Optimize Cultivate; Proactive Lewis Mite Protocols; Herbicides in Greenhouses



Cultural and Technical Information for Greenhouse Professionals

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE greenPROFIT MAGAZINE

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TECH ON DEMAND brought to you by GROWERTALKS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Maximize Time at Cultivate
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Podcast w/ Jeremy
P.L. Light & DLI Partnership
Finish Line ...



Optimize Cultivate 2026

Within about 24 to 48 hours of this email hitting your inbox, more than 10,000 industry members will descend on Columbus, Ohio, for the annual Cultivate trade show and conference. It's a bigtime commitment and expense, yet for so many, it's a must-attend. But how many of us will actually accomplish enough to make all that time and money worthwhile?

A few years ago, Nick Flax used his weekly newsletter column to share some tips and tricks for maximizing time at trade shows. I went back through that article and pulled out some of his best advice and applied it directly to this year's Cultivate and blended in some of my own thoughts as a 25-year Short Course vet and attendee of 100+ green industry shows over the years. In fact, just this week, I shared my personal schedule for the show with a coworker, and they were impressed that I still take time to detail everything I want to accomplish and put it on paper. Truth is … I can't imagine going to Columbus without a plan. So, here are some ways to make your



upcoming trip to Cultivate as productive as possible.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by everything happening at **CULTIVATE'26**, AmericanHort's flagship event for the green industry. With hundreds of exhibitors, educational sessions, networking opportunities and technical experts gathered in one place, the key to success is arriving with a plan.



Start by identifying one to three "must-solve" challenges you want to address. If you're an owner or operator focused primarily on the business side, talk with your growers before heading to Columbus. Find out which production issues are costing your greenhouse the most time, money or crop losses. Solving a greenhouse problem often delivers an immediate return on investment.

If you're on the production team, you can take a similar approach. Focus on major pain points in areas such as IPM, PGRs, crop nutrition, labor efficiency or problem crops. Review production data with management to identify recurring losses, rising input costs or operational bottlenecks. The most valuable conversations at Cultivate usually begin with a clear understanding of the problems you're trying to solve.

Once your priorities are set, build a schedule around them. Cultivate'26 offers a wide range of educational sessions, workshops and technical presentations. Attend sessions related to your top challenges early in the event whenever possible. Doing so helps frame the conversations you'll have throughout the week with researchers, consultants, suppliers and fellow growers. You'll often discover factors you hadn't previously considered and leave with better questions to ask.

Next, identify exhibitors whose products or services align with your goals. Before arriving, review the trade show floor map and create a list of booths you want to visit. A little planning can save hours of wandering and help ensure you connect with the right people. *(If your show goes anything like mine, you'll want to prioritize this list because you're not going to have time for them all …).*

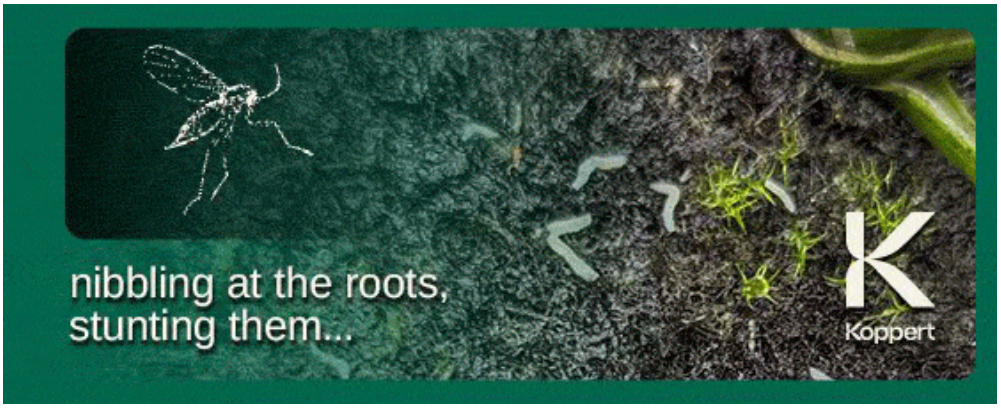
Come prepared with relevant information—for example, if you're trying to solve fertility or water-quality issues, bring a recent water test report and a simple diagram of your irrigation and injection systems. If you're troubleshooting crop losses, have photos, notes or production data available. The more information you can provide, the more meaningful and productive your conversations will be.

