insideGROWER

FROM YOUR EDITOR

7/31/2026

Staying Ahead of Trouble

Jennifer Polanz

As I age, it seems I spend a significant amount of time heading off potential ailments before they happen. It gets harder the longer you're on this Earth, it seems. I try to eat better (to middling success) and exercise (it's the thought that counts, right?) and get a good night's sleep. On the days where I succeed at all three, I often feel much better than the days when I don't.

Your plants follow a similar track, but with different preventative actions. From proper nutrition to the right temperatures and other management tools, plants perform their best under their optimal growth conditions. The challenge, of course, is to make sure you're providing those optimal conditions.

When you don't, plants can become stressed, opening the door for diseases and even potential pest issues. In this issue, we take a look at some common issues on key crops and technology for plant health and potential fixes, as well as new research on a crop everyone is talking about.

First, let's talk tomato troubles. Some of the more common problems for tomato production are disease-related, and in our cover story, researchers at Virginia Tech University highlight preventative measures, conditions that can create disease issues and how to identify them.

Editor-in-Chief Chris Beytes takes a look at some of the newer technology out there for keeping plants healthy in their indoor environments. Then, Dr. Raymond Cloyd tells us how to defend against western flower thrips on indoor basil crops.

We're not just looking at pests and diseases, though. We're also exploring food safety and pushing the boundaries for new indoor crops. Kellie Worrell walks us through how to choose the best food safety certification for your operation and what to consider.

Ellie Gregoire, a Virginia Tech researcher looks into the viability of edamame as an indoor crop. It's an interesting proposition because all I keep hearing about is how to get more fiber and protein in your diet. With 8 grams of fiber and about 18 grams of protein in a cup of cooked edamame, it sounds like a great option for the masses. This research doesn't talk about the profitability of the crop, though, just whether or not it's even possible to grow it inside.

And speaking of newer crops to grow indoors, we have the third installment of the four-part series on indoor strawberry production from Michigan State University. This one takes a look at the impact of vapor-pressure

deficit (VPD) on the crop. If you're growing strawberries indoors, you'll definitely want to check this one out.

We round out the issue with Dr. Gene Giacomelli's look at the circular economy as part of a broader look at achieving sustainability goals in the indoor space. Of course, working toward greater sustainability promotes a healthier planet, which in turn, results in healthier plants and people.