

Grow Better Margins and Better Plants



**“How Profile[®] Products is
Changing the Game in Plant
Production”**

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How Profile Products is Changing the Game in Plant Production



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HydraFiber is a 98% porous fiber substrate that is designed to provide plants with more available water, better air space, and improved root zone development.

In most cases, when a new product is introduced to a market used to doing things a certain way for a long time, it can take time for that product to gain traction in the market – if it ever does.

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That has not been the case with [HydraFiber Advanced Substrate](#), *Greenhouse Grower* magazine's 2019 [Gamechanger of the Year Award winner](#). The engineered media mix was first introduced to the ornamentals market by Profile Products nearly 10 years ago, and since then, a good percentage of the nation's largest greenhouse operations have almost seamlessly incorporated it into their plant production process.

HydraFiber offers agronomic characteristics designed to promote healthy plants. Using renewable virgin southern yellow pine, HydraFiber is a 98% porous fiber substrate manufactured with a unique Thermally Refined patented process that combines wood and bark in a pressurized vessel to create singulated, small-diameter, long, thin strands with greater surface area. This process provides plants with more readily available water, better air space, and improved root zone development.

Subhead: Education Is Critical

Jennifer Neujahr, the Director of Horticulture at Profile Products, is understandably the biggest advocate for the benefits of HydraFiber. However, she emphasizes that education from her production team, as well as from growers who have experience using HydraFiber, has been the biggest factor in creating long-term market viability.

“We had to start by making sure growers knew that wood can actually be a viable raw material,” Neujahr says. “Fortunately, we found the innovators and early adopters who understood the benefits of growing with wood. They have helped us educate other growers in the industry on what they need to do to be successful, from irrigation to potting to dibbling.”

This education has come in many forms, from Profile Products hosting grower visits at its production facility in North Carolina, to webinars and panel discussions at events like Cultivate that feature growers highlighting the benefits they’ve experienced. Many of these growers have also been open to prospective users visiting their own operations.

“That’s the best kind of education, because it can help new users feel comfortable using HydraFiber if they can see how someone else is using it effectively,” Neujahr says. “We’re grateful that we have so many customers that are so passionate about the benefits of HydraFiber that they’re willing to open their doors or answer phone calls about it.”



Profile Products’ Jennifer Neujahr (right, with Rob Lando of AgriNomix) says the partnership between Profile and AgriNomix has been a big

part of the success of HydraFiber.

A Prolific Partnership

One of the keys to helping growers make the best use of HydraFiber is Profile Products' partnership with Oberlin, OH-based [AgriNomix](#) on the necessary equipment.

"I would say it's been critical to our success," Neujahr says. "There's only so many things you can do yourself. Our partnership has been wonderful because we complement each other so well, while excelling in our own core businesses.

"Providing equipment solutions is their core competency, and engineered raw materials is our core competency. Together, we were able to put our two businesses together to create a transition plan for helping growers move from the raw materials they were currently using to products like our original HydraFiber Ultra," Neujahr says.

Never Stop Improving

"Arrogance is the death of progress" is a concept Neujahr takes to heart. In other words, once you find success, it's easy to become complacent and rest on your laurels. Once again, this is not the case with Profile Products, as the company constantly looks for ways it can improve how HydraFiber works and how it is used in the greenhouse.

"We've continued to evaluate the equipment and make improvements, both in the pieces and parts that are used in the equipment, and in the setup and layout," Neujahr says.

The early adopters of HydraFiber have been key to these improvements.

"As they used the product more and spread the word about it, we began to hear from other growers who were interested in learning more but didn't always have the equipment in place to use the product in its original form," Neujahr says.

This led to the [recent introduction of HydraFiber EZ Blend and HydraFiber Hybrid](#), which allows growers to customize their media mix to fit their current needs and does not require the specialized HydraFiber processing equipment.

"We want our customers to be able to use HydraFiber at whatever percentage makes the most sense for them," Neujahr says.

Growing for the Future

Moving forward, the HydraFiber team continues to look for ways to innovate.

“We just opened up our second factory, which doubles the size of our production as well as our research and development greenhouses,” Neujahr says. “We want to be in the best position possible to continue to provide the marketplace with what it needs both in new product development and operational capacity. We’re always looking to try to find the next best thing to help growers be more efficient and produce better plants, and that means making sure we also stay innovative.”

Profile Products is also in the process of expanding into new crops. Neujahr says some of the company’s customers are either considering or have started transitioning into hemp, which has led Profile Products to take the same steps. It also sells into the cannabis market in Canada and is looking at how it might move into greenhouse vegetables.

“We have not found a crop that does not like growing in HydraFiber, and we’re continuing to develop our knowledge so we can provide advice to our customers in all crop areas,” Neujahr says.



The Profile Products team works closely with growers using HydraFiber to make sure they are getting the most out of it. Photo courtesy of Profile Products

What Leading Growers Are Saying

Many of *Greenhouse Grower’s* Top 100 Growers have started using HydraFiber in the last few years. Here’s what some of them had to say about the benefits they’ve seen.

“I believe the biggest benefit is that we haven’t had to change any of our growing practices with the incorporation of HydraFiber,” says Chad Cagle, Head Grower at [ColorPoint](#). “We water, fertilize, and apply fungicides the same as we did before. We have also saved major storage space with the compressed HydraFiber bags.