

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Plantpeddler Installs Three Robots

Chris Beytes



In January, Cresco, Iowa-based young-plant and finished-plant producer Plantpeddler took delivery of three ISO Model 2500 Cutting Planters. Here, Plantpeddler employees Jesse Vorwald (in blue) and Landon Fraser (in gray) get trained on the new machines by ISO specialists Peter van Steenberg and Herbert van der Vliet, respectively.

The installation of the three automated cutting stickers is part of a major investment by Plantpeddler in their root-and-sell business, says company founder and co-owner Mike Gooder (along with 100,000 sq. ft. of new greenhouse and an expansion of their production barn). What will they be using them for?

“Everything we can possibly stick,” he answered.

Plantpeddler’s goal is multifold, Mike explained, starting with establishing a stronger position in the propagation of

multi-variety liners. Plantpeddler just picked up Dümmen Orange's Confetti line, and is already propagating Selecta One's Trixis and Syngenta's Kwik Kombos. Mike says it's challenging for workers to stick multiple cuttings in one cell and tedious to get everything positioned correctly.

"This gives us the opportunity to have perfect multi-liners," he says of planting them with the ISOs.



Next objective: sticking core spring annuals.

"We stick a lot of geraniums and begonias early, so [the ISOs] will do that work early in the cycle," he said.

In addition, they'll use the ISOs to stick fall mum cuttings, which normally fall into the peak of spring when staff is already fatigued from other work.

"This will allow us to stick mums during peak periods with minimal crew," Mike says, adding that the ISOs will do a good job with multi-variety mum pots.

They'll keep the ISOs running (at 7,500 cuttings per hour total—equivalent to nine employees) into May and June by sticking a summer and fall annuals program.

"That really hasn't been available in the marketplace," Mike says.

Lastly, poinsettia cuttings—of which they hope to do two million this year. Mike says they'll attempt to stick a good portion of those with the robots.

All of the above should keep the sticking line running for up to eight months of the year—critical to paying back the investment and helping Plantpeddler continue to grow.

"The real game-changer for us is to be able to extend our season," Mike says. "It opens up more doors and opportunities." **GT**

Spread photo by Adam Powers. Aerial photo by John Gooder.