Don’t limit yourself to current suppliers! Visit companies you already work with to learn about new products and services, but also spend time with competing suppliers. Trade shows are one of the few opportunities to directly compare solutions and ask detailed questions about performance, implementation and ROI.

Equally valuable are the conversations that happen in the aisles of the Columbus Convention Center and in some of the establishments up and down High Street and even at the Char Bar (IYKYK). Take time to connect with other growers and industry professionals. Ask about their experiences with products, suppliers and customers. Real-world feedback often provides insights that catalogs and a chat with some marketing guy in a polo cannot.

When visiting exhibitors, be respectful of their time. Keep initial conversations focused and concise. If a discussion becomes more involved, ask whether you can reconnect later over coffee, lunch or after the show floor closes.

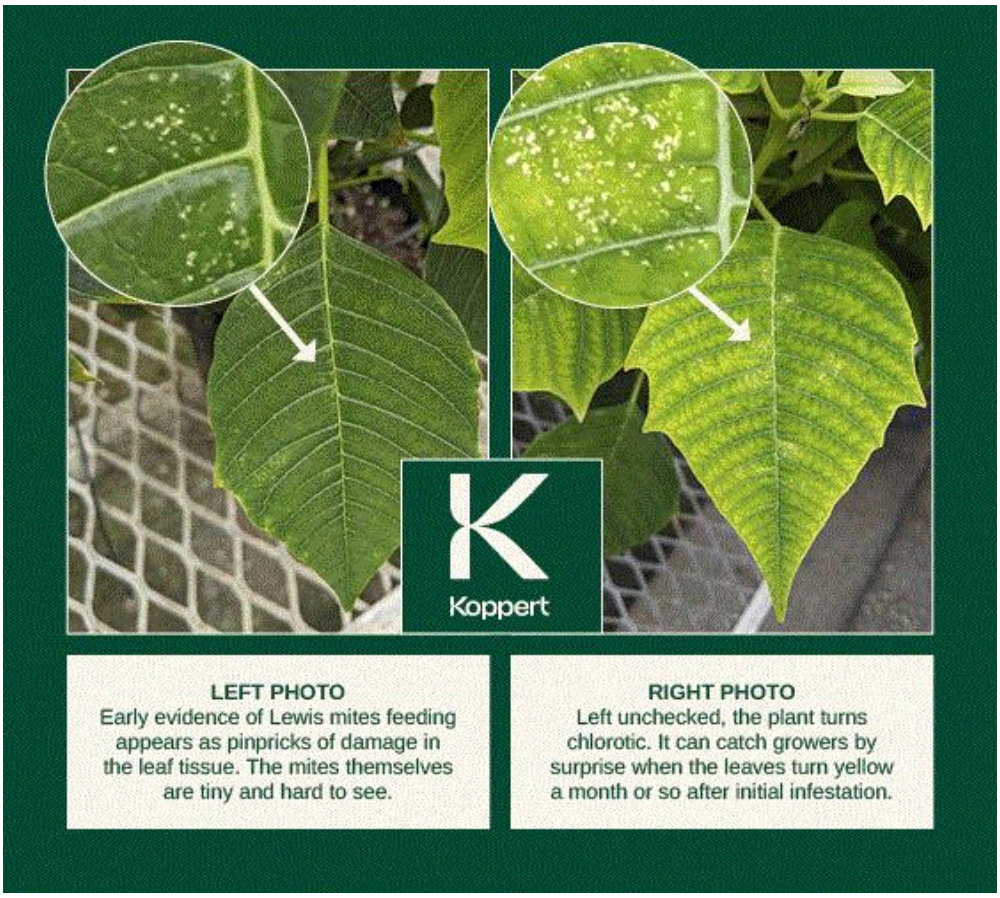
Finally, don’t let valuable connections disappear once Cultivate ends. Spend a few minutes each evening sending quick follow-up emails or LinkedIn requests to the people you’ve met. A short message summarizing your conversation can help turn a brief introduction into a long-term professional resource. Our industry is relationship driven and Cultivate is one of the best places to build and strengthen relationships.



Koppert Corner: Proactive Lewis Mite Control on Poinsettia

Each month I connect with my friend Heidi Doering, a technical services expert at Koppert, and she shares tips and technical information that she runs across during her many visits to client sites across the nation. This week she’s helping you get ahead of a pest that can plague poinsettia crops.

