



## TRAILBLAZING THE RASPBERRY INDUSTRY

Southland Sod Farms' Martin Gramckow is adapting to the needs of the raspberry growing industry with advanced irrigation and climate management solutions.

- > **Tailored precision growing solution for raspberries on substrate**
- > **Improved fruit quality by irrigating with the right amount at the right time**
- > **Integration of wireless sensor data in irrigation strategy**
- > **Reliable, high quality solutions with technical support**
- > **Priva expertise and guidance from idea to success**

### Challenge

Operating in a very competitive and complex industry of raspberry growing, precise irrigation control would be imperative to the success of the Gramckow's family business

### Solution

Priva introduced Gramckow to the Priva Root Optimizer, which very accurately calculates container moisture by measuring weight.

### Benefits

The Root optimizer has allowed Gramckow to better manage flower gutation which results in higher fruit quality and a lower cull rate.

Since 1976, Southland Sod Farms in California has continuously adapted to industry needs; from starting with a modest sod production facility to listening to market needs and adjusting to market demand, the Gramckow brothers are now producing substrate raspberries.

Operating in a very competitive and complex industry of raspberry growing, the Gramckow's family business started growing raspberries in 2012 after evaluating market needs in California. Gramckow decided to grow in substrate, rather than traditional in-ground production. With a background in substrate sod production, he knew that precise irrigation control would be imperative to his success.

### **Serving the need**

Gramckow has a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University. He spent his early years working in the aerospace industry before joining his brother in agriculture. Gramckow reflected on his background as well as this project and said, "the most important thing I learned in engineering was how to problem solve; growing in substrate was just another problem to be solved. I initially thought I would design and build my own system. I had very specific ideas of what I needed, but decided that I would look to see what was already available before I 'reinvented the wheel'. I contacted Priva among others. Priva listened closely to my needs and showed a sincere interest in my project. Not only did they have the products to solve my needs, they brought years of controls knowledge to the table, and an enthusiasm to share it."

*"Priva exceeded my expectation on service, quality and execution"*

### **Solutions for the challenge**

Many challenges face California berry growers including precise growing timelines, and competition from Mexico. Success in raspberries is dependent on the California growers' ability to manage production to hit market windows while maintaining a consistent year-round supply of fresh fruit. Pressure from Mexico is forcing the California grower to continuously look for ways to reduce the cost of production. Gramckow believes that substrate production can achieve that goal by producing healthier plants and ultimately more fruit, resulting in a lower cost per pound.

### **Service and Support around the clock**

"Priva exceeded my expectation on service, quality and execution" states Gramckow. "Priva's products have worked flawlessly. Plants don't take the weekend off. When there is an issue, there is an urgency you don't have in other industries. Priva's helpdesk has been exceptional in responding to our questions, and understands that sense of urgency. Furthermore, the Expert Centre has been a pleasure to work with, as we jointly work toward solutions uniquely specific to raspberries and this project."

### **Integrated control for better crop production**

During the initial project scoping discussions, Gramckow expressed an interest in controlling irrigations using moisture sensors. Priva introduced Gramckow to the Priva Root Optimizer, which very accurately calculates container moisture by measuring weight. "The Root Optimizer was just what we needed. It not only determines when to irrigate but, allows us to define when and how much to drain. This has allowed us to better manage flower gutation which results in higher fruit quality and a lower cull rate. I affectionately call it a Fruit Optimizer", notes Gramckow.

### **The right solutions delivers results**

Southland Sod Farms is undeniably a leader in substrate raspberries in California; yielding at the top of raspberry growers every year since starting. With the help of Priva irrigation control solutions and the Root Optimizer, each year yields have been steadily increasing. The company has hopes for expansion and to continually innovate the berry growing industry.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SOFT FRUIT SOLUTIONS

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