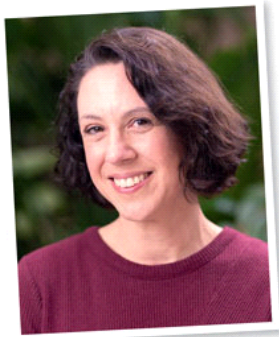


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Advocate for CEA

Jennifer Polanz



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Sometimes I take risks. The range of risk varies from eating questionable leftovers (not advisable) to publishing stories that may completely change by the time they get into print.

You may see where I'm going with this. I took a risk with this month's cover story because it's really important. While the bones of the story are about H-2A labor, the reasons it doesn't work and the need for reform won't change, some of the details may shift by the time you sit down to read this in November. I'm writing it at the end of September, so there's a good chance more may happen in between now and then. Although, I remember back to a column I wrote in late June 2023 for that August's issue about advocating for the industry before the

Farm Bill was passed. Here we are two years later ... no Farm Bill.

Sometimes the wheels of the government turn slowly. Sometimes the movement is almost imperceptible. And then other times there's enough momentum that picks up to make a change. The folks at AmericanHort think this may be one of those times. I talked to the advocacy team at Cultivate this year and they were cautiously optimistic that there could be movement on improving the H-2A program. That, and hearing the stories of growers who can't find the workers they need, was the impetus for my cover story on page 16.

And, hey, if there's a complete and total overhaul by November 1 that's good news for the industry and one less story in this magazine you have to read. But if it takes longer, please do read it and find out how you can help push the issue forward.

There's lots more for you in this issue, too. When it comes to substrates, most growers are understandably risk averse. However, changing substrates also could be a game-changer. Turn to page 20 to find out how to properly evaluate new substrates to make an informed decision. Then, on page 22, David Kuack tackles the keys to growing leafy greens during multiple seasons, taking the risk out of year-round growing.

Feeding your plants is also key, and on page 26 you can learn more about the differences between water-soluble and controlled-release fertilizers. And, finally, on page 28, learn about how production practices impact nutrition in microgreens and how consumers might react in their preferences.

At the risk of rambling, I'll let you find the rest of what we have in this issue on your own. I do have a request, though. I'd love to hear from you. What are your thoughts on the H-2A program? What have been your challenges with it? Have you talked to your Congressional representatives about it? Email me at