Lewis mite can create significant issues if small populations aren’t caught early in the production cycle. It typically arrives on a small number of poinsettia varieties and is not easily visible on incoming cuttings. In early weeks of production, Lewis mite can reproduce and develop to damaging populations undetected. Visible symptoms may not show up on the plant until after the crop has been spaced. At this point, the cost to contain this insect pest increases significantly, as now we need to apply predatory mites or spray chemical miticides weekly over a much larger area to gain control.



The Basics

It's best to be proactive and treat all incoming material as if it is infested. We can't know which varieties will show up infested until an astute IPM scout, grower or IPM consultant detects and identifies them in the crop. There are several approaches to eliminating Lewis mite from your poinsettia crop early in the cycle.

Biologicals/Microbiological Approach

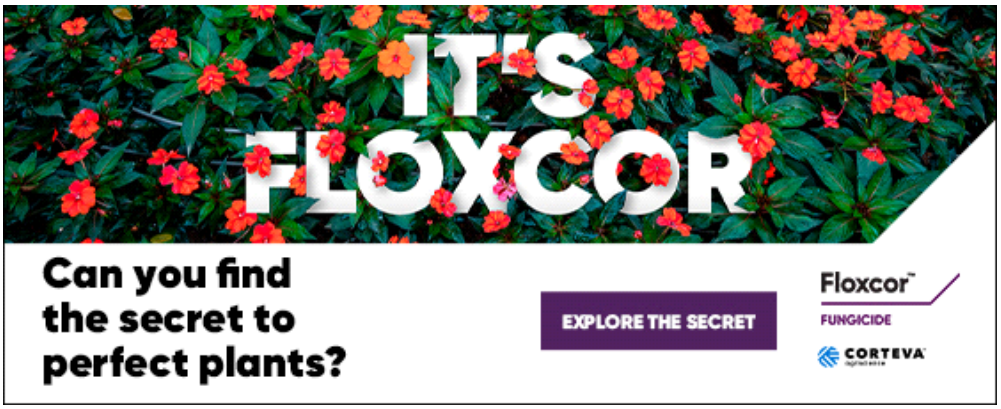
If you don't have time or labor to dip incoming poinsettia cuttings, it's important to initiate an inundative approach to eliminate them as completely as possible while the crop is pot tight.

Achieve a biological approach by releasing predatory mites *N. californicus* (**Spical**), *P. persimilis* (**Spidex**), and *A. swirskii* (**Swirski-Mite**) weekly from the time cuttings come off mist (or liners arrive) until the crop is spaced. In propagation and pot tight phase, sprench a tank mix of **nematodes** (*S. feltiae or S. carpocapsae*) and **Isarid** to impact all stages of fungus gnats and whitefly. Note that there may be pesticide residues on the cuttings/liners that can damage predatory mites, so ask for a 12-week history of IPM applications from your broker to know what pesticides have been previously applied to cuttings or liners.

Chemical Miticides

The alternative to the biological approach is a series of chemical miticide spray applications. Note that applying contact miticides after the canopy closes may result in incomplete contact coverage and reduced efficacy of miticide apps. We also don't know what miticides have been applied to these cuttings or liners before you receive them, so we can't know whether the mites could be resistant to pesticides.

