

Companies market biodegradable pots to growers, retailers and consumers

By Kelli Rodda

It's 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.

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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, Nova

series and corresponding saucers for retail sales.

Sizes range from 3½ 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,



EcoForms 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, 1919 Dennis Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95403; (707) 566-8133; www.ecoforms.com.