



rePoRTER



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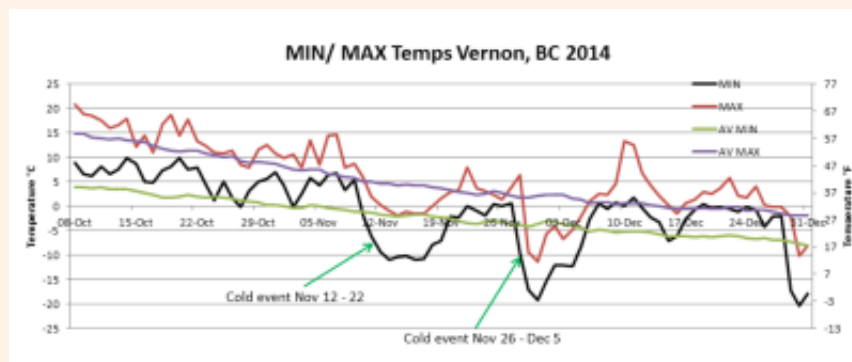
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PRT RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES WEATHER THE STORM



As Mark Twain once said, "Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get." And the unexpected was certainly what we got in November 2014 when a fragment of the polar vortex descended from the Arctic into Southern Canada and the United States throwing much of the continent into the deep freeze. The frigid weather blasted close to 200 million people all across North America right down to Northern Mexico. Twenty-eight people died. Hundreds of thousands of businesses were affected. PRT was one of them.

"Following a relatively warm September and October here in the Okanagan, the cold wave descended upon us," says Chris Mostyn, Nursery Manager at PRT Armstrong, the largest of the three PRT nurseries the company operates in British Columbia's North Okanagan valley, the other two being PRT Vernon and PRT Coldstream. "Temperatures were higher than average leading up to November 12 and then they plummeted. The nightly low of +5C (41F) suddenly became -12C (10F) and stayed low three days in a row. It warmed up a week later, but then there was a second, even more severe event on November 29. The mercury dropped to -19C (-2F) and remained low for another week."



Working effectively with the weather is critical at these three PRT nurseries where approximately 60 million seedlings are grown in open compounds each year. The hot Okanagan summers and slowly cooling autumns normally provide optimum outdoor growing conditions. Staff at the nurseries monitor forecasts closely and are quick to take action if the weather turns ugly. "In this case, before the cold weather hit, all the right things were done. The blocks were taken off the rails and put on the ground to protect the roots," says Mostyn. "But as it turned out, the cold wasn't our only problem."

THE CHILLING TRUTH

In addition to the extreme low temperatures wreaked by the polar vortex, Mother Nature worked against us in another way last fall. There was significantly less snow cover in the Okanagan to insulate roots and shoots from temperature extremes. Despite seedlings accumulating sufficient "chilling hours" to be frost hardy, the lack of snow cover was likely a contributing factor to damage to some of the open compound crops. It all sounds dire, but it's not. Thanks to PRT's risk management practices, there's a positive resolution for our customers.

THE GOOD NEWS

As part of PRT's Quality Assurance Program, our nurseries conduct a potting test on every seedlot to ensure that seedlings have withstood cold storage and are shipped healthy for outplanting in the field. "When the first test on our 2014 Okanagan seedlings uncovered suspected root damage in some seedlots, we immediately performed second potting tests on those seedlots and informed any customers who could potentially be affected," says Dan Livingston, Customer Support Representative for Southern BC. "We were upfront with customers and dealt with the problem early in a transparent manner, so customers had the most time to formulate any necessary changes to their planting programs."

Prior to shipping, potting tests were done on every potentially affected seedlot again. "Following our Quality Assurance protocol, we conducted a second test with a much larger sample size to ensure that 90% or more of the seedlings were viable. We invited our customers to come to the nursery and witness the assessments of the second potting tests for themselves," says Livingston.

While our initial potting trials successfully identified the issue, the second set of larger trials helped us narrow down the focus to just those orders that were significantly affected. "It now appears to be two million seedlings or less. The affected crops were primarily Pine grown for the Southern British Columbia and Eastern Washington/Northern Idaho regions. We're working with those customers to replace trees and develop plans to help them mitigate any losses. Happily the majority of our customers including those in the rest of BC, the Pacific Northwest, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario were generally unaffected."

PRT was by no means the only Okanagan forestry seedling grower affected by 2014's freak weather, but with our Quality Assurance system, the issues were detected early and our customers' best interests were protected. The lesson learned is that PRT's risk management practices work to help minimize risks and detect problems for the benefit of our customers.

"'No surprises' is our motto," says Livingston. "The last thing we want is for a problem to arise in the field after seedlings are planted. That's why we do extensive testing on every seedlot and product combination long before they leave the nursery." Meteorologists tell us an event like November's cold wave happens once in 50 years, so we're not expecting a repeat any time soon. Even so, PRT has formed an internal investigation team whose mandate is to review our internal processes/protocols and cross reference these with the lessons learned from this event. Any required adjustments will be made, so when the next winter weather event occurs, we will be even better prepared to shelter our customers from the storm.

For more information on PRT's Quality Assurance Program and other risk management practices, please contact the Customer Support Representative nearest you.

NEW FACE IN THE NORTH: PRT WELCOMES BLAINE MCFADDEN

We are pleased to announce another addition to PRT's growing team. In February 2015, Blaine McFadden joined the company as Nursery Manager at PRT Red Rock in Prince George, BC.