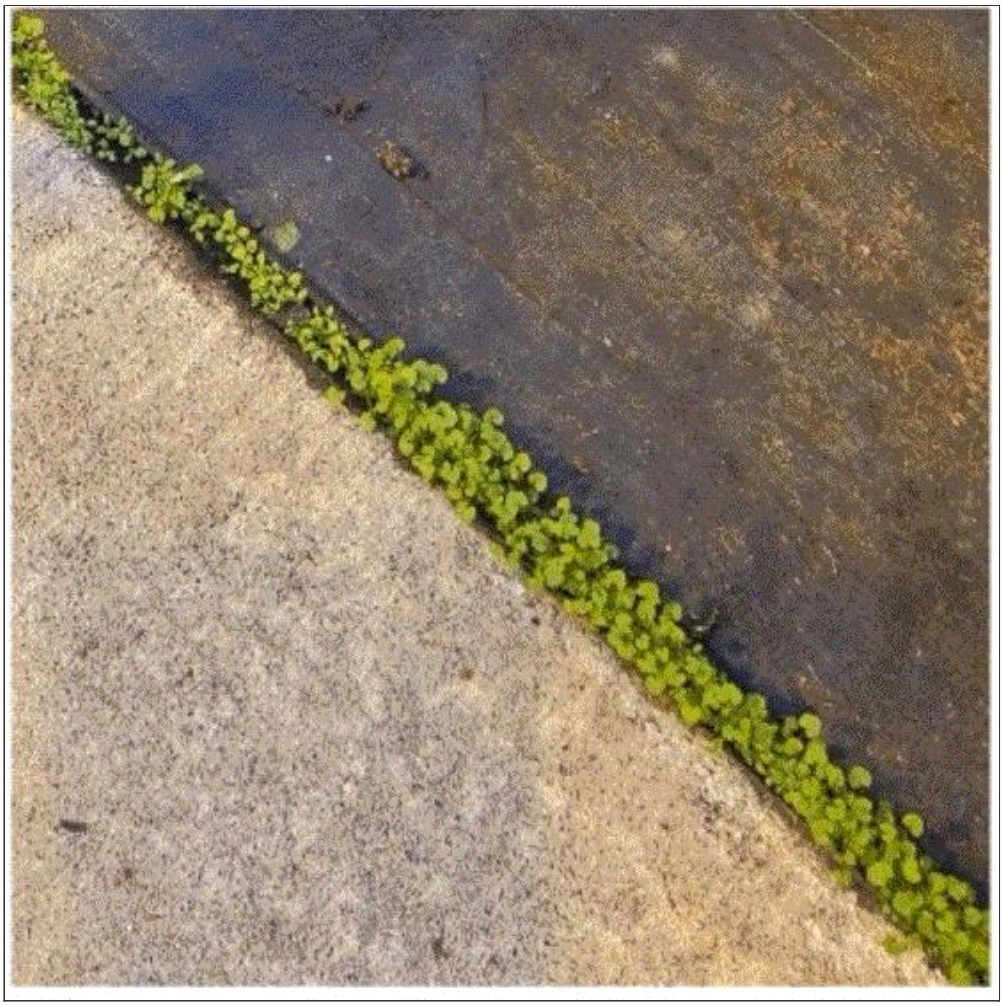
***Contact** a Koppert Technical Consultant to dial in predatory mite rates and application methods to eliminate Lewis mite before it damages your crop!*



Josh's Tip of the Week: Herbicide Use in the Greenhouse

Usually my buddy Nick Flax, a technical services expert at Ball, takes time each week in this newsletter to share a concern that's come up during one of his numerous calls with growers across North America. But I led off the newsletter with my spin on something Nick has shared in the past, so this week, our friend (and coworker) Josh Henry is jumping into the "weekly tip" spot with some info on herbicides and weed control in your greenhouse.

PROBLEM: Effective weed control in greenhouses requires a different approach from outdoor production. Herbicide options are limited, label restrictions are strict and misuse can quickly result in crop injury due to volatilization or residual activity.



JOSH'S TIP: The most effective programs combine sanitation, timing and targeted herbicide use only when appropriate. Understanding when to apply herbicides, how they behave in enclosed environments and how to select and interpret label language is critical to reducing weed pressure without presenting significant risk to crops.

Why Herbicide Use Is Limited in Greenhouses
Most herbicides are not labeled for use inside enclosed structures due to the increased risk of crop injury. Vapors can become trapped in greenhouses, leading to phytotoxicity even when applications are made to non-crop surfaces. Herbicides with long residuals pose risk to future crops, and their use is generally limited to floors, gravel or areas under benches when no crops are present. Applications should always comply with label language specifying enclosed structures and non-crop use. The most effective timing for herbicide application is when weeds are actively growing and the greenhouse is empty. Many labels require a specific time interval before crops can be reintroduced. Herbicide use inside greenhouses during active production is extremely limited and poses significant risk, so most applications should be restricted to between crop cycles.

Volatilization & Residue Concerns
Herbicide volatilization is a major risk in greenhouses due to warm temperatures and limited air exchange. Once volatilized, herbicides can move off target and injure sensitive crops. In addition, residues on floors or ground surfaces can be taken up indirectly if plant roots grow through containers and contact treated areas. These risks increase under high temperatures and when ventilation is limited, making application timing and environmental conditions critical.

Emergence & Selectivity
Greenhouse weed control relies primarily on post-emergence herbicides, which kill weeds that are actively growing. Post-emergence products are most effective when weeds are small and actively growing. Allowing weeds to mature reduces herbicide efficacy and increases risk of seed production, leading to future infestations. Pre-emergence herbicides like indaziflam can be used to prevent weed seeds from establishing after germination, but few products in this category are available for use in the greenhouse. Herbicides may also be selective, targeting specific groups such as broadleaf weeds or grasses, or non-selective, controlling a broad range of plant species.

