

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Greenhouse Hacks

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It seems like “hacks” are all the rage these days—tips and tricks to get things done without wasting time or money. The word has taken on new meaning in our current lexicon and no longer just applies to the person who displays no talent at whatever pursuit they’re into this week. (Editor’s note: Ball Publishing employs no hack journalists. Fact.)

When running a greenhouse, you’re no doubt looking for ways to increase productivity, solve problems and maximize efficiency whenever possible. We reached out on social media and asked greenhouse pros for some of their best hacks and were pleasantly surprised by the response and ideas that came back. Some were practical, some humorous and others just made a lot of sense. Here are some of the hacks we uncovered:

Training your team to water the same is near impossible, but using an agreed-upon scale will help. Following established levels (1 to 5, with 1 being bone dry and 5 being sopping wet) allows everyone to be on the same page and also helps the plants. Water to 4 and dry down to 2.—Illinois

(For more on this, check out “Training Your Team to Water Properly” in the January 2021 issue of GrowerTalks: growertalks.com/Article/?articleid=25029)

Tired of your glasses falling off your face and landing in gross things? Or petrified of losing said glasses? I give you drip line and paperclips.—Texas

Have shorter meetings, more often. Save time and increase attention to important things.—Pennsylvania

Eliminate paper and communicate using text messages. That way everyone has the information with them at all times.—California

Delegate as much as possible. Maybe this isn’t a hack, but it has saved me so much time. And the job is usually done better in the long run.—Connecticut

Make weekly (or daily) To-Do lists and hand them out so people can see what they’ve accomplished in real time. It also helps me see what still needs to be done at the end of the week.—California

Hanging basket wire is the duct tape of the greenhouse world. It can be used to fix anything.—Illinois

Match your best growers up with new growers and they will teach and learn from each other. We started doing this last season and it really paid off.—Louisiana

Start early. Get to the office before anyone else and plan out the day. Then you can hit the ground running and not waste time starting the day.—Missouri



Buy everyone lunch. It's amazing what my people will do when they get free pizza. Complaints just seem to go away.—Illinois

Just do it. I think the best hack for getting things done at our store is to take care of problems right away and not put them off. At the end of the day or week, we're too tired to tie up the loose ends. It's better to address them when they occur.—Texas

Get a cat (or two). We had rodent problems for years until an employee asked if we wanted to rehome her cat. So simple, but we never thought of it.—Massachusetts

A hack we learned during COVID was to put tape over door latches so people can push the doors open without touching the knobs. Easy and it works.—Ohio

Take six deep breaths before reacting to a problem between employees. This is probably more of a life hack than a greenhouse hack, but my job IS my life.—Oregon

We started letting growers listen to music on headphones while working and saw things get faster almost immediately.—Ohio

Don't check email first thing when you come into the office. Drop your stuff and get out into the greenhouse. This way you don't waste half your morning on email and forget your most important job.—Texas

As you can see, what started as a project to collect hacks on fixing greenhouse problems or increasing production efficiency quickly turned into an article on productivity. Maybe that's what it's all about—the little things we can all do to make the most of the time we have. No matter what time of year, there are ways to improve by staying on task, reducing distraction and increasing engagement. Of course, using hanging basket wire to fix a dangling exhaust pipe or saving your glasses from falling into the soil bin with some drip tube are also quite important hacks to learn. **GT**

If you have any other hacks that have proved effective over the years, let me know: bcalkins@ballhort.com.