

GROMOR MARCH 2018 NEWSLETTER

Gardening and agriculture take second place to politics for now. Two days before Zuma was still insistent on delivering the state of the nation address, he announced that he'd been asked by the ANC top six to resign as RSA President. He claimed that he could not understand why, as he'd always been a hardworking ANC cadre. His departure from the post has certainly been very positively accepted.

Ramaphosa's SONA address, delivered at very short notice, was generally enthusiastically accepted. The odd smile between him and Malema would even indicate that they could maybe work better together than Zuma and Malema ever did – we must never forget the positive role Malema played in stirring up support for Zuma's removal. His strong support for land claims without compensation, does however worry me. On the positive side, this topic was closely followed by the assertion from Ramaphos that food production would not be compromised. This would indicate that productively farmed land was not in their "sights"! The same goes for land with tourism potential, with tourism falling into the country's top 3 GDP earners.

The extent to which state funds had been syphoned off became obvious when the Hawks blew the lid off how the Guptas and government officials had taken money meant for the Estonia Vredefort poor farmers upliftment scheme in the OFS. I seem to remember that initially a figure of R120 million was mentioned, with the latest at R242 million. R30 million of this money was allegedly spent on the Gupta wedding, where a plane load of guests was flown in from India, with the plane landing at Waterkloof Airforce Base, allegedly with permission from No1. This happened nearly three years ago – why has it taken so long for action to be taken?

FARMERS WEEKLY

I find a diversity of interesting and easy to read articles in the Farmers Weekly. An exceptional one was "Success with Cover Crops; just add cattle!" On pages 50, 51, 52 in FW of 26/01/2018.

HYDROPONICS

Irrespective of how sophistication your hydroponics system, there are certain things that it pays to keep in mind.

1. Before making up any nutrient solution (including that to feed potplants with solution) ensure that water pH used to make up the nutrient lies between 5 and 6. Excess pH or acidity even at this initial stage will compromise the availability of nutrients. If the pH exceeds 6, add units of 125mℓ Nitric Acid per 1000ℓ water until. The water pH falls to between 5 and 6. (For potplant nutrient solutions a cup of vinegar in 5ℓ water usually reduces pH to desired level).
2. Keep PHOSPHATE and CALCIUM sources separate when making concentrate solutions. When using GROMOR NEW GENERATION COASTAL BLEND as the phosphate source and GROMOR CALMAG N as the calcium source, mix 1kg of each in SEPARATE 10ℓ containers and only combine them in the final 1000ℓ (one litre of each in the final 100ℓ concentrate solution as fed). (This mix will provide all the macro and micro elements required, in addition to the phosphate and calcium).
3. There should be no precipitation of fertilizers in the final solution – if there is, call for help.
4. Use all fertilizer solutions as rapidly as possible – concentrates within a day, finally solutions within a week.

5. Chemical droughts occur in crops grown in bags, where there is insufficient run off. The EC around the root ball increases to unacceptably high levels. It can be identified, by taking weekly leachate EC readings, which should not exceed those of the nutrient solution by more than 10%

To rectify the problem:

- Place the “drippers” as close to the plant stems as is practically possible, but NOT directly onto them.
 - Allow for 20% runoff at each watering.
 - Apply a watering regime that will not allow the media to dry out.
6. Because plants start slowly shutting down nutrient uptake (and consequently growth) about 5 hours before sunset, maximum use must be made of the time from sunrise to ±2pm.
 7. At sunrise, open tunnels to get a change of air. This should even be done on cold mornings, to reduce humidity to improve photosynthesis. (A high relative humidity causes moisture to “stick” between stomata hairs and hinder the leaf absorption of carbon dioxide, required for photosynthesis.
 8. Institute a 9pm feed in the hot months to lessen the chances of cracking fruit. (If practical, this feed should constitute 1kg CALMAG N in 1000ℓ water, rather than a complete nutrient solution)
 9. Recirculating nutrient solutions as used in gravel beds, should be dumped and replaced with a freshly made up solution every 2 weeks.

Regards,

GROMOR (PTY) LTD

R. Hagen

PS: A researcher named Peitsa (1952) found that in forest soils the strongest toxicity against *Pythium ultimum* was found in extract of humus from under pine.

PPS: We’ve be to the moon! The Pratley group, a family company started in 1948 has registered over 350 patents and currently has over 1200 products it is probably the only South African produced product to be used in the moon landing.