Contact vs. Systemic Herbicides
Contact herbicides kill only the plant tissue they contact during application and are most effective on small, young weeds. These include products containing diquat, pelargonic acid glufosinate and ammonium nonanoate. In contrast, systemic herbicides are absorbed and move within the plant, providing more complete control. The primary example of a systemic herbicide is glyphosate, which can only be applied when crops are not present. In greenhouse settings, contact materials are often preferred due to reduced movement and lower risk of unintended crop exposure.

Modes of Action (MOA)
Herbicides work through different modes of action—including synthetic auxins, photosynthesis inhibitors and cell membrane disruptors. Understanding these classes is important for improving control and preventing resistance development. Rotating the herbicide MOA is recommended in areas where repeated applications are made, such as gravel walkways or perimeter zones.

Ultimately, herbicides should be part of an integrated strategy, not the sole control method. Preventative practices such as weed barrier fabric, cleaning, sanitation and management of weeds around the greenhouse are essential.



NEW PODCAST: 4 Questions for Jeremy, a Crop Team Manager

FOR EPISODE 259, I was joined by my friend Jeremy Webber, the Cannabis and Ornamental Crop Team Manager at Koppert and an IPM expert with plenty of greenhouse and nursery experience, as well as a true passion for plants and how to produce them efficiently and effectively.



Jeremy is a great storyteller and that skill shines over the course of this episode. It's funny, informational and a fantastic look into the mind of someone who thinks deeply about our industry every day. Jeremy has been a podcast guest before (we recorded a fantastic two-part episode back in 2024) and has written articles for *GrowerTalks* magazine and our Biosolutions Guide, but this episode is a bit more casual and philosophical … I hope you enjoy listening as much as we enjoyed recording it.

Here are the four questions Jeremy chose to answer:

1. What was your first exposure to "horticulture" and how did you feel, react, respond?
2. If you had a free hour, what would we find you doing?
3. What are your top 3 favorite annuals? And perennials?
4. What do you love most about your job?

Big shout out to Prospiant—leaders in greenhouse design, manufacture and build—who sponsored this episode! Click HERE to learn more and connect with their expert team.

There are now almost 260 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. Jump back in to get caught up or take a minute to subscribe—that way you'll never miss an episode.

- **APPLE PODCASTS**
- **SPOTIFY**



New Lighting Partnership

I'm sure I'll hear about more business partnerships, purchases, sales and plenty of substantiated and unsubstantiated industry rumors at Cultivate this weekend, but here's some official news to report.

P.L. Light Systems (horticultural lighting supplier since 1981 and based in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada) has completed a strategic partnership agreement with **Dutch Lighting Innovations** (Dutch designer, assembler and provider of LED lighting systems to greenhouses around the world).

According to the release I received, through its partnership with DLI, P.L. Light Systems is poised to expand its best-in-class service to customers across the continent while expanding its role as a leader at the intersection of horticultural lighting and technology.

Todd Phillips (owner and president of P.L. Light) will continue as president and run North American operations. He commented, “Our leading market position and reputation for quality and service were key attributes that attracted interest from DLI. The partnership with DLI is a great fit and will create a larger platform for continued geographic expansion, a broadening of the portfolio of products and services, and a strong base for growth via acquisitions across the horticultural lighting industry.”



Dutch Lighting Innovations CEO Pim Van Eijk added that “P.L. Light Systems has been a long-established leader in the North American market, and their partnership with DLI will help them expand their reach and continue providing quality products, services and solutions to their customers.”

I searched the Cultivate exhibitor directory and it looks like DLI will be at the show and I’m sure they’d like to talk to you about this partnership. Visit them in Booth 3712.



Finish Line ...

I need to pack for Cultivate. Many of you probably do, as well. So how about we use this time to prepare for the show or get caught up on Tech On Demand podcasts.

- **CULTIVATE PLANNING (Yes, AmericanHort literally has a system you can use to create a plan!)**
- **TECH ON DEMAND PODCASTS ON APPLE**
- **TECH ON DEMAND PODCASTS ON SPOTIFY**

Next week, I’ll recap Cultivate but if you want to follow along in real time, keep an eye on Ball Publishing’s FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM (@GrowerTalksGreenProfit).

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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