BALLTECH ON DEMAND™

TECH TIP: NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS HIGH EC

The issue here was caused by too-high substrate EC (fertilizer salt accumulation). The pH was normal (5.9), but the EC was 2.3 mS/cm. The grower of this crop had gotten caught up in the chaos of spring, hadn't had the chance to do pour-thrus (a handy field diagnostic test, for those of you who aren't familiar) in a while, was growing crops relatively cool in this house (55F nights; 65F max during the day), and had accidentally been feeding these at 250 ppm of nitrogen constantly for several weeks along with everything else that was on the bench.

The solution here is to leach with clear water a couple of times, warm them up to at least 60–65F night temp to push new growth, and resume feeding once the EC is back down about 0.9–1.0 mS/cm (1.2 mS/cm is the upper threshold where problems can start to occur). Normal growth should resume in a couple of weeks, but now the problem is it will be several weeks now before these crops will be salable, and the target sales window may have come and gone by the time they are ready. There are a couple of take-home messages from this experience:

- For pH or EC-sensitive crops, it pays to keep them in a separate group from everything else. Management of their needs is much easier to accomplish and less easy to forget when they are a stand-alone group in your greenhouse, so don't group petunias, geraniums, and New Guinea impatiens all in the same spot if you can avoid it.
- Though spring is a chaotic time, make time to monitor high-volume crops that you know are sensitive to different cultural or environmental factors, or are prone to specific pests, diseases, or disorders. Correcting problems is much more painful and takes a lot longer than preventing them.