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# Agri-Plastic Report

American Society for Plasticulture



A Member Service of the American Society for Plasticulture

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**Hilex introduces biodegradable HDPE bag** (*Plastic News*, Feb. 1, '08). "The leading producer of plastic grocery bags has unveiled a biodegradable product amid continued nationwide debate over banning plastics from the check-out counter. Officials at Hartsville-based Hilex Poly Co. LLC said the new Hilex Environmentally Degradable, or HED, bag is designed to break down into water, carbon dioxide and microbial waste in about eight weeks, when exposed to oxygen. Heat, sunlight and stress may accelerate the process. Hilex is pitching HED bags as part of a two-pronged strategy to address environmental concerns of lawmakers and consumers . . . The other step involves signing retailers up for the company's Bag-2-Bag recycling program, in which used bags collected at stores are made into new bags at Hilex's plant in North Vernon, Ind. In 2007, Hilex recycled 8 million pounds of bags and plastic film at the facility. The company plans to reach 12 million pounds in 2008."

**Plastics in Agriculture Chat** (*Plastics Europe*, Jan. 31 '08). "Once the construction of a greenhouse was made more affordable for individual farmers, thanks to plastics, they started to multiply in many countries. Looking at Europe, Italy is in the first place, with more than 60.000ha of greenhouses, followed by Spain with more than 50.000ha, France occupies the third position, but at great distance, with almost 10.000ha. Intensive culture is spread all over the world. In Asia, great importance has in Japan, but is China with more than 200.000ha, the country with the highest concentration of greenhouses in the world." This 12-page report with color photos is available in PDF format at [http://www.futurenergia.org/shared/data/futurenergia2008/chat4\\_agriculture.pdf](http://www.futurenergia.org/shared/data/futurenergia2008/chat4_agriculture.pdf).

**Beets: A Biodegradable Bonus for Earth-Friendly Plastics?** (*Agricultural Research*, Mar. '08). ARS scientists have found a way to breathe new economic life into sugar beet pulp. They have "found a way to turn the fiber-rich pulp into a biodegradable filler material that could make polylactic acid (PLA) more cost-competitive with some petroleum-based thermoplastics, like polypropylene and polystyrene. PLA is considered a promising natural alternative to such plastics because it is biodegradable and has comparable tensile strength and other mechanical properties. But PLA costs more because of the process by which it is obtained from fermented corn sugars. . . . Potential uses for the new composite range from nondurable goods, such as water bottles, cups, and packaging, to lightweight indoor-construction materials, such as wallboard, tabletops, and pressed furniture." Read the complete article at [Beets: A Biodegradable Bonus](#).

**Engineers Establishing UMass Endowment** (Feb. 20, 3:25 p.m. EST) "Two plastics engineering alumni are contributing \$1 million each to set up an endowment fund at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell to create two professorships in the study of environmentally friendly plastics." <http://www.plasticsnews.com/subscriber/mailings.html?id=1203539456>

**Hall of Fame to induct four posthumously** (*Plastics News*, Feb. 29, '08). "Hermann Staudinger, a German who coined the idea of "polymerization" in a 1920 technical paper, and three other industry leaders will become posthumous members of the Plastics Hall of Fame. Two of the four have won the Nobel Prize in chemistry. . . . Posthumous inductees for 2008 are Staudinger, Hermann Schnell, Alan MacDiarmid and John Swallow. . . . Staudinger won the 1953 Nobel Prize for chemistry, for his work to show how monomers can be joined in various processes to create polymer chains. This laid the groundwork for the modern plastics industry. . . . As a scientist at Bayer AG in Germany, (Schnell) invented polycarbonate in 1953. . . . Alan MacDiarmid shared the 2000 Nobel Prize . . . for discovering polymers that could conduct electricity. . . . John Swallow from England was one of the first to recognize the true significance of R.O. Gibson's 1933 discovery of polyethylene."

**Rainbird Takes Home Top Rose Parade Award** (*Landscape Online*, Jan. 10, '08). "Rain Bird was awarded the

Tournament of Roses Sweepstakes Trophy in the 2008 Tournament of Roses Parade for its entry Preservation Celebration. This award goes to the float deemed the most beautiful by the judges. This marks the eleventh time in 12 years Rain Bird has won for its Rose Parade float entry, and the seventh time the company has taken the parade's top honor. The Rain Bird float was based on the importance of water conservation and environmental preservation, in keeping with Rain Bird's commitment to the intelligent use of water. Preservation Celebration dazzled the parade watchers and judges with its voluminous waterfalls and jungle creatures within an ancient temple setting." Read the complete article at [Rainbird Rose Parade Award](#).

**Solar power in Alaska** (*GreenTalks*, Feb. 8, '08) "Editor Chris Beytes has, in the last few weeks, visited two greenhouses with solar panels installed. In Alaska, Cyndie Warbelow-Tack at The Plant Kingdom started pursuing solar power last fall because she was bothered by the fact that she was running ventilation fans when the sun was at its strongest. A solar expert, however, suggested that rather than generating her own power and storing it in a battery, that she install panels but then feed the power back into the electrical grid, getting paid for what she produces. According to her CPA, as a commercial enterprise, the cost of the project is eligible for the 30% federal Energy Act PV tax credit, and the depreciable tax basis is 85% of the purchase cost. Apparently, she says, the system is eligible for either accelerated depreciation or Section 179 Expensing. The 3,500-watt system cost about \$32,000 installed. "As I calculate it, I can recover about half that cost by April 15 in the sense that it's dollars that I'd have to pay to IRS if I didn't pay it to the solar fellow," she says."

**Drip Irrigation Inventor Receives IA Industry Achievement Award** (*New Ag International*, Winter '08). "An irrigation industry pioneer credited with changing the drip irrigation market with the invention of an integrated dripper has been named recipient of the Irrigation Association Industry Achievement Award. Gershon Eckstein of Drip Irrigation Systems Ltd. of San Diego was honored at the International Irrigation Show in San Diego. . . . Eckstein is credited with numerous irrigation patents. . . . His invention was to insert the drippers into the irrigation pipe during the manufacturing or extrusion process rather than cutting the pipe and inserting the dripper later. . . . Ecksteins' son, Eran Eckstein, said his father's invention was not well accepted when it was introduced, but it has become the production standard in the market."

## OTHER EVENTS

**May 4 – 8 ANTEC 2008/Plastics Encounter.** Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Society of Plastics Engineers annual technical conference will again be held in conjunction with the Plastics News Plastics Encounter Trade Show. For more information, visit either [www.antec.ws](http://www.antec.ws) or [www.plasticsencounter.com](http://www.plasticsencounter.com).

**May 12–13 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Progress in Biofibre Plastic Composites.** Toronto Marriott Eaton Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. <http://www.biocomposites-toronto.com/index.html>

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