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Grower News

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Editor John Esser

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Burning Wood, Seven Things You Need to Know

Seven things I learned from Scott Sanford during his presentation at the CFGW's September 22, 2015 membership meeting at Schroeder's Flowerland in Green Bay: 1) Many Wisconsin greenhouse businesses can save \$\$\$ by burning wood to heat their buildings. 2) If the greenhouse current heating fuel is propane then wood, in the long run, will reduce their heating costs. 3) The savings are not great enough if the grower is currently using natural gas for heat. 4) Burning cord wood or logs is less energy efficient than burning dry wood chips or pellets because logs have a high water content which must be vaporized during the burning process reducing the heat produced. 5) The most efficient wood fuels are dry wood chips or wood pellets. 6) Wisconsin is offering free evaluations for those interested in the possibility of heating with wood. 7) There are grant funds that can help Wisconsin greenhouses install efficient wood burning systems.

Attendees toured Schroeder's Flowerland wood chip heating and storage system after Scott's presentation. Schroeder's has burned wood chips for a heating fuel in their Green Bay facility for many, many years. Both Brian and Charles Schroeder told the attendees burning wood chips has reduced their heating costs substantially.

Is it time for you to save heating costs by looking at wood heat for your greenhouse? Contact Scott at sasanford@wisc.edu or 608-262-5062 for more information and set up an appointment for an evaluation. Scott is a Distinguished Outreach Specialist for the University of Wisconsin Madison.

Editor

2016 Perennial Plant of the Year™

Anemone 'Honorine Jobert'

Anemone was found in China and other Asiatic countries as well as the Mediterranean region. The origins gave rise to the common name **Japanese anemone**. **Windflower** is another name

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popularly applied to the plant. This anemone has existed in the English garden at the Royal Horticultural Society in Chadwick at least since 1848. Before then, many of the fall flowering anemone were a very light pink.

Ten years later a fantastic new white flowered hybrid occurred in Verdun, France, in the Jobert Gardens and was named '**Honorine Jobert**'. Soon this exciting discovery went to England and eventually to American gardens. It was a sought-after cultivar by the time of the American Civil War and since has become a classic perennial in gardens of the world. It is found in borders, cottage gardens, or in formal borders and continues to grow in popularity.

Plants are clump-forming and erect.

The long wiry stems make the plant look airy and graceful. 'Honorine Jobert' attains heights of up to 4', although most of the time it is a 3' beauty.

Flowers are intense bright white with a green center surrounded by a corolla of yellow stamens. In late summer, 2" to 3" flowers of 'Honorine Jobert' explode from dainty pink, silvery buds into petaloid-shaped flowers. The striking flowers are enhanced by the uniquely attractive trifoliate dark green textural foliage that stays attractive from spring to fall.

The anemone is a very low maintenance plant. It can be grown in sun or in partial shade. In warm climates it should definitely be in partial shade with protection from wind. Be aware to plant only in early spring or fall. In any location, the plant thrives in humus-rich soil that is well-drained but moisture retentive. It does not tolerate wet, poorly-draining soils in winter. In colder climates, mulch establishing plants. Soils should not be allowed to become dry. The foliage will burn in hot, dry locations. Eventually the spreading rhizomes will be happy to colonize your

garden.

'Honorine Jobert' grows in USDA zones 4 to 8. It seems to flourish without insect or disease problems and deer do not seem to browse this plant. The best time to propagate is winter or spring. In winter they are usually propagated by root cuttings and in spring by division.

'Honorine Jobert' goes well with many other annuals and perennials.

Since 'Honorine Jobert' flowers into autumn the bright white plant stands out in the landscape and provides accents to the deeper gold, orange, and red colors of the fall garden. They can be charming companion plants with hostas and ferns and countless annuals. Classic plants stand the test of time. This plant more than fills that requirement.

National Garden Bureau

Lef Farms opens in New Hampshire

Loudon, N.H. - Who doesn't like fresh salad greens? They're tasty and crisp, not to mention healthy. So why do those in the Northeast settle for eating lettuce and herbs that typically spend an entire week on a truck shipped in from the West Coast?

That was the exact question Henry Huntington and Bob LaDue of Pleasant View Gardens had been asking themselves for the past few years. In fact, it was the primary motivation for them to start Lef Farms (pronounced "leaf"), and breaking ground on a brand new, 75,000-sq.-ft. greenhouse growing facility in the heart of New England.

"With the discerning tastes and Yankee practicality here in the Northeast, we truly couldn't understand why anyone would choose to eat something that was perceived fresh but in reality was a week or so old," says Lef's President and CEO, Henry Huntington. "We knew

there was a tremendous opportunity to better serve the people of our region with greens that are truly fresh. To give them a choice while elevating their expectations of how fresh packaged lettuce could actually taste,” affirms Huntington.

Located in Loudon, New Hampshire, Lef Farms is currently in the final stages of construction and will be the first of its kind in the Northeast. Their grand opening is right around the corner, with finished product expected to be available as early as June, so Lef has already begun spreading the fresh greens gospel that will ultimately bring tastier lettuce to this very demanding market – a market that reportedly gets 90 percent of its lettuce from the West Coast.

