

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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No Shortage of Info (or Goodbyes)

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The typical problems that our industry deals with aren't typical for a wide range of industries. Sure, other sectors deal with weather issues, trying to find labor and high taxes, but it's rare when the year's major dilemma crosses over to a lot of other industries.

Or, in the case of the current problem with product shortages and sky-rocketing costs, to our consumer customers.

As COVID-19 recedes and becomes more manageable (I don't know if it'll ever be gone for good), and people start leaving their homes and doing things, we're noticing that many of the products we're used to buying are significantly higher than the usual cost or aren't even available. Every business, homeowner and general consumer is experiencing this right now.

Case in point: the Zurko abode has recently undergone an outside facelift.

We had quite a bit of peeling and rotting wood trim around the outside of our house that needed to be replaced, and since we saved some money during the pandemic, we called our favorite handyman and asked if he could get to work replacing it.

The work included the entire frame of our two-car garage door. Our handyman said that it usually costs about \$30 for the wood that makes up the frame—we paid \$100. All of the wood that we had replaced cost us almost three times more than what we would have paid in a typical year. It had to be done, so we swallowed that bitter cost pill, but we would have saved so much more money if we did it last year.

We're hearing from quite a few growers, sales people and technical reps that there are shortages and delays on a wide range of inputs—everything from chemicals and soil amendments to resin for plastic pots and even pallets to ship products. It was already a crazy year with trying to meet the demand for plants that had carried over from 2020's gardening boon. Trying to deal with that while waiting for the inputs you needed in order to keep your head above water ...? What's a crazier word for "crazy" ...?

We think the hardgoods shortages and delays will be the talk of the aisles at Cultivate'21 and other summer events, so I asked a bunch of suppliers to give a rundown on the challenges they faced this spring, how they dealt with them and when they think things will get back to normal (and if there is such a thing).

One other thing I wanted to mention is that this month marks Roger McGaughey's very last Growers Talk Production column. Roger has been one of our longest-tenured columnists (I think John Friel, who writes for *Green Profit*, beats him by a year or two) and he estimates that he's written over 40 columns since he started in 2006. Bossman Beytes first met Roger at a Connecticut Greenhouse Conference and he fondly recalls, "When I heard this Irishman use the colloquialism 'hosepipe' in his presentation, I knew we needed his wit, wisdom and vocabulary in the magazine."

So Chris asked Roger if he would share his years of growing knowledge with our readers. Roger was one of the first growers to begin using biologicals to control pests, and his experiences and expertise turned many skeptics into believers—including my boss, who freely admits it.

I've had the extreme pleasure of getting to know Roger since I started with Ball Publishing 12 years ago. I traveled to Connecticut at one point to visit Roger's place of employment at the time and I got to meet his lovely wife Ellen over dinner one night. I always looked forward to our phone calls and seeing him at Cultivate, where he would approach me with arms open and say in his Irish brogue, "Let me hug another man's wife!"

I'll miss having Roger on these pages every three months, but thankfully, he's still going to be poking his head into the greenhouse once in a while and tinkering in his own garden. So you may still see his thoughts on growing and pest control as a guest column once in a while.

I hope those of you who've been dedicated readers of this magazine learned a lot from Roger's column and that it offered you some appreciation for his passion and commitment—and glee at seeing white roots! I know I've truly appreciated his friendship. **GT**