

New System Uses Natural Processes to Treat Nursery Leachates

The Cleanleach system makes it possible to recover and treat the leachates from nurseries' own irrigation systems for more sustainable container plant production.

The plants used in gardening, landscaping and reforestation are grown in nurseries. In Europe, 127,000 ha are set aside for this activity.

Container plant production facilitates agronomic management, transport and transplanting in the definitive location, but it also generates leachates that cannot be released into the environment because they contain high concentrations of nitrates and sometimes phosphates.

The Cleanleach system makes it possible to return these leachates into the irrigation system and take advantage of the nitrate and phosphate content as fertilizers.

The technology developed by IRTA combines slow horizontal sand filtering of leachates under the container area with constructed wetlands to transform the nitrates into nitrogen gas and render the phosphates less soluble.

The new recirculation and treatment process will lead to the improved use of water and fertilizers. Moreover, better water