

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Changes for the Better

Bill Calkins

We've all learned a lot this year. From constant reminders about unpredictability to how to wear a fabric face mask, things have changed. And as life returns to normal (whatever that looks like), the COVID-19 pandemic will leave an indelible mark on everyone, in life and in business.

As greenhouse professionals move forward and look to 2021, many around the industry are considering what the work environment and shopping environment will look like. We asked our social media followers to weigh in on changes at their greenhouse specifically to address COVID/pandemic concerns that they plan to keep in place moving forward. There's no doubt processes, worker and customer safety, and product flow will be different in the future.

We put in new hand wash stations, lots of hand sanitizers, implemented social distancing, limited the number of workers in the greenhouses at any one time, and at the beginning of each workday, we will go through a series of questions about health and symptoms before each worker gets started. —British Columbia

We have little greenhouses in our warehouse where we graft. We call them COVID huts, 6 x 8 greenhouses, which keeps each grafter in their own isolated space. I don't think I will ever be able to get rid of them because everyone loves them now.—Florida

Dedicated forced traffic flow. Our customers now need to follow a path.—Oklahoma

Smaller loads and more frequent deliveries to customers. Also, paperless and contactless delivery.—Missouri

We introduced online ordering and curbside pickup. I'm hoping the company continues this practice, as it has definitely benefited everyone.—Minnesota

Divided sticking stations with clear barriers and independent air flow, always away from others. Our new office building has separated offices. —Pennsylvania

We went to "by appointment only" and require face masks.—Oklahoma

We will disinfect carts daily.—Utah

We will continue with flow patterns and plastic barriers. We will keep hand sanitizer and preserve staff-only areas.—Indiana

We implemented live inventory on our website to facilitate smoother ordering for our wholesale customers.—Missouri

We moved checkout stations from inside the shop to the greenhouse. We have reopened the shop with a checkout, but will keep the station in the greenhouse. It really made things run smoothly this year.—Illinois

This is just a sample of the responses. It seems that worker safety will be top of mind and we may have all learned something about how disease is spread. Also interesting were comments about how some changes actually improved or streamlined processes, leading to increased efficiency in receiving, production and shipping areas. Innovation frequently comes from necessity and 2020 may have some positive effects as we move ahead.

Feel free to let us know if your business made any changes you plan to keep in place. Drop an email to bcalkins@ballhort.com. We'd love to hear from you! **GT**

COVID-19 Resources

Back in early May, *GrowerTalks* released [a video on our YouTube channel](#) titled "Greenhouse Safety in a Pandemic & Post-COVID World." We talked to a couple of leading growers about best practices and protocols they'd put in place to keep workers safe in production greenhouses. We encourage you to watch that video and read the accompanying article from our June 2020 issue, as well as bookmarking our COVID-19 News & Updates resources available at growertalks.com/COVID-19 for a virtual library of information that we continue to update as news and information becomes available.