

Aphids; INSV; TSWV; Podcast w/ Mason

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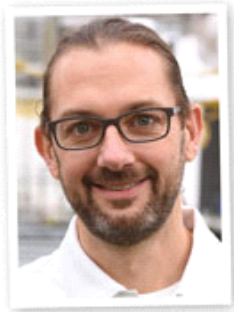


Cultural and Technical Information for Greenhouse Professionals



FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2026

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Podcast: Pick 4 with Mason
- Nick's Tip: Aphids
- e-GRO on INSV
- Nick on TSWV
- May 1 Scholarship Deadline
- Finish Line ... Facebook



NEW PODCAST: 4 Questions for Mason, a Biz Dev VP

These fun and informational podcasts keep coming and I have a bunch more scheduled this spring and summer. Getting to know folks in different industry by asking them questions about work and life is really shining a spotlight on the wide range of opportunities our industry has to offer and how there's truly a career for everyone and every personality type.

IN THIS EPISODE, I was joined by Mason Day, the Vice President of Business Development at JR Peters Company/Jack's Fertilizers, who picked four questions from my list of 12. Many of you know Mason and I are close friends, which can either make or break a podcast. In this case, I think it adds a lot to the discussion. But you be the judge!

4 Questions
for Mason, a
Business
Development
VP

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Here are the four questions Mason selected:

Q: What do you love most about your job?

Q: What advice would you give to an industry veteran currently dealing with “burnout”?

Q: How do you explain our industry to strangers, friends, family?

Q: What’s something about professional horticulture that annoys you and how would you change it?

There are more than 240 Tech On Demand podcast episodes in the archive covering a huge range of topics related to the professional greenhouse, garden center, landscape, nursery and CEA markets. Take a minute to subscribe—that way you’ll never miss an episode.

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Nick’s Tip of the Week: Aphid Awareness in 2026

Each week, I’ll work with my buddy Nick Flax, a technical services expert at Ball, to share a concern that’s come up during one of his numerous calls with growers across North America. This week, he’s talking about a pest that seems to be on everyone’s radar this spring: aphids.

PROBLEM: As the weather warms up and we get closer to Mother’s Day, more pest management questions start to hit my desk. The last thing you want to find before your crops go to retail is an infestation that slipped the net and turned into a major infestation. This week has been chock-full of aphid-related inquiries, so be on the alert for these tenacious little critters over the next few weeks.



NICK'S TIP: Aphid populations can explode in a short period of time when temps are warm and plants are growing quickly. Keep the following in mind as you're scouting crops, and act quickly if you find an aphid hot spot.

Common ID Characteristics

For those of you who may not be as familiar with insect pest identification, aphids:

- Are small and vary in size from about 1.5 to 4 mm long, depending on the species.
- Do not typically have wings, but “flyers” can be present on occasion.
- Come in a variety of colors, including (but not limited to) green, yellow, orange, red/pink, black and pale/whiteish.
- Have little appendages (cornicles) on the rear part of their abdomen that look almost like little exhaust tailpipes. These can generally be seen easily without magnification, which makes these structures a key ID trait for aphids.

Where To Look (Generally ...)

While aphids aren't super picky about what they feed upon, they tend to gravitate to certain crops first. However, you will consistently find them in the same general location on plants when they appear (in most cases).

Calibrachoa x hybrida, peppers (*Capsicum annuum*), and sweet potato vine (*Ipomoea batatas*) are often the first crops that I hear reports of aphid pressure on from growers each spring.

Certain cultivars seem to be “tastier” to aphids than others, so it's not unusual for them to appear in just one or two varieties initially.

While I have never seen a resource that characterizes which cultivars of different crops are preferred by aphids, it's important to make note of these “magnet varieties” in your operation. Once you identify them, it can be helpful to your scouting efforts to place extra sticky cards near these varieties or near combo planters that have these cultivars in the mix.

