave him alone for a night and, like a dog, he comes when you call, meowing and purring. And even as he’s looking at me while I scream at him as he’s clawing the couch, he does it with love in his eyes. Well, at least I think it’s love …