“We will initially be able to produce 1.3 million pounds of fresh greens a year, with tremendous future capacity,” says Lef’s VP and COO, Bob LaDue. “Most importantly, our customers can get those greens within 24 hours from the time they’re harvested. Grocers, retailers, restaurants, schools, hospitals and consumers all across the Northeast will be getting the absolute freshest and most flavorful salad blends possible. It’s something bagged lettuce shipped in from Mexico and California simply can’t match.”

Lef greens will be grown in an advanced climate-controlled greenhouse environment where baby greens will be harvested at quality standards every day of the year – regardless of the weather. So Lef greens can be consistently delivered at the peak of freshness and flavor, whether it is January or July.

Knowing freshness equates to local production, much of the raw greens being harvested and shipped to the Northeast from the West Coast and beyond are being sent to East Coast packing plants, where they are transformed into “local” greens through

packaging.

“This is the exact reason our tagline, ‘Fresh is right here’ is so important,” Huntington says. “We’re truly grown in the Northeast – from start to finish – not packaged to trick people into thinking that.”

Lef Farms’ hydroponic method of production relies on recycling water balanced with nutrients rather than dirt to provide essential minerals for optimal growth. And since the process delivers an exact amount of water, oxygen and nutrients to the plants, Lef is able to employ a plant nutrition program that has essentially zero waste. Plus, it uses as much as 90 percent less water than traditional farming, where water is used in excess and lost to the environment. All of this combines to help Lef lettuce grow twice as fast as lettuce grown in the very best organic media available.

Lef has invested heavily in technologies and techniques that will minimize the introduction of insect pests. This includes expertly managing the high growth rates of its greens while also taking advantage of something the organic movement has helped make affordable: the use of beneficial insects to fight the bad ones.

From a food safety perspective, Lef Farms starts with 100-percent non-GMO seeds and employs a process where those seeds are sown, grown, cut, mixed, weighed, packaged and boxed all under the same roof. Human hands will never touch the product directly. And since Lef greens will be grown in a clean environment with no pesticides, the need to pre-wash the product is eliminated. This is a plus for consumers, since each bag of lettuce from Lef Farms will contain more greens and less water, on top of the fuel savings that come with locally grown produce.

“When you add it all up, the benefits of

our greens are tremendous,” says Huntington. “Fresher lettuce that’s grown without chemical pesticides, contains little to no PH₂O (packaged water), and hasn’t experienced a weeklong road trip means our customers will get a much greater value for much tastier, safer lettuce.”

Prior to connecting with the Huntingtons and joining Lef Farms, LaDue gained critical operational and business experience as general manager of Finger Lakes Fresh, where his ideas and successes were put to work in a commercial greenhouse business in Ithaca, N.Y. LaDue created and marketed new leafy-green products for retail and wholesale markets, established its distribution system, developed and implemented its food safety program, and advanced expansion plans for a new greenhouse and packing facility.

Visit the [Lef Farms website](#) for more information.

From a news release

See More Green this Spring with Energy Saving Opportunities from Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy, Wisconsin utilities’ statewide program for energy efficiency and renewable energy, has a program dedicated to agricultural customers, including greenhouses. The Agriculture, Schools and Government (AgSG) program offers both custom and prescriptive incentives for energy efficiency projects. In 2015, the AgSG program provided more than \$1 million in incentives to nearly 600 agriculture customers. The most frequent equipment upgrades included high efficiency lighting, upgraded ventilation/exhaust fans, and high efficiency heaters. Start off your spring with new incentives and offerings from Focus on Energy.

Wisconsin growers can now take advantage of these 2016 offerings:

1. **New and Improved Incentives** – Focus on Energy is offering higher incentives for agriculture customers in 2016. For a complete list of incentives, check out the 2016 Greenhouse Application at focusonenergy.com/applications or call 888.947.7828 to speak with an AgSG Representative.
2. **Conveniently Located Energy Advisors** – Expert Energy Advisors are available throughout the state to help guide you through energy savings projects and provide an unbiased third party source of information to improve the efficiency of your facility. To find the Energy Advisor in your area, visit focusonenergy.com/agsgEA.
3. **Power Connect Chat Sessions** – This quarterly call-in chat series features program updates, product eligibility, incentive requirements, case studies, maintenance tips, and expert advice from our Energy Advisors. Chat sessions for 2016 include:
 - April 28: Keep Cool by Cutting Energy Costs – 2016 Agricultural Fan Offerings
 - September 29: Recover Your Energy Savings – Overview on Heat Recovery Units
 - December 8: Shine a Light on Safety and Efficiency – Updates on LED Lighting Systems

Participating is easy! Just call **1.855.947.8255** at **9 AM** on any of these dates, enter the passcode: 9276715#, listen and ask questions.

