

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

5/1/2024

Going Solar

Jennifer Zurko



When we were visiting Four Star Greenhouse in Carleton, Michigan, for Proven Winners' New Variety Open House in early April, we did a quick walk-through in the greenhouse. Their staff was hustling and bustling getting hundreds and hundreds of finished products ready to ship.

Which is always very exciting because that means spring is coming. But what we wanted to know was: What's new? Dan Foster, Senior Manager of Growing

Operations for Four Star, thought for two seconds and asked if we wanted to see their new array of solar panels.

Dan said they've been considering installing solar panels for a few years, so when they decided to move forward, they got quotes from four different suppliers. The team chose Harvest Solar, who started the install at the end of the summer last year. By December, the system was ready to go. After having to wait a bit for the array to get connected to the electrical grid, it was up and running by mid-April.

Dan estimates that about 30% of their general energy usage will now come directly from the solar panels and that they should pay off within three years. And the whole array should last 30 to 35 years.

But those aren't the only reasons why they feel this is a good investment. Dan noted that the cost of energy continues to increase and the reliability of supply is shaky. They're also trying to be more sustainable and using solar energy allows them to move toward that goal.

Working with Harvest Solar, Four Star was also able to utilize their expertise in applying for a REAP (Rural Energy for America Program) grant that off-set about 40% of the cost.

Depending on the ever-changing regulations, Dan hopes to be able to add more panels so they can use more energy from solar.

One piece of advice Dan would give if you're considering a solar power investment: "There are a lot of intricacies to watch out for, so get multiple quotes from different companies." **GT**