Most often, aphids can be found feeding on the youngest developing leaves and shoots on a plant. They can typically be found on the undersides of leaves in the upper part of the canopy during the heat of the day. This reduces their exposure to the elements and helps them to avoid predators. (Note: Root aphids are the only major exception to this rule, as they feed exclusively on below-ground plant parts or at the crown near the soil line.)

Where To Look (Specifically! ...)

Under ideal conditions, a newly birthed aphid (yes, they give live birth...) can become reproductive in as little as around seven days. Each female aphid can produce as many as 60 to 100 nymphs

during the approximately 20- to 30-day reproductive period in its life cycle. This is why aphid infestations seem to explode suddenly if they aren't detected early. The rate at which insects develop is heavily influenced by temperature, so ranges with warmer setpoints or areas in the greenhouse that are simply warmer by virtue of physics are the first places you should scout.

Greenhouses with a temperature setpoint range that doesn't get much below about 68F (20C) and run warmer during the day should be scouted more frequently and rigorously.

Check hanging basket lines frequently. The higher up your plants are and the closer to the greenhouse glazing material they sit, the warmer and cozier they will be for aphids.

- While most aphids lack wings, they will crawl along basket lines to the next plant when the one they were born on becomes too crowded.
- Place sticky cards more liberally in HBs and physically take baskets off their line to scout when you check them—a quick glance from the ground is not enough!
- Pay close attention to crops near side vents, exhaust fans, exterior doors or near breezeway air inlets.

Aphids in the landscape “wake up” when ambient outdoor temperatures stay consistently warm or when sudden, unseasonal warm spells hit. A nice, warm greenhouse full of a veritable buffet of tender, tasty bedding plants is the first place they will run when there's slim pickings out in the landscape. *This is why pre-season maintenance to replace compromised side and ridge vent screens is important.*

(Note: If roll-up sides are your primary means of venting, take special care when scouting and keep a close eye on pots/flats along the outer edge of your production blocks.)

Management

If an aphid outbreak occurs in your greenhouse, implement control measures ASAP.

Traditional chemical controls should include insecticides that provide quick knock-down control (at least two in different IRAC groups), and at least one translaminar or systemic insecticide that provides longer-term mop-up control.

For insecticide options, check out the 2026 *GrowerTalks* Insecticide, Miticide and Fungicide Guide [HERE](#) (also in Spanish [HERE](#)).

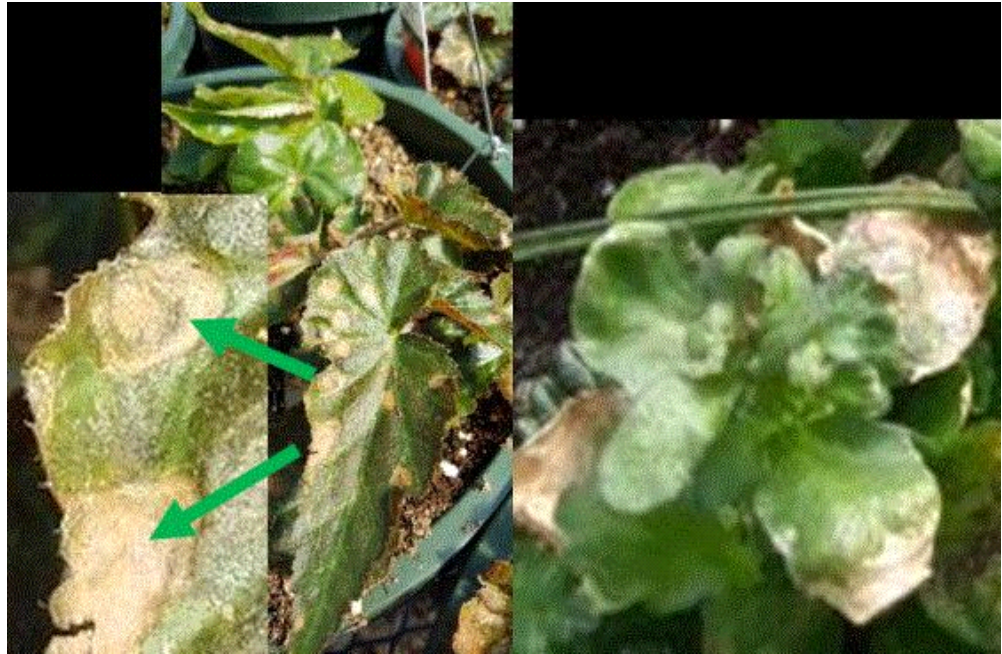
If you primarily use biocontrols in your IPM strategy, be sure you have an “in case of emergency” plan in place to curb a major outbreak. While I am a huge fan of biological IPM strategies to keep pest pressure low, they can struggle to take on overwhelming pressure or massive influxes from the field. Proactively talk to your BCA supplier about best options to knock down major outbreaks without causing major harm to your beneficials.



