



# Barbara Scheer OF NEW BIOLOGY

*When asked if she felt there were extra challenges working in a male-dominant business, Barbara simply responded, “No, I really don’t. I have been fortunate to work with a lot of great men and women in the horticulture industry.” Here’s the story of a woman who’s working on equal ground...*

Barbara Scheer always had a passion to apply science to industry. She studied horticulture and plant physiology at Washington State University, and conducted research in human immunology at the University of California San Francisco. In 2006, she then co-founded New Biology in San Francisco with the desire for the company’s line of JAZ products to be introduced to indoor gardening.

The creation of JAZ products stemmed from a curiosity and a desire to help strengthen the immune systems of plants. During graduate school at WSU, Barbara and others became interested in discovering how plants defend themselves from environmental stresses in the growing environment. “Stress is a huge factor in determining plant productivity and performance, and while this is well known in agriculture realm, gardeners do not always anticipate the negative impact of stresses such as drought, excessive heat, overwatering, etc., on plant health and performance,” explains Barbara. “Indoor plants are affected by stress as much as outdoor plants with the unnatural and often less than ideal temperature, lighting and humidity conditions,” she adds.

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Research was based on the fact that plants already have mechanisms to naturally tolerate growing stress to a certain extent. "Since they cannot just walk to find water when they are thirsty or move to a shady spot when the summer sun and heat get intense or run away from pests, plants must adapt fast and build tolerance to the particular growing conditions they experience so they continue to survive rather than succumb to stress," says Barbara. "The way stressed plants adapt is by detecting the stress in their leaves or roots and then sending messages throughout the entire plant to beef up their natural, built-in defenses. These protective defenses include antioxidants, strengthened cell wall, phenolics, various resins and proteins. Upon detecting stress, plants can begin to build tolerance in a matter of minutes or hours."

New Biology was founded with the objective of taking this understanding of how plants build stress tolerance and developing plant-strengthening products that greatly improve stress tolerance mechanisms for maximal health, productivity and beauty. Research conducted at WSU, other uni-

***"New Biology DISCOVERED THAT THE PARTICULAR JASMONATE FOUND IN PLANT-STRENGTHENING JAZ PRODUCTS IS IDEAL FOR HEIGHTENING A PLANT'S TOLERANCE TO STRESSES."***

versities and at New Biology found that applying jasmonates—a natural group of molecules found in virtually every plant and known in the scientific community for years—to leaves or roots is a natural way to tap into these adaptations and further strengthen a plant's tolerance to these stresses, ensuring they are less susceptible than usual to stress. "New Biology discovered that the particular jasmonate found in plant-strengthening JAZ products is ideal for heightening a plant's tolerance to stresses such as drought, heat and overwatering. When sprayed on the leaves, plants build their natural stress tolerance mechanisms (these include antioxidants such as vitamin C, resins, proteins, etc.) so that they better thrive under typically stressful growing conditions and increase yield, survival and performance," says Barbara.

Once the discovery was made and the formula perfected, JAZ products hit the market; however, like most new business owners, Barbara experienced a few struggles at the beginning. Juggling all of the functions of a company with limited resources was difficult, but the biggest test was understanding the market and fine-tuning the development of just the right product for this market. "[It was] challenging but exciting to be developing products that gardeners valued," she remembers. "This is a continual process I find—even now this dominates our work!"

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The fact that the company is really focused on developing products that work along with nature to strengthen plants' natural ability to thrive is what Barbara thinks makes New Biology unique. They were one of the first companies to commercialize jasmonate—named from the jasmine plant where this natural compound was originally identified. "We are excited to be utilizing this natural jasmonate technology in the development of eco-friendly products that build plants' strength, health and productivity while limiting damage from environmental stress," she says. "And we are happy to be the ones bringing the benefits of jasmonates to gardeners."

"The indoor gardening market is so progressive and the technologies used are fascinating," says Barbara. "However, I try to remain focused on the products and the customer."

Indeed, Barbara's idea of success is achieving a satisfied customer. And since opening, New Biology has helped many gardeners. In fact, the company has grown from merely targeting specifically rose gardeners to helping gardeners grow more productive plants in all areas of gardening, including hydroponics and indoor gardening.

"I find it so gratifying to hear how JAZ products helped increase success gardening." Sometimes, she'll even check in with past customers from time to time to see how they are using and liking JAZ products. Listening and learning from them is most valuable and enjoyable, she admits.

I also enjoy growing and developing professionally as the business grows. "The learning curve is amazing as the company needs change with growth," she admits.

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On the topic of professional growth and goals, Barbara says that the one thing she would like to accomplish one thing in her career is to inspire non-gardeners to become gardeners. "I think a lot of people did not grow up growing plants and have either never considered gardening or are intimidated by it," she explains. "I would love to have the confusion and fear removed from people's concept of gardening, especially kids, who benefit from the hands-on process of growing food or a flower. Growing plants is very satisfying and there are so many ways to do it now—indoors, outdoors, in soil or by hydroponics. There is nothing as flavorful as eating herbs that you have grown, or as beautiful as the bouquet on your table that was picked from your own garden." 