

Growers talk plastics, plus Canada proposes changes to organic



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#### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

New AIB Program  
Growers Talk Plastics  
Solar Tariff  
Canada's Organic Changes  
Water Pathogens

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## AIB Launches New Program

America In Bloom (AIB) just launched a new self-assessment program called Growing Vibrant Communities (GVC). It allows communities to measure their commitment and progress in community vitality, flowers, landscaped area, urban forestry, environmental efforts, celebrating heritage and overall impression.

AIB already has a long-standing National Awards Program, and GVC will offer a good alternative to the awards program, with no registration deadlines or specific timeline. The \$299 registration fee includes a self-assessment and a designated GVC advisor, who can guide the community and recommend enhancements.

John Manchester, president of the AIB board of directors, says, "We know that beautiful communities promote quality of life and economic vitality; that volunteer leadership and involvement can effect change in a community; and the character of a community can be preserved through celebrating the unique heritage it has. The GVC program guides communities through a set of metrics designed to evaluate their current efforts, and then provides a roadmap for them to get stronger in the areas that provide for a more robust and livable community."

You can learn more at <https://growingvibrantcommunities.com/>.



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## Growers Speak Up on Plastics

After the last issue of *GreenTalks*, I received an unusual number of emails about plastics. While some of you are making changes and have pressure from your customers to do so, others are finding less demand for change. Perhaps a sign that we're at a crossroads?

Here's a sampling of grower thoughts:

### Double Standard

Paul Schwabe at Johnson's Nursery in Wisconsin pointed out that while plastic straws get all the attention, he doesn't see people changing their infatuation with single-use plastic grocery bags. "I guess I can only shake my head when I am at the grocery store viewing all the plastic bags I see being used. Hard to complain too loudly to people, however, when our green industry is perhaps the worst when it comes to plastic for one-time use. Pots, labels, trays, etc. all get dumped after the plants are purchased and put into the ground. And then I have to consider all the plastic covering hoop houses and greenhouses that will end up in landfills too! No end in sight in the use of plastics."

### Customers Who Want Change

"Our customers are asking for change. They want paper and cardboard, and they are okay with biodegradable starch-based plastic. We have reacted accordingly. We use pulp and wood containers instead of clamshells, and we use kraft paper bags and biodegradable plastic bags. The next big challenge is greenhouse films and ag plastics in the field."—Dick Chase, Arrowhead Family Farm, Massachusetts

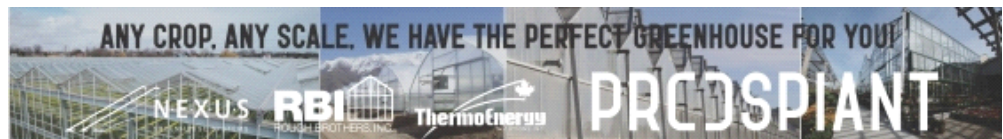
### Reuse

"Here at Wind In The Willows Nursery, we are reusing our plastic pots and buying used plastic pots from the landscapers we sell to. We are able to get three or four uses out of a pot. The one gal. pots we move cuttings into for a year before we shift them to three gal. pots get used as many as five times before they have to be discarded. We wash and sanitize them before each use."—Grady Roscoe, Wind In The Willows Nursery, South Carolina

### Growers Slow to Convert

And Danny Takao at Takao Nursery in California laments that the industry has been slow to change. He says he got involved with Ellepots because he didn't see other options in the near horizon. "I work with Ellepots and have been visiting growers and letting them know about the big Ellepots and the reduction of plastic pots. But they are not seeing the urgency to convert until they see more demand from the retailers/landscapers. It's a very slow process and mindset to change over. In the meantime, we are dumping a lot of plastic in the oceans and landfills."

Danny urges *GreenTalks* readers to stop by the Blackmore booth at Cultivate and check out their large Ellepots and provide feedback. "This will only start working if both growers and retailers work together and we (Ellepot USA) can see what we need to fine-tune to make this work."



## Tariff on Solar Panels

If you're keeping an eye on the solar industry, or thinking about installing photovoltaics in the future, take note. Solar panels just got hit with a big tariff that could slow down the U.S. solar industry. According to [this article in Time Magazine](#), "The U.S. will impose duties of as much as 30% on solar equipment made abroad, a move that threatens to handicap a \$28 billion industry that relies on parts made abroad for 80% of its supply."

The tariffs, which did not come as a surprise to most in the solar industry, will be in effect for four years. The purpose? To make the price of imported panels more comparable to U.S.-made panels. (And, as you might surmise, China is the largest producer of those panels.)



## Canada Proposes Changes to Organic

Canada is looking at making some changes to their Canadian Organic Standards, and they've drafted up new, specific language explicitly for controlled-environment production. It proposes new rules about soil composition, fertilizing, artificial lighting and other scenarios. For example, they propose that you can only use 100% supplemental lighting when crops are harvested within 60 days. (Hydroponic and aeroponic production are not allowed under the Canadian Organic Standards.)

You can learn more about the proposed changes [HERE](#). They're open for public comment until September 30, 2019.

## New Research: Pathogens in Your Irrigation Water

If you recycle irrigation water, you're going to want to check out the latest from CleanWater3. They just published "Diversity of Phytophthora, Pythium, and Phytophythium Species in Recycled Irrigation Water in a Container Nursery."

They spent a year tracking plant pathogens in irrigation water to see which, if any, tended to occur together and which water sources (creek, pond, reservoir, runoff channels) they were most prevalent in. Turns out Pythium and Phytophythium species were prominent in summer, and Phytophthora species were observed year-round.

Read the full research paper [HERE](#).

*Until next time,*

*Jennifer*

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