

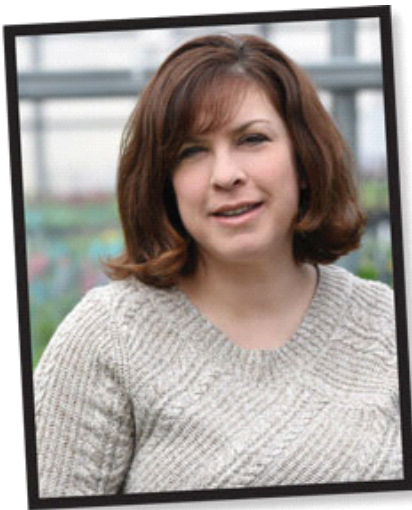
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

6/1/2021

Using Tech Smartly

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

Question: What would make you panic more—losing your wallet or losing your phone?

I'm kinda embarrassed to admit my first reaction is to say my phone. Having to cancel debit and credit cards is a headache I don't want, of course, but I feel like my whole life is in my phone.

It's not just a vessel to house phone numbers; it's my lifeline to the outside world. I can text or email anyone at any time; check the weather and what's going on in the news; find out what time the Cubs game starts; order food/clothes, etc.; download songs; read my book; play a game; take a video of my crazy cat chasing his tail—all with just a few taps. I go to sleep and wake up with it next to me, and it's always within reach in between. I'm never without it and if it goes missing, even for a few minutes, I start to panic.

Some may say I have a slight addiction to my smartphone, but I like to think of it more as an *appreciation* for what this beautiful handheld technology provides to make my life easier. It makes communicating and getting information faster and simpler, and isn't that the whole point of ever-evolving technology?

Innovations in technology continue to alter our lives and some may say all of this change has made us worse rather than better. Certainly, we can debate the effects of social media's misinformation problem, younger generations' reliance on their smart devices and how easy it is for companies to learn our habits. But smart technology has also opened the door for many industries to continue to adapt and advance so they can remain successful during changing marketplace dynamics.

Think about all of the smart technology that's now available for your greenhouse. For those of you who've been in the industry for more than 20 years, could you imagine that you could turn on your booms and lights, open your roof vents and check inventory all from one portable handheld device that fits in your back pocket? How much easier has this technology made your life and how has it helped you grow better crops?

Jeff Woolsey has been in the industry for over 35 years, working in greenhouse operations and now consulting with growers to help them manage their environmental controls and systems engineering. Back in March, Jeff participated in one of our webinars where he talked about what it meant to have a "fully integrated greenhouse," so we felt he was the ideal person to discuss what smart technology really means with regard to our industry. He writes

about how everyday technology has been used to make greenhouse production more efficient and data-driven.

We also have other features centered on technology, including more on fully integrated control systems and how to check if you have the right electrical capabilities for LEDs.

And, as with every June issue, we have the essays from our Young Grower Award finalists. This year, we asked them to tell us how their operations are handling the unprecedented demand that was brought upon our industry by COVID-19, while also juggling the same challenges every growing operation faces each year.

Speaking of the pandemic, the thought has popped in my head that if COVID-19 happened just 10 years earlier, our personal and professional lives would be very different. Many industries like travel and restaurants suffered tremendously, but without smart technology, so many more businesses wouldn't have been able to stay afloat without the option of remote work. And our children would have just missed an entire year of school, period. It was an excruciating, stressful year, but thanks to technology we got through it.

My iPhone can help me celebrate that by ordering a bottle of Cabernet off of the Binny's app and putting the Diana Krall station on Pandora, so I can sit back and relax, while I read my book on Overdrive. **GT**