

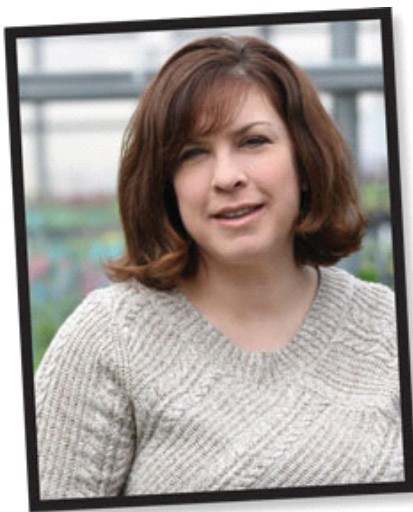
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Intolerant

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JENNIFER ZURKO

Are there some things that you have zero tolerance for?

Like when people don't use their turn signal. Or walk reeeeeaaaaalllyyyy slow in front of you at the airport (or just completely stop in the middle of the walkway). Or write a check for groceries (only allowed for those age 75 and older). Or maybe that's just what I have zero tolerance for ... I was not blessed with the virtue of patience.

How about insects on our plants? Could we as consumers honestly say that we would shrug our shoulders and accept some whiteflies on our poinsettias or spider mites on our salvia? In this instance, I'm much more tolerant. I'm of the mindset that plants come with bugs. It's inevitable. Kinda like assuming that your local politician stretches the truth or that one day you'll find a gray hair. You've come to expect it.

I thought of this when I peeked in on Ron Valentin's talk at last year's Plug & Cutting Conference about what "zero tolerance" means for greenhouse production. Maybe as a grower, your customers and your customers' customers don't mind a stray whitefly here or there, but could you say the same about the cuttings you ordered?

On one hand, you ordered clean cuttings, dang it, so they best be pest-free when they get here. It's hard enough to grow plants—you don't need to start on the wrong foot with buggy cuttings before you even stick them.

On the other hand, should you be expecting perfection from your off-shore suppliers? Is that even realistic?

I'm not saying one way is right—nor am I saying the breeders don't strive for 100% pest-free products. I know how much resources they spend and how hard they work to make that goal. But we hear of instances all the time when so-and-so breeder shipped diseased/infested cuttings—it's almost a yearly occurrence. So maybe we're being too intolerant ...?

It's a good, debatable question and the reason why I asked Ron if he would write the magazine-article version of his talk from the Plug & Cutting Conference, to offer some discussion points and solutions to prevent problems when your cuttings arrive.

For the last few years, our Pest Management Issue has been in April. We sat down and realized that spring was a little too late to communicate new disease and insect information ... for spring production ... so we moved it to the

February issue starting this year.

It's still the same issue that's filled with new research, and best prevention and control practices you can implement now in the greenhouse, including diseases and insect issues on perennials, the basics of using biocontrols, root rot diseases and even a quick update on Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus—that we don't have to worry about yet, but that we should still keep an eye out for.

We also have new research on the disease tolerance of Imara XDR Impatiens and Cora XDR Vinca, new chemical label updates and classes, and what the IR-4 Project research priorities are for the coming years.

I hope your spring production is off to a good start with completely insect- and disease-free days ahead. But maybe that's too much to ask for ... **GT**