



Bluestone keeps production consistent with Premier Tech's growing media mixes.



Bill Boonstra, owner of Bluestone Perennials.

GOOD PEOPLE, GREAT GROWING MEDIA

Off the shores of Lake Erie in Northeast Ohio, is the small community of Madison, formally known as the nursery capital of the world. In 1972, Richard and Patti Boonstra started a mail order perennial operation, Bluestone Perennials. As the business grew, their two teenage children started to help out. In 1983, after 3 years' experience outside the business, Bill Boonstra returned with his wife Sarah and young family to help his dad until his retirement in 1994.

Bluestone Perennials has grown to 5 acres of greenhouse production of 1,400 varieties of perennials, grasses and ornamental shrubs grown in 4-inch biodegradable coconut fiber pots. Using one container size improved efficiency by simplifying inventory of containers, plants, packaging material, etc. Bill designed modular packaging that secures plants during shipping, ensuring they arrive in great condition with an appealing presentation.

All perennial flats have radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags that are scanned when entering their staging greenhouse to track inventory and placed in designated, UPC-coded slots for each

plant cultivar. When pulling plants, the UPC code is scanned for invoicing and inventory management and then packed, boxed and shipped throughout the U.S.

A mail order business has several challenges. If an order is not right (plant is damaged, dead, not the right color, etc.), the problem must be quickly assessed and fixed. Thousands of orders must be tracked internally so they are not lost, plants cannot be shipped in cold weather, and snowstorms often delay orders. The shipping window is narrow, so it is imperative to get the order to the customer when promised.

There are many variables when growing a crop, but the growing medium should not be one. Bill used several types of growing media, but consistency eventually became a problem. When he considered Premier Tech's PRO-MIX products, he wanted a consistent, lightweight growing medium that dries quickly, so plants do not rot during shipping. After doing trials, he found PRO-MIX HP BIOFUNGICIDE + MYCORRHIZAE was best for his propagation and PRO-MIX BX BIOFUNGICIDE + MYCORRHIZAE was best as a transplant medium.

Bill admits using one growing medium for all crops with different watering requirements is challenging, but multiple growing media only amplified watering differences. Since using PRO-MIX HP BIOFUNGICIDE + MYCORRHIZAE and PRO-MIX BX BIOFUNGICIDE + MYCORRHIZAE, Bill has reduced both fungicide drenches for root disease and labor costs to apply them while having consistent crop growth and quality.

"Across the board, [Premier Tech Horticulture] are good people and are a joy to deal with. They do what they say they are going to do."



Plants are picked and taken to the packaging line.

For more: www.bluestoneperennials.com;
www.pthorticulture.com/en/

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MYCORRHIZAE™**

THE VALUE-ADDED COMBINATION

ENHANCE

The use of fertilizer and water. Increase resistance to stresses. Improve plant strength and productivity. Optimize plant growth rate and uniformity.

PROTECT

By reducing incidence of plant root diseases (*Fusarium*, *Pythium* and *Rhizoctonia*) and risk of pathogens that develop resistance to chemical fungicides.

SUPPRESS

Certain insects, including fungus gnats and thrips that pupate into the growing media, by suppressing their food sources and plant susceptibility.



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