

MCCORKLE NURSERIES

Dearing, Georgia

Small Changes Yield Big Results: How Switching to HydraFiber[®] Improved Nursery Operations

Founded in 1942 by C.S. McCorkle, his wife Avis and his mother Beatrice, McCorkle Nurseries, Inc. began as an ornamental plant grower during the Great Depression. In addition to being a licensed grower for most major plant brands, McCorkle Nurseries raises its own line of top-performing plants, which features more than 70 patented and trademarked selections.

As a pioneer in nursery management with an emphasis on innovation and sustainable growing practices, McCorkle Nurseries is always looking for ways to improve and streamline their operations.

"We need to be focused on continuous improvement," said Chris McCorkle, operations manager for McCorkle Nurseries. "In our business, even something small like changing the soil can result in something big. Being aware of and open to new, innovative products and production practices is important to our company."

HYDRAFIBER TRIALS

Since its inception, McCorkle Nurseries made minimal changes to their media mix given their success with pine bark. After learning about HydraFiber[®] Advanced Substrate's water-holding capacity and comparable cost to pine bark, McCorkle conducted extensive trials.



PLANTS IN HYDRAFIBER[®] MEDIA MIX AT MCCORKLE NURSERIES.

"It's often said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Without change, we won't get new results, so when we heard about HydraFiber, we knew we had to give it a try."



Chris McCorkle, Operations Manager
McCorkle Nurseries, Inc.

While McCorkle originally considered using HydraFiber for only a select group of plants, trials quickly showed growing benefits that compelled the company to broaden the trials to all plant varieties as well as propagation.

"One of the things nurseries struggle with is irrigation of plants and water uniformity," said McCorkle. "With HydraFiber, the water uniformity and the distribution of moisture throughout the column of the root zone was much improved compared to using just a straight pine bark mix. When we improve the water uniformity in the root zone, we end up with healthier plants."

The unique, engineered fibers are highly consistent with a low bulk density and high porosity which makes water available to plants and reduces channeling. McCorkle has adopted a 20% HydraFiber inclusion rate in all its standard mixes, and 30% in its propagation mixes. Plus, because it's comparable in price to pine bark, HydraFiber was a cost-effective media input upgrade.

Not only is HydraFiber helping to improve plant quality at the nursery, it is reducing shrink at the retail level.

"We see a better result for the end consumer," McCorkle said. "Bark-only mixes dry down too fast at the store level. Putting HydraFiber in the mix helps the plants hold up better in the store, especially when they don't get enough water."



HYDRAFIBER® ULTRA 365 BALES NEXT TO HYDRAFIBER PROCESSING UNIT.



CHRIS MCCORKLE OVERSEES POTTING LINE AT MCCORKLE NURSERIES.

STREAMLINING OPERATIONS

After proving the enormous benefits of better growth, less shrink and positive retail impact, McCorkle Nurseries upgraded their soil mixing area to include HydraFiber’s specialized processing equipment developed by AgriNomix. These machines are designed to fit easily into existing mix lines. They return the highly compressed bales back to their fibrous state to maximize yield. This mix line upgrade ensures predictable, consistent, high-quality media that makes McCorkle’s plants thrive and perform better when under stress.

“HydraFiber is our ‘insurance policy,’” McCorkle said. “It makes water more easily available to the plant. If for some reason a plant dries down, we have a better chance of rewetting and recovering the ones that are in a HydraFiber blend.”

The transition to HydraFiber is not only simplifying irrigation practices throughout the nursery, but also reducing waste and producing better plants. With HydraFiber, McCorkle’s plants are rooting better and lasting longer, and customers are noticing.

“If we just reduce scrap by one percent, that’s valuable,” McCorkle said. “This was not an insignificant risk for us, but we are confident that we made the right decision.”

Our thanks to Chris for talking with us about McCorkle Nurseries. If you’re a grower or blender interested in learning more and starting HydraFiber trials, visit HydraFiber.com or reach out to us at hydrafiber@profileproducts.com or 800-496-0955.

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