

Cyclosporiasis Over; EZ's Open House; Some Great Courses



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Cyclosporiasis outbreak declared over

That's according to the CDC, anyway, as reported in [this New York Times article](#).

It makes sense that a crop like leafy greens would turn over quickly given its short production cycle, and fortunately outbreak levels dropped back to typical background levels throughout August. Due to the long latency period between consumption of contaminated produce and symptoms, more cases are expected to be reported; however, contaminated lettuce is unlikely to have been consumed after early August.

This outbreak got a lot of publicity. Seems like everyone heard about it, avoided lettuce to some degree, and reports of industry-changing effects are already being observed. But how bad was it? We've had outbreaks in the past and how did this compare?

By case number, it was far beyond anything in the past. Fortunately, cyclosporiasis isn't as deadly as other food-borne illnesses.

In 2018, a romaine supply from Yuma, Arizona, contained E. coli O157:H7. Nearly half of the 210 patients affected were hospitalized, and five deaths were attributed to the event. Comparatively, at the peak of the cyclosporiasis outbreak, more than 1,000 cases were reported PER DAY, totaling 12,883 cases directly linked to the 2026 outbreak. The good news is that the illness is significantly less severe, with only 4% of cases resulting in hospitalization and two deaths reported as linked to cyclosporiasis.

While we can quantify severity in a number of ways, one thing is a fact: significantly more people experienced this outbreak, and by a large margin. Now that it's behind us, by the end of the year we should start to understand if this was a blip or if the outbreak drove meaningful consumer and industry change for the long term.



Ridder and Quantified announce new integration partnership

Ridder, the horticultural control company, and Quantified, the advanced sensor company, have announced a new integration partnership.

Ridder has been in the agricultural space since 1953, and in 2011 expanded into a broader greenhouse control and management company with the addition of Hortimax. Since then, Ridder has continually shown interest in the most cutting-edge horticultural technology, adding climate screens in 2015 and robot partnerships in 2021. This recent partnership with a sensor company aligns well with the newest technology hoping to leverage plant physiological responses and precise irrigation and fertilizer management in greenhouse control.



As for Quantified, it hasn't been long since they were last in the conversation. Earlier this year, the Dutch company announced a distribution partnership with Biome Delta, based in North America. With a variety of sensors covering root-zone and irrigation, plant-level measurements and standard climate, Quantified is positioning itself as a leader in the next generation of sensors for currently untapped greenhouse metrics.

Read more about the partnership [HERE](#).



Sun Gro Horticulture launches redesigned website

Sun Gro Horticulture, supplier of both professional and consumer potting mix and media, has released an updated website aiming to make information and tools easily accessible online. Included in the release is educational content, media formulations, crop performance trials and industry trends.

Having spent a bit of time on the site, the most useful tool I played around with was under the Growing Ingredients tab. Listing all their products, it was easy to click through and see what was offered for each substrate type, whether in mixes or raw ingredients.

In my opinion, it's a great site to send people to just to learn about horticultural substrate. The challenge with folks outside the industry or new to growing is explaining the difference between soil and potting mix, and why those differences are important. And for me, I appreciate the ease of navigating between substrate types and plant types to compare options.

It's worth a gander, especially since they supply both commercial and retail. Find the link to the site [HERE](#).



Enza Zaden's CEA Discovery Days

Seed breeder Enza Zaden will host its **hydroponic/CEA Discovery Field Days** September 22 to 24 at its headquarters in Enkhuizen, the Netherlands. The company will demonstrate the realistic commercial greenhouse it has built to specialize in breeding for high-tech growing systems.

At the center of this is root health. An interesting starting point for a discussion of CEA, but perhaps the most relevant one, as this is arguably the paradigm furthest removed from field production. Enza Zaden believes healthy roots are at the core of performance, as well as uniformity, consistency and reliability.

In addition to the focus on CEA, educational discussions and sessions will guide attendees through how Enza Zaden operates as a breeder, from phytopathology to product development.

For years I've been hearing interest in how genetics could be leveraged in controlled environments. The root zone is certainly a fascinating area to start; and while resilience is a goal, I'm interested to see where this road may lead. Recently, I was shocked to learn that as much as 10–20% of carbon fixed during photosynthesis can be released as root exudates. While there's a fair bit known about this in hydroponics, I've yet to see knowledge like this get truly leveraged in an actionable way. This could be a start to understanding more about what genetics make for a healthy root system in soilless cultivation.



Navus Funds Blue Radix



Blue Radix has announced that **Navus**, an investment firm focused on ag tech, has reinvested additional funds to put toward new technology, innovations and continued development.

Navus's portfolio is full of interesting and familiar characters in the ag tech industry. Ridder, just mentioned above, is in their portfolio, as well as other CEA companies, including Gardin, FOTONIQ, SAIA Agrobotics and MetoMotion, maker of the GRoW harvesting robot that Ridder distributes. It's a tangled web and a world worth diving into, as the ownership structure of horticultural suppliers can be wild and have significant impacts on technology development and distribution.

The investment into Blue Radix follows an industry trend of prioritizing control system automation and leveraging the latest in climate and irrigation control technology.



Wageningen Keeps Stacking the CEA Course Calendar

Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands just wrapped another Summer School Greenhouse Horticulture class, which ran August 31 to September 11. The short-format course is aimed at PhD students, scientists and working professionals.

It's the latest addition to WUR's growing catalog of professional CEA education—an effort that's starting to look like a genuine alternative paradigm for training and certification in this industry.

That one's done, but there are a few worth putting on the calendar. Two 2027 courses are already listed: Vertical Farming, starting February 8, and the Masterclass Soilless Culture, starting March 8. Several others run on repeat, including the self-paced Online Course Greenhouse Horticulture and the Sino-European Masterclass on Plant Phenotyping and Plant Modelling this October.

Wageningen remains a leader in greenhouse research and education. As the industry shifts to adopt new technology and new control paradigms, these formats (self-paced online classes and intensive multi-day workshops) are professional development you can actually fit around a full-time career, without having to enroll in a semester-long program.

See courses and register [HERE](#).

UF's Nutrient Management 2 Starts September 28

If you'd rather not wait until 2027, the University of Florida has an advanced course opening in just two weeks.



Nutrient Management 2 (Advanced) runs September 28 to October 30 as part of UF/IFAS Extension's Greenhouse Training Online program. This is the deep end of the pool: formulating a fertilizer from individual salts; converting fertilizer units; managing substrate pH across lime, water quality, nitrogen form and species; and diagnosing nutritional problems well enough to actually correct them. You'll need Excel and a computer; the assignments aren't phone-friendly.

The course is taught by Dr. Paul Fisher, who created the Greenhouse Training Online program, and it carries a 4.5 out of 5 rating from more than 580 past participants. Material is available in both English and Spanish, with two new modules activated each week (for eight total), plus a discussion board where you can put questions directly to the instructors. It counts toward the Root Zone Expert Program.

Cost is \$293 per employee, with 20% off for five or more. Worth noting: this one isn't offered every year, so if nutrient management is a gap on your team, this is the window!

Click [HERE](#) to register. Click [HERE](#) to email for more info.



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