

P. Ag.

THE ONTARIO AGROLOGIST

A conversation with Lorne King, P.Ag., Technical Sales Representative and customer support coordinator with Plant Products, based in Leamington. Plant Products is a supplier of fertilizer, pest control products, seeds and other specialty equipment and services to the horticulture greenhouse, nursery and the turf industries across Canada and the US.

Q: Can you summarize your formal education and your current job responsibilities?

Lorne: I joined Plant Products in May of 1999 following graduation from the University of Guelph after receiving my Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture. A large part of my responsibility over the past couple of years has involved evaluating bio-controls at customers' greenhouses while the company's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) division has expanded. I also helped design our online custom fertilizer program software, and the company website. We conduct regular quality analysis of all the company's fertilizer ingredients, and formulate custom fertilizer recipes as required.

My work also involves company liaison duties with the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers for registered pesticides and participation in the OGVG Research Prioritization Workshop concerning new pesticide registrations. I work with the company's marketing and regulatory departments to determine a new product's safety,

value and benefits for customers through product evaluations in commercial greenhouses. And since 2008 I've served on the Canadian Greenhouse Conference trade show committee and have served as the committee chair for the last three years.

My job has also allowed me to do some international travel. I've participated in fertilizer seminars in the Netherlands and Israel, organized by the various major industry manufacturers, related to such things as greenhouse climate control and diffused lighting in commercial vegetable crops

Q: You had been working for a decade before going after your certification through the OIA. Was there any particular reason for wanting to qualify for P.Ag. certification?

Lorne: Yes, I'd finished university and had been working for more than 10 years when I received my P.Ag. designation, in 2012. For some time now there have been concerns related to nutrient recycling and other issues within the greenhouse industry. My company was looking for more depth



of knowledge and qualifications from employees who work directly with our greenhouse operator customers. So, in order to be viewed as a more capable and professionally qualified individual, I went through the process of becoming a designated Agrologist.

I do feel more comfortable in having that professional credibility a P.Ag. designation brings to the table. The agricultural, agrifood and agribusiness industry only continues to increase in its complexity. My OIA membership also gives me access to a range of qualified professionals across the agricultural and agribusiness industries, well beyond the horticultural greenhouse industry.

The access to a professional agrologist network here in Ontario is a real asset to me and to Plant Products.

The Ontario Institute of Agrologists represents nearly 500 Professional (P.Ag.), Technical (T.Ag.), and Articling (A.Ag.) Agrologist members across Ontario's diverse agricultural industry. The OIA is based in Guelph. For a current listing of OIA Members, events and information go to the website shown below.