Avoiding INSV in Your Crops

As we get deeper into the season, when plants tend to experience periodic drought episodes, Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus (INSV) can cause severe stunting on many crops (more than 300 species, in fact).

Take a few minutes to review your pest control protocols to identify any periods where your control program might not aggressively treat for pupae that can overwinter in the ground and emerge in the spring to infect plants with INSV. (Note: Treating your greenhouse floors with Strip-It will help reduce the pupae population.)



To help identify the symptoms of INSV, here's an **ALERT** from our friends at e-GRO that walks you through not only what to watch for, but also provides tips for managing the disease. Because the host range is so wide and the variety of symptoms is so vast, scouting for INSV can be a challenge. Nonetheless, it's extremely critical.

According to Nora Catlin and Margery Daughtrey (the team who wrote the alert) symptoms can include various types of leaf spots or discoloration: small circular spots, spots with concentric ring or zonate patterns, necrotic arc-shaped spots, irregular line patterns, leaf mottle or striking discoloration. Symptoms of stem or petiole blackening or necrosis and stunting can also occur. To add to the confusion, the coloring of INSV symptoms will vary from white to yellow to brown to black. The same virus that causes a bright yellow mottle in begonia leaves can cause large black spots on New Guinea impatiens leaves.

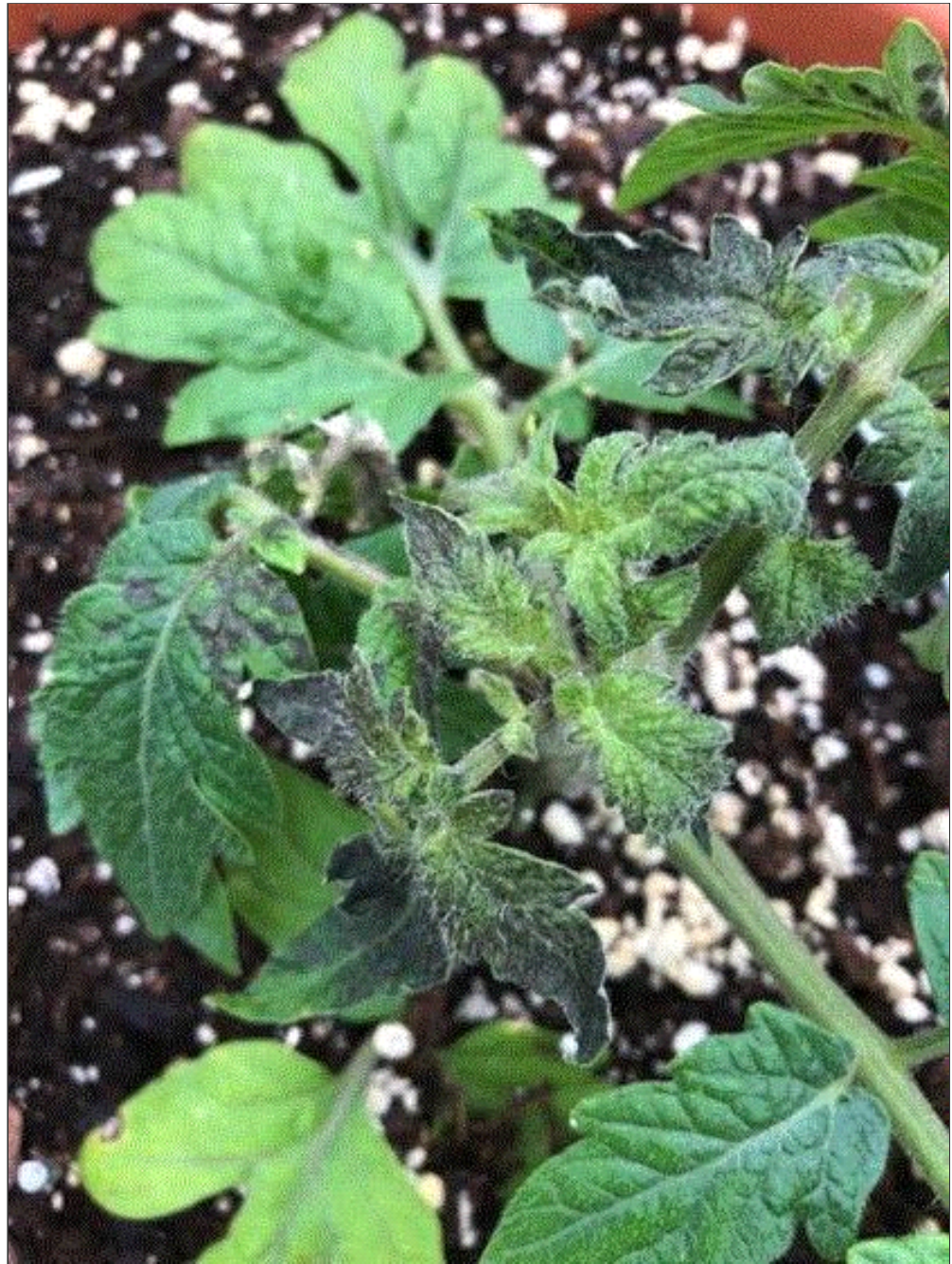
