

Why Plan Ahead?



Chase Agricultural Consulting, LLC was formed at the end of 2011 when Ann (A.R.) Chase and Mike Zemke moved to Arizona. Ann has more than 35 years experience in research, diagnostics and practical consulting in plant pathology. She has been retired from the University of Florida – Mid Florida Research and Education Center in Apopka since 1994, but remains on staff as a Professor Emeritus. Mike holds an Associate of Applied Science in manufacturing drafting. Mike started his education in horticulture when he and Ann were married in 1995. He specializes in communications of all sorts within the industry.

Welcome to Crossroads. We understand that you must wear many different hats in today's greenhouse production, and we want to help you decide what needs your attention and what is not as critical.

We will be trying to describe in the most compelling (and understandable) ways why certain approaches to disease control will be more effective and save you money than what you might be doing now.

We also will speak to the things that are truly at a crossroads with training of personnel, use of biologicals, new delivery methods and crossing back and forth from edibles to ornamentals.

Are you a "shoot from the hip" type of person? Shoot first then ask questions (or make excuses) after? Why are you in panic mode? If you really think about the whole picture and what is entailed to fix a problem, you may not need to overreact. In fact, you may even save some money because of your well-thought-out fix. Shooting from the hip usually involves way more than what's necessary in product, time and money.

Think about what you're doing — don't just react. There is more to the picture than meets the eye. And do you recognize that sometimes doing nothing is better than doing the wrong thing?

Making some plans ahead of time usually ends up being less costly than reacting in panic mode. If you can plan ahead you can choose the best, most cost-effective product that will give you the result you want/need. You could even consider purchasing the product or even maybe applying it before there is a massive outbreak. If you are preventative, the rates you use and products available to you are less costly.

For one example: Let's say you are concerned with powdery mildew. The list of preventative products is often much longer than those that can "cure" an outbreak. It is also true that you can use a lower rate when acting preventatively than when you launch into curative action.

So maybe a list of what's good versus what's bad about each approach will help:

LAST MINUTE CHOICE

Good parts:

- Time saved in planning ahead
- Money saved if a miracle happens and disease does not appear

EDITOR'S NOTE: MIKE AND ANN ARE STARTING A NEW COLUMN FOR GPN WITH THIS ISSUE. IT IS CALLED "CROSSROADS" BECAUSE THEIR INTENT IS TO BLEND THE SCIENTIFIC ISSUES ANN DEALS WITH EVERYDAY TO THE BUSINESS ISSUES MIKE (AND ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE) DEALS WITH.

Bad parts:

- Hysteria, use of expensive fungicide at most expensive rate and shortest interval
- Possible phytotoxicity
- Choice of wrong product since you don't have time for a diagnosis
- Lack of control
- Poor plant quality and loss of sale

PLANNING AHEAD

Good parts:

- Choice of less costly fungicide at lower rate and longer interval
- If phytotoxicity occurs the plants have time to grow out.
- Avoiding heart failure when something does appear right before shipping
- Having products on hand

Bad parts:

- Ah — none except maybe boredom

Speaking of planning ahead ... I take it everyone should be on a maintenance schedule, right? But how well do we follow it? Do we let things go into the next scheduled time?

We know just how hard it is to keep on track with our vehicle maintenance. It seems like every month I'm getting the tires rotated or oil changed. With most newer vehicles they say now we can go between 3,000 and 5,000 miles for oil changes and should have our tires rotated about every 5,000 miles. So let's use the phrase "I don't have the time right now" and you let another 1,000 miles get added before you do something.

You've just let your engine work a little harder with dirty oil or wear off more tire tread in the same spots. So you say to yourself ... that little bit won't hurt anything. I would definitely think again. Over time you just may find yourself buying a new set of tires because of premature wearing or buying a new vehicle before you planned on because of engine wear.

Do we stick with our maintenance schedules at work? Do we change the nozzles, do calibrations, clean up, sanitize benches, and so on when we're supposed to ... or do we let things go into the next scheduled time? Where do we spend the money? When do we spend the money? How much do we have to spend?

Regularly maintained things usually last longer and run more efficiently, so personally we like to put our money more up front in the maintenance area than wait until something breaks and spend more money to replace it.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure ... and a lot cheaper. [gpn](http://gpn.com)