Formerly the parent seed agronomist for HyTech Production Ltd. out of Kimberley, BC, Blaine was responsible for planting, maintaining and harvesting pedigree canola seed for the past 10 years. Highly experienced and well travelled, he has also conducted fieldwork in California, Chile and Australia.

McFadden graduated from the University of Lethbridge with a Bachelor degree in Finance and holds a Certificate of Agricultural Production from the University of Saskatchewan. Also a Certified Crop Advisor, he brings extensive agricultural project management experience to his new role at PRT Red Rock. Welcome to the team, Blaine.



*Blaine McFadden
PRT Red Rock*

WHAT'S THE BUZZ? IT'S SPRING AT PRT NURSERIES

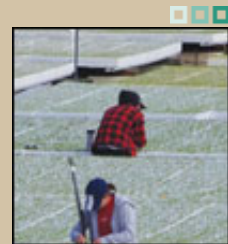
It would be hard to find a busier place than a PRT nursery in the spring. All 12 of our operating nurseries in Canada and the US - PRT Armstrong, PRT Beaverlodge, PRT Campbell River, PRT Coldstream, PRT Dryden, PRT Harrop, PRT Hybrid, PRT Oregon, PRT Prince Albert, PRT Red Rock, PRT Summit and PRT Vernon - are beehives of activity this time of year.

Given our geographic diversity, we are still sowing seed in some southern locations while more northerly nurseries are busy thinning and maintaining crops. Every nursery has its own schedule geared to serve specific customers and climate zones.

Right now, our nurseries are also ramping up for the big spring plant. We're coordinating thawing and delivery dates with customers, making trucking arrangements and shifting millions of seedlings from cold storage in preparation for planting. Some stock is to be shipped frozen, other seedlings thawed to order, ready to be put in the ground as soon as they arrive. Communication is key as exact thawing times can vary greatly between nurseries.

Summer planting is just around the corner and crops are starting to go through blackout to be ready for the June lift dates. Notifying us early of your summer plant schedules is really helpful to allow nurseries to condition seedlings and ramp up staffing. There's a myriad of details to oversee every day at every PRT location, but never fear; we always have time to talk with you. If there's anything you need, just give us a buzz.

Questions on thawing and planting? You'll find detailed guidelines online at <http://www.prt.com/products-services/forest-seedlings/seedling-sales/thawing-planting-guidelines>



*Thinning time at
PRT Vernon*

MEET THE MIRACLE WORKERS: SALUTING OUR CUSTOMER SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

We know many of you have frequent contact with our Customer Support Assistants (CSAs) by phone and email, but unfortunately you've never had the opportunity to meet these amazing people in person. So we thought it was time to put faces to the names and voices you know so well.

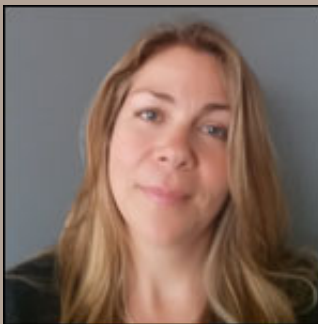
Our CSAs - Amanda, Andrea, Fiona, Laura, Rachel and Suzanne - are the heart and soul of the PRT operation. Efficient, professional and unflappable, they handle all the administrative workload for our Customer Support team - processing customer orders, answering constant emails and telephone calls, generating reports, preparing contracts, data entry, web sales, billing, banking, and so much more.

"We take care of all the little details," says CSA Suzanne Nicklen who came to PRT nine years ago with a wealth of nursery administration experience. "The Customer Support Representatives we assist have more extensive knowledge and direct contact with the customers, but when they're in the field or on the road, they're not always immediately reachable. We are - and customers value that."

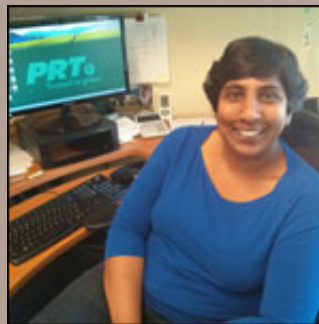
"From November through February is our peak time. Finalizing contracts and doing all the reporting that goes along with the massive winter lift, winding up the old year and starting the new one...it's a crazy time," says Nicklen. "It calms down a bit in the spring, but not much."

CSA Amanda Wall from our PRT Victoria office agrees. "I love that it's busy and varies day to day. There's no monotony in this job." What kind of person thrives as a CSA? "Most definitely a detail person, but also someone who likes multi-tasking. We often work on several projects at the same time, but when a customer or CSR calls, everything gets dropped. Once their needs are taken care of, you have to get your head back into the game quickly because the day moves fast."

"For me, the best part of the job is making customers happy," smiles Nicklen. "I think that's true of all of us at PRT."



*Andrea Prentice
CSA Supervisor*



Fiona Apeldoorn



*Rachel Byrne
(On maternity leave)*



Laura Jordans



Suzanne Nicklen



Amanda Wall

IT'S TIME TO START PLANNING FOR 2016



At PRT, our goal is to deliver exactly what you want. With high demand for nursery space across North America, planning and placing your seedling orders early is the best way to ensure you get the optimal nursery site, growing conditions and delivery dates you desire.

Letting your PRT Customer Support Representative know your anticipated seedling needs as early as possible is highly recommended. Remember, details can always be fine tuned later. As long as you have your orders in, no worries!

Contact Us

For more information, please visit our website at www.prt.com.

To contact our editor, to comment on a story or to report any concerns, [please click here](#).