

Companies market biodegradable pots to growers, retailers and consumers

By Kelli Rodda

It is not easy being green. With tons of plastic being generated into the waste stream, the green industry continues to focus on ways to be more environmentally conscious. Part of those efforts includes using and selling degradable pots. Some have been on the market for years and are enjoying a resurgence in the market, while new eco-friendly pots are trickling onto the scene.

For production use, there are pots designed strictly for utilitarian purposes to promote healthy root systems, less waste and labor savings. On the retail side, there are sleek, decorative types for value-added sales.

Here is a sample of some of the products on the market or in the pipeline.

ECOFORMS

Sweetwater Nursery in Santa Rosa, Calif., distributes EcoForms, a line of containers made from renewable grain husks and natural binding agents. The pots are suitable for greenhouse production and retail sales.

The Grower Pots line was designed to be compatible with most commercial pot handling and watering systems, said Elise Loveday-Brown, co-owner of Sweetwater. Shuttle trays are available with the Grower Pots.

EcoForms also offer the Decor line, Novaseries

and corresponding saucers for retail sales,

Sizes range from 3 1/2 to 12 inches. Colors include sage green, province gold, charcoal black, mocha brown and natural.

The smooth finish and earthy tones give the pots a sophisticated look. These pots are not meant to be planted in the ground, but they can be tossed onto the compost pile at the end of their shelflife.

"With plastic prices on the rise, these pots are actually affordable," Loveday-Brown said.

EcoForms can be customized with barcodes,



are made from renewable grain husks and are designed to fit into traditional greenhouse production.

tag locks and embossing.

The pots last up to five years under normal use, she said.

EcoForms are rigid, so they don't have the "give" that plastic offers.

"But by using the shuttle trays, we haven't had any problems with breakage," she said.

Sweetwater trialed the pots in the greenhouse.

"They provide better insulation than plastic, so the root system develops quicker," she said. "All of our crops performed great in the pots."

Sweetwater grows organic perennials, herbs and vegetables.

♦ **For more:** Sweetwater Nursery, www.ecoforms.com

CIRCLE OF LIFE

Ball Horticultural Co. offers the Circle of Life compostable pots made from rice hulls. The pots are not meant to be planted in the ground, but they break down well in the compost pile, said Jessie Atchison, industry communications manager at Ball.

The pots are available in 4-inch, 4½-inch and 6-inch and they're embossed with the Circle of Life logo.



The Circle of Life pots are made from rice hulls and support annual and perennial plant production.

The pots are part of Ball's Circle of Life program, which promotes sustainable growing practices such as minimal use of chemicals and the use of biologically enriched soil and organically-based fertilizers.

Some of the plants available in the Circle of Life program include the Serena angelonia series, Kong coleus series, Fusion impatiens series and 'Black Pearl' ornamental pepper.

The program is available to

growers in Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin. The program is in its second year.

♦ **For more:** Ball Horticultural Co., West Chicago, IL, www.ballhort.com

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