4. **Agriculture Energy Efficiency Best Practices Guidebook** – This **NEW** guidebook will provide Wisconsin’s agriculture community with methods and tools to help reduce their energy use. The recommendations outlined in this guide are meant to aid in conservation efforts by encouraging the use of energy-saving farm equipment, as well as provide general best practices. Visit

focusonenergy.com/guidebooks to download your **FREE** copy or request a hard copy sent to your home.

Focus on your greenhouse while we focus on your energy. Call 888.947.7828 now and see how the AgSG Program can start saving you energy and money today!

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy is Wisconsin utilities' statewide energy efficiency and renewable resource program funded by the state's investor-owned energy utilities and participating municipal and electric cooperative utilities. Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus on Energy information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control Wisconsin's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information call 800.762.7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

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Focus On Energy

I Say

Yesterday I was clever so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise so I am changing myself.

Rumi

Plants Talk!

I'm a lifelong Horticulturist. As a first grader I became intrigued with plants when our class germinated bean seeds in a damp towel and I was amazed that life could come out of apparently dead, dried beans. About the same time my father allowed me to sow Maple tree seeds in a flower garden at our small home on

Second Street in Madison. Little did I know at that time that Maples produce millions of seeds leaving no shortage of seedlings but I was amazed that such small seeds could produce a huge tree. That scrape with plants was the beginning of a life long career.

In 2016 after working over 43 years in Wisconsin's greenhouse industry and almost sixty years in Horticulture I'm still interested in plants. Joann, my wife, describes it as both a vocation and an avocation (and at times an addiction). But, even after all these years working with plants I often learn something new.

It is with this interest in plants and science that I read an article on communications between two different life forms in the March/April, 2016 issue of Horticulture magazine. More than just communicating with your dog or cat, this article, "Plot Twists" written by Jeff Cox, tells how plants and insects communicate to the benefit of both.



Large Blue Butterfly

This story is about plant communication involving Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), a European/Asian butterfly commonly named large blue butterfly (*Maculinea arion*) and a species of *Myrmica* ant. The study was performed by Jeremy Thomas, University of Oxford, Oxford, England. Although most butterfly caterpillars eat plant parts, the large blue butterfly caterpillar has developed a taste for ant eggs and larva and *Myrmica* ant larva prefer to eat Oregano roots. The

adult ant lay eggs on the Oregano root where the larva feed after hatching. One would think laying eggs underground would provide protection for the ant eggs and larva but an Oregano plant attacked by the larva of these ants produces more carvacrol, the chemical that gives Oregano its scent. The large blue butterfly is attracted to plants with more scent and lays eggs on that plant. When those eggs hatch the caterpillars migrate down into the ground where they eat the ant's eggs and larva. That means Oregano plants are "talking" to large blue butterflies. Nature continues to amaze me!

As a former greenhouse grower and currently a gardener I find plants communicate with me. I can "feel" when the plant needs water even before it starts to wilt. Can you? Does that mean plants are talking to you and me?

If you are interested in plant communication, Google "plant communication" and you will find a number of books have been written on the subject. Talking plants are not uncommon in nature.

Editor

I Say

When I was a child I thought Nap Time was a punishment ... now, as a grown up, it just feels like a small vacation!

Board and Other Notes

Your CFGW board held teleconference board meetings on January 5 and February 15, 2016 and the following topics were discussed.

New varieties for 2015, 2016 and 2017 will be featured at the August 4, 2016 CFGW Field Day to be held at the University of Wisconsin West Madison Agricultural Research Station on Madison's west side in Verona. 150-160 varieties will be grown this year with plants and seeds being donated by

Dummen, Hort Couture, Ball and Pan Am. **Save the date, August 4.**

The date of the 2016 Fall Greenhouse Conference has been set for October 19, 2016 and will again be held at the Floral Plant Growers greenhouse in Denmark, WI. Floral Plant Grower's Joe Mikulsky assures us that he can move the meeting room out of the recently constructed germination chamber to avoid any echoing of the sound system. Cornell University Plant Pathologist Margery Daughtrey has been confirmed at the main speaker. Her topics will be determined after the spring bedding plant season. Your topic suggestions will be appreciated. The board decided to continue the program format started in 2015 with four additional speakers each giving a 25 minute presentation. Eason Horticultural's Pat Peshek will invite perennial guru Jesse Hensen, Carlin's Dann Handel and BFG's Jason Wenninger will each invite speakers from their companies. **Be there! Save the date October 19.**

Green County is holding an Agricultural Plastic film recycling collection event at their land fill located at W2002 County SS, Brodhead, WI on November 9-20, 2016 with drop offs permitted from 7 AM to 3 PM. They will also accept drip tape watering tubes.

Program for 2016

-June ?? – BFG Janesville, Review of the 2016 Spring season

-August 4 - CFGW Field Day at the West Madison Ag. Research Station, Verona (Madison)

-September ?? CFGW Membership meeting

-October 19 – Fall Greenhouse Conference at Floral Plant Growers, Denmark, WI

-November 9-20 Green County Ag Plastics recycling collection at W2002 County Hwy. SS, Brodhead, WI.

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