GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Survivor: Greenhouse Edition

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From what I understand, preparing for a camping trip takes a lot of planning to make sure you have everything you need for any scenario. These are assumptions taken from what friends have told me.

I believe I've talked about it on this page, but it may surprise you (or not) that I've never gone camping or have ever had the desire to camp. Growing up on the outskirts of the city of Chicago, it just wasn't something my family did. And the idea of sleeping outside in a tent in the woods sounds extremely uncomfortable and a bit itchy—two things I don't like being.

Many of my friends have been forced to camp when they had to chaperone a Girl Scouts or Cub Scouts camping trip—thankfully, there's a Girl Scouts day camp in Chicagoland that my daughter went to, so I didn't have to sleep in the dirt with the bugs.

Some people love to camp. I am not one of those people. But as someone who's an ultra planner, I can appreciate the art of packing a survival kit, being as prepared as possible and making sure you have the right tools just in case you need them.

We do this for a lot of aspects of our life—when you pack for a long vacation or work trip, or you're making sure your kid has all of her back-to-school supplies. Even leaving the house just to go to the store requires going through a mental checklist (keys, wallet, phone, grocery list). It pays to be prepared.

That's why this month our friend, Iowa State University Hort Professor Chris Currey, has put together information on essential tools you need to "survive" in the greenhouse. There are multiple issues and scenarios that are always popping up, so you need to be prepared with the right equipment to deal with anything. Learn what you need to have in your production backpack.

You also have to be prepared for any temperature fluctuations that happen in your greenhouse and know how to manage the ideal environment. Another educator, Erik Runkle, tells us how to do that. And there's more on temperature management for edibles.

You definitely need the physical tools to be prepared for anything in the greenhouse, but you also need to know and

appreciate your mental capacity for creative problem-solving and innovation. If you've never thought of yourself as a creative person because you "just grow plants," you need to change your mindset because you ARE. Brandan Shur and Dr. Bill Fonteno wrote a fabulous piece for the Spring 2026 issue of our sister publication *Inside Grower* that talks about the importance of combining the science of growing with the art of thinking. My cohort Jen Polanz said, "This would be a great topic for *GrowerTalks*," and she was right. So I asked Brandan and Bill to tweak it for our ornamentals audience and it's a great read. I highly recommend it.

So you survived the spring season—congratulations! I'm sure you're also a brilliant camper and could handle anything. If I was ever asked to go on "Survivor" or "Naked & Afraid"—I would last a week, tops. But would I survive a zombie apocalypse? Maybe. I'd like to think my Chicago city pluck would kick in my survival fight mode. It seems that fighting zombies is more about attitude. To sleep in a wet, mosquito-filled tent—I don't have the right attitude for that.

Best to you! **GT**