Thankfully, Nora and Margery go into detail about strategies to manage INSV and the thrips that vector it. You'll want to print out the document linked above and share it with your team. You should also probably file it for future reference. If a picture is worth a thousand words, this alert is worth about 24,000! Check out what INSV looks like on more than a dozen common greenhouse crops.



Tackling TSWV

Temperatures have already started rising in many North American regions (it's been 70+ in Cleveland all week), and this always leads to higher levels of pest activity. Around this time, technical services team members' phones start ringing with disease concerns and many discussions are had with growers discussing the importance of a solid IPM program.

A past call with a grower I found in our activity reports was related to dark splotches, mottled chlorosis and distorted growth on tomato varieties in both small and large containers. Our resident greenhouse CSI Nick Flax worked with this customer to get to the bottom of the problem and shared the story below:



For those of you who are not familiar with this virus, thrips transmit (vector) TSWV by taking it into their gut during feeding in the larval stage and, after an incubation period of several days where the virus multiplies inside the thrips, regurgitating it into the cells of uninfected plants during future feedings. This grower said they weren't sure if they had thrips but had not really been monitoring for them, so I asked for a few photos and suggested they put some sticky traps out to see what they can catch.

Sure enough, not even a day later they reported finding lots of thrips and the photos clearly looked like TSWV symptoms. I suggested they get plants tested just to be certain, and the results came back positive for TSWV.

