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Change Is Inevitable

Jennifer Polanz



The one thing you can always count on in life (besides death and taxes) is change. Our industry is no different.

The change we've seen in the last 18 months has been swift and sometimes unforgiving: the pandemic brought on greater demand for more produce grown closer to the source, and with less touches and with fewer pesticides. Demand for organic products increased in 2020 with record sales figures. It also brought about expansion among some

of the larger players in the business, as well as consolidation on the vendor side. In other words, lots of moving and shaking going on.

Of course, not all change is good. With the pandemic came labor shortages, supply chain pressures and increases in energy costs. These are struggles that may continue for the foreseeable future (although it seems the supply chain issues may work themselves out in early 2022).

So how do we react to all these changes? Only with the best information, of course. Arming yourself with knowledge can help you navigate the twists and turns of a changing industry deftly. We try to be one of those sources of knowledge, but there are many—including university research sources and vendor partners, who are working hard to ensure your success, and consultants who understand where the markets are going.

In this issue, we try to make sense of some of the changes and what you can do about them. Our cover story, written by Editor Chris Beytes, tackles the shifts tomato grower Casey Houweling has seen over nearly a decade since Chris interviewed him for our first *Inside Grower* cover story in January 2013. Turn to page 8 to see his take on multiple CEA topics.

Energy and its sources is constantly evolving, too. I asked a couple of experts how CEA growers can reduce their energy costs both with new construction and existing facilities. You can find their thoughts on page 12.

Varieties are always evolving, too, and All-America Selections has been around for 90 years to help growers and consumers find the best of the best. Some of the 2022 award winners would make for great hydroponic or farmers market options. You can see those winners on page 16.

Of course, with plants come plant viruses and pests, and tomatoes are no exception. Saman Soltaninejad of Fluence tells us what to look for and how to prevent the destructive Tomato brown rugose fruit virus. There are resistant varieties in the works and on the way, but in the meantime, turn to page 18 to find out how to prevent

it.

Finally, we always have Dr. Brian Corr to close out our issues with cannabis culture, and before you turn to page 24, I want you to know I wrote the headline “Let’s Talk About Sex,” so don’t flood his inbox (flood mine!). I wrote it because the sex of the cannabis plant is vital to profitability. Read the story to find out why and how to prevent the plant from changing sex.

Change is inevitable—let’s just make sure in 2022 we’re all changing for the better. **IG**