

A greenhouse "oops"—pink water; and the story of our unsustainable strawberry



A sustainable e-newsletter from GrowerTalks and Green Profit

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FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Unsustainable Strawberries
Pink Water
Earth Day Incentives
New Melons & Cukes
Webinars
American Grown Month



How Strawberries Became Unsustainable

When Cornell University's Marvin Pritts was asked to write a book chapter about sustainable strawberry production, he hesitated. He wasn't sure today's strawberries should be called sustainable. So he went about putting together the story of how strawberries went from a diverse collection of varieties grown rather sustainably to something vastly different.

It's a story of how a crop has changed and how production methods have changed, with lots of inputs, high energy and water usage. (And arguably, how the flavor has also changed.) Marvin follows it up with some work they're doing to combine best practices and give strawberries a better name.

Cornell University has made Marvin's talk, "How the Strawberry Became America's Most Unsustainable Fruit" on YouTube. You can watch it [HERE](#).



Greenhouse Water Turns Pink

It wasn't a good week for Quik's Farm in British Columbia. When their local Chilliwack waterway turned pink in early April, it was easy to trace the source to the dark pink water dripping out of a pipe at the end of their greenhouse.

Luckily, it was a non-toxic pink dye that reportedly doesn't pose a danger; they add it to flowers before Easter. While the pigment typically breaks down in sunlight, owner Leo Quik [told his local paper](#) that a worker's handling mistake caused it to be released down the wrong drain. A local resident reported the pink water in the Camp Slough to the Ministry of Environment.

Quik's immediately hired an environmental consultant to help them with remediation, and they were involved with water testing and working with the Ministry of Environment, Environment Canada and their city to deal with the issue.

Most of all, it's a stark reminder—for our industry and for the public—about where our water goes. Most water pollutants don't travel as conspicuously as red dye. But they travel. The next question, of course, is where to? And what's the impact?

It might be a good time to think about your own wastewater.



Earth Day Incentives

April 22 is Earth Day, and it's a great opportunity to remind your customers about plants. They're good for the Earth, and good for us.

A few quick last-minute ideas:

- Promote the sale of trees/shrubs.
- Promote the sale of pollinator/wildlife friendly plants.
- Remind your social media followers about the ways in which plants benefit the environment and human health.
- If you recycle, reuse, reduce in any way—it's a good time to tell that story, too.



New Organic Cucumbers & Melons Bred

If you're looking for disease-resistant melons or cucumbers, take a look at the new cucumber and melon varieties released by Cornell University's Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics. They were developed with organic growers in mind and are the result of a collaboration with farmers and regional seed companies.

DMR401 is an open-pollinated, downy-mildew resistant cucumber that's already in high demand. Meanwhile, **Trifecta melon** has also impressed with its downy-mildew resistance, eating quality and high yields.

The varieties were developed with support from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) in the USDA. Partnering with Cornell University on the Eastern Sustainable Organic Cucurbit Research Project (ESOCuc) were Auburn University, North Carolina State University, and Organic Seed Alliance. Further information is available [HERE](#).

Webinars

The next month is full of webinars from Ball Publishing, and they're free!

What Makes a Growing Container Automation-Friendly? You have labor issues and greenhouse automation can help. Having the right container is critical. Don't have automation machinery? You can still employ containers that will increase your manual efficiency. Chris Soltis and Mark Hembree of HC Companies will help you figure out your choices. Bonus—if you attend the webinar you can get a free sample pack of automation-friendly containers. Takes place **Thursday, April 18** at 1 p.m. EDT. Sponsored by HC Companies.

These Guys Suck! JC Chong, Associate Professor of Turf and Ornamentals—Entomology at Clemson University and the astute editor of Ball Publishing's *PestTalks* e-newsletter, will focus on management approaches and tools for those scourges of greenhouses and nurseries: aphids and whiteflies. He'll focus on biological controls and alternatives to systemics, discuss research on the efficacy of new insecticides and will explain how to integrate new insecticides into your rotation. Takes place **Wednesday, April 24** at 1 p.m. EDT. Sponsored by BASF.

New Research: Overcoming Piercing and Sucking Insects. New research shows that certain innovations are delivering exceptional performance. You'll learn about best practices, the latest comparative trials, and the performance of traditional solutions and neonicotinoid alternatives such as Altus. Presenters include Karla Adesso of Tennessee State University and Aaron Palmateer of Bayer. Takes place **Thursday, May 16** at 1 p.m. Sponsored by Bayer.

Register for these webinars and check out those in the archives at www.growertalks.com/webinars.

July is American Grown Flowers Month

Planning ahead, don't forget that July is American Grown Flowers Month—a perfect time to boost lagging July sales. For motivation, Certified American Grown is once again sponsoring a merchandising contest to promote homegrown flowers in retail stores. They say that sales in the top five participating stores increased 17.5% last year. All participating stores saw an average increase of 6.7%.

It goes to show, promoting where your product comes from can make a difference. Learn more and sign up to participate at americangrownflowers.org/julycontest.

Until next time,



Jennifer Duffield White

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