For all of you out there who are a bit more relaxed on scouting—I get it. It's hard to find time to thoroughly scout your crops and record bug counts in spring. But this is one of the most important things you should take the time to do in your operation. Scouting is half of the battle to combat viruses like TSWV—the other part is building and executing an effective IPM program. Viruses like this don't just appear out of thin air – they come from somewhere and the source

could be a lot closer than you think.

Tospoviruses like TSWV can get into your greenhouse on infected plant material; but often, if it comes in on plants from outside of your operation, the plants will not show symptoms until later. Regularly scouting incoming plants and established crops in your greenhouse to identify symptoms early and removing infected plants before it can spread is critical.

Another way TSWV can get into your greenhouse is from local “reservoirs.” Many weeds can serve as hosts for the virus, so managing weeds in and around your greenhouse that thrips might be feeding on is a critical component to keeping it out.

Lastly, and most importantly, managing the vector (thrips) is the best way to prevent it from infecting your crops or keep it from spreading if it does get in. Thrips are becoming increasingly difficult to manage with traditional pesticide chemistries, so use of biologicals to keep thrips pressure from getting too high is a strategy that many growers across North America are using. Preventative management using traditional pesticide chemistries can also be effective but be sure you’re rotating between at least three (ideally more) IRAC groups to ensure your local thrips don’t become resistant to the pesticides you’re using.

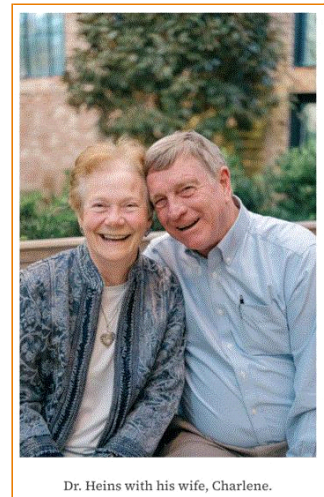
Royal Heins Scholarship Deadline Approaching—May 1

Established at the beginning of this year (January 2026), the new [Royal Heins International Floriculture Research Scholarship Fund](#) offered by the American Floral Endowment (AFE) supports semester-long international research experiences that will help students grow both scientifically and professionally. This scholarship reflects Dr. Heins’ long-standing belief in applied research, mentorship and learning through experience.

The new scholarship will be awarded annually to a U.S. citizen enrolled in a Ph.D. program in floriculture or controlled environment research at a U.S. or Canadian institution. (Engineering and AI application to floriculture/greenhouse/controlled environment production will also be considered.)

To ensure students are able to take advantage of this opportunity in its first year, the inaugural deadline this year is May 1. (Beginning in 2027, the deadline will align with other AFE graduate opportunities, February 1.)

This scholarship complements the student’s dissertation work by providing access to research opportunities, facilities or expertise not available at their home university. Students must secure a host advisor at an institution outside the U.S. or Canada, reinforcing the Fund’s emphasis on global scientific collaboration.



Dr. Heins with his wife, Charlene.

More details, eligibility information and tips for preparing for this scholarship application can be found [HERE](#).

Finish Line ... Join Our Online Community!

If you’re a regular reader of this newsletter, you probably know there’s a global online group of

more than 6,000 greenhouse professionals asking questions and discussing daily issues related to plant production. In fact, you might already be a member! If not, spring is the perfect time to join because it's when the most issues arise and it's exactly when you can use a network of peers to bounce questions and ideas off of to help determine the best course of action to avoid or solve problems.

The **GREENHOUSE TECH TEAM GROUP ON FACEBOOK** is a closed group (meaning you need to answer some questions to prove you're a grower before you're approved as a member) that's intended to provide a forum for working through challenges. You'll find tips, tricks, resources and—most importantly—like-minded growers and technical experts happy to share experiences and solutions. Check it out!

(BTW, I am the one who approves new members, so now you have an “in.”)

Talk to you next week!

Please feel free to send your comments, constructive criticism and topic ideas to me at bcalkins@ballhort.com.



Bill Calkins
Editor—*Tech On Demand*

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