

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Worth the Weight

Jennifer Zurko



The sun was trying to peek out over the outdoor fields of Qualitree Propagators in Rosedale, British Columbia, Canada, which faces the cloud-covered Mount Cheam. While we were there at the end of January, spring production was just underway, and product was in the process of being moved outside.

Some of the areas had just been converted to ErfGoed irrigation floors, but what caught our eye were the rectangular cut-outs in the ground that looked like secret trap doors (see inset). Actually, those are scales to weigh the plants.

Qualitree practices “watering by weight”—they’ve determined when the plants get to a certain weight, it’s time to turn on the irrigation using their Argus climate control system. This way, the plants get watered when they actually need it, meaning there’s less guess work involved. And it saves on labor since staff isn’t wasting time unnecessarily watering.

“It doesn’t mean we’re hands off with our irrigation,” said Lead Grower (and GrowerTalks columnist) Stephanie Saccomano. “It just gives us peace of mind.”

The idea came from seeing the same practice at a grower in Europe, so they decided to adopt it at Qualitree. Technical Advisor Simon Traskey said they improve upon a lot of their processes by sharing information with growers overseas.

“We’ve always had a strong European connection,” he said. “And this company exists because ownership thinks there are always advancements to be made.” **GT**

