

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Production

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The Winds of Change

Sylvia Dekker

(Editor's note: Sylvia and her new husband have moved, so she had to leave Qualitree, meaning she's left us, too. We're hoping it's only a temporary leave of absence, as we've enjoyed having her as a contributor for the last year or so and it would be a huge loss to our industry not to have her be a part of it.—JZ)

Before the New Year, I was deep into planning 2019's IPM scheme with all its nitty gritty details.

Here and there I would think about a few things for our wedding, but I had a whole three and a half months to nail down all the details, so I wasn't worried. There were biologicals to research, calendars to make and crops to scout.

After the New Year, I was down to a month and a half and a wrinkle was thrown into the mix. Where were we going to live?

You see, as a new paramedic, my fiancé wasn't sure exactly where in BC his next station would be. So before mid-January, we couldn't even attempt to plan, much less bother to worry about it. A month and a half before "I do," we finally got a station in Castlegar, six hours away from the Fraser Valley.

We scoured the Internet for living options. What seemed like a great deal on renting a mobile home from a very nice sounding BC-turned-Dubai-resident turned out exactly as you'd expect from emails promising to send the keys via the mail. That is, only after we parted with \$500 precious dollars, of course.

As I write this in Week 7 we're now moving to Merritt, not Castlegar. This was another sudden, unexpected change, but we were excited to be only 1.5 hours away from family and friends at least.

I'm leaving my aphid-killing job and now we're one week away from moving with bags, baggage, hound dog, hiking and hunting stuff, beehives and a pile of household essentials. Getting married is a lucrative business—we started out with nothing, and after a couple parties, now have almost everything to set up housekeeping.

Except, of course, a house.

When you read this, we'll have been living in Merritt for a month or so. Everything will have fallen into place, but our lives will have changed a lot.

That's just it. Plans change. Some unexpectedly, some anticipated. Solid plans are sometimes impossible to make. And the best of plans can be fouled.

One thing I don't have to worry about is IPM at Qualitree. Since my fiancé and I anticipated not being able to stay close enough to the Valley to keep my job, I've been slowly (and now very quickly) training up my protégé who is

graduating from high school in June. It won't take long before she's excelling beyond what I ever was able to accomplish. That, at least, was something I could plan ahead for.

She and I are ready to jump in with both feet. Her into 2019's promise of insect issues; me into the relative unknown.

How do you plan ahead for the unknown? Crazy weather, unexpected insects, nasty diseases, leaving team members, market changes ...? I suppose it's not how you plan for the unknown, but how you can handle change that determines whether you sink or swim in whatever situation you find yourself in.

As the New Year settled in, I received multiple emails from newsletters and magazines mentioning change: "At this time of year, we often find ourselves preparing for change ..." "What can you do to re-wire yourself to be better at change, to be more capable and comfortable in a world of continuous transformation?"

At the end of 2018, the Qualitree growing team did a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis together and the results showed change as being one of the biggest factors under each heading—good changes, changes happening too fast, growth through change, unexpected changes.

Some people's characters resist change; other characters embrace it. Whether you like it or not, it happens. I've learned throughout my short career at Qualitree that change results in business growth, solutions and overall positive improvements.

Even if a change is intimidating, the best way to approach it is with enthusiasm. It's inevitable, after all. **GT**

Sylvia Dekker is a newlywed and has worked in the hort industry practically her whole life, but is currently living in limbo, writing, hiking, hunting and woodburning on the side. You can reach her at sylschaap95@gmail.com.