

CEN at MJBizCon: The Key to Good Cultivation

Ian Justus Has a Unique Ability to See and Read Plants Unlike Many Others, Transforming Indoor Cultivation

The agriculture and horticulture industries traditionally evolve at a measured pace, leaving room for gaps in innovation. Ian Justus, Senior Vice President of Cultivation and Operations at Connected Cannabis Co., has dedicated his career to identifying and addressing these gaps. According to Justus, one of the most crucial aspects of indoor farming is HVAC technology—often referred to as the “heartbeat” of cultivation.

While indoor cannabis growers have invested significant time and resources into optimizing HVAC systems, they continue to struggle with water removal and achieving the right environmental balance. Justus believes the industry needs more intelligent, packaged HVAC units to accommodate facilities that cannot implement large chiller systems.

From Berries to Buds: Ian Justus’s Journey from Driscoll’s to Cannabis Cultivation

Before making a name for himself in the cannabis industry, Justus spent over a decade producing berries for Driscoll’s, one of the world’s leading berry companies. His tenure at Driscoll’s gave him extensive experience in plant breeding, global crop production, and agricultural innovation.

However, Justus was drawn to the cannabis industry for a unique reason—its unparalleled economic viability in the indoor farming sector. “Cannabis is the only crop that is truly economically viable in the current state of indoor farming,” he explains. Unlike other crops, which struggle to justify the high costs associated with controlled-environment agriculture, cannabis remains profitable and sustainable when grown indoors.

The Extraordinary Talent That Sets Ian Justus Apart: Seeing and Reading Plants with Unmatched Precision

One of Justus’s most remarkable abilities is his capacity to see and read plants in ways that few others can. His years of experience touring the world and breeding plants have given him an intimate understanding of how plants communicate. Justus believes that successful cultivation comes down to truly seeing plants for what they are—not just as crops but as living organisms with specific needs.

His ability to “read” plants has become a defining characteristic of his work, and he continues to teach and train others in this skill. Whether it’s cannabis, berries, or any other crop, Justus emphasizes that plants give off signals about their health, growth patterns, and environmental needs. The key is learning how to interpret these signals accurately.

Empathy: The Secret to Understanding Plants and Cultivating with Precision

At the core of Justus’s philosophy is a simple but powerful concept: empathy. “Reading plants all boils down to one simple trait—understanding something else’s needs,” he says. While plants don’t communicate in

words, they provide nonverbal cues through their leaves, stems, coloration, and growth behavior.

Justus acknowledges that interpreting these cues requires patience and expertise. However, he insists that with proper training and observation, cultivators can learn to respond to their plants' needs more effectively, leading to healthier crops and better yields.

Transforming Indoor Cultivation with Innovation, Experience, and an Unparalleled Connection to Plants

With decades of experience and a rare ability to understand plant communication, Ian Justus is redefining indoor cultivation. His insights into HVAC technology, plant empathy, and sustainable farming are helping to bridge the gaps in the industry.

As indoor farming continues to evolve, experts like Justus play a crucial role in driving innovation and ensuring that the future of controlled-environment agriculture remains viable, efficient, and sustainable.

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