

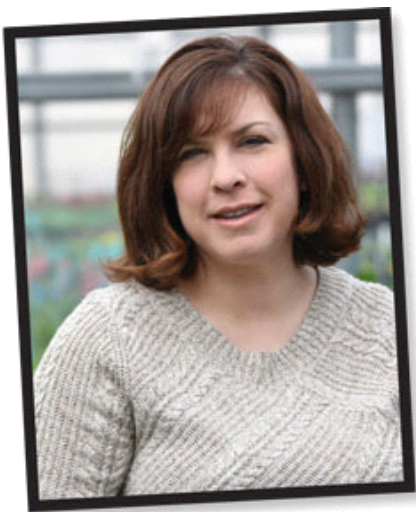
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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We're All Connected

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Of the many, many lessons we learned while living through a pandemic (besides confirmation that life is, indeed, short), one of them is that the products we consume don't magically appear in the stores. They don't even get magically made all at once in one place. Some products require a widget from here, a whoseywhats from there, a thingamabob from hither and a whatchamacallit from thither.

We're so much more connected than we realize.

Nobody knows this more than the companies in our industry who supply us with hardgoods. No matter if you sell growing media, pots or chemicals, more than likely you're relying on at least one part of the package to come from somewhere else.

During the last two years, I've had multiple conversations with people about the struggles they've had trying to get products to their customers.

One fertilizer business said they didn't have enough caps for the bottles. A growing media supplier said they couldn't get perlite or coconut coir. And a container company couldn't get the right plastic to make the flats and trays.

Greenhouse manufacturers went through it, too—waiting for steel, aluminum and glass from overseas so they could fulfill orders placed by their grower and retailer customers who've been looking to expand. If you've recently asked your greenhouse supplier for a quote on a new build, you might have been surprised to learn the project will take months instead of weeks. That's because the supply chain is still reeling from the disruptions during the pandemic. As I write this, there's news of the Omicron variant surging in Hong Kong and other parts of China. Every article and post warns that this will certainly slow down the flow of products made in these regions.

And I haven't even mentioned inflation and prices. I just read this morning that oil is less than \$100 a barrel, yet gas prices are still high. I'm no economist, but it certainly seems like we should be expecting fluctuations in fuel to continue, especially with what's happening in Ukraine. Sure, some of the sanctions put in place to punish Russia will sting our wallets, but I think the images we're seeing on a daily basis touch our hearts and that's a different kind of pain. Again, we're all connected ...

But despite the supply chain headaches, the greenhouse folks have still been able to balance new project requests while keeping their customers happy.

In this month's structures-themed issue, we also have the basics of optimizing your greenhouse heat, and a refresher on LEDs and whether you should switch from HPS completely. We also have the second part of a series on soilless substrates—this time, about what researchers are focusing on to address the needs of the industry.

So the next time you watch that pallet of soil come off the truck or the aluminum extrusions of your new greenhouse addition go up, just think about what that product went through to help you grow and sell more plants. You may feel even more of a connection to your business than you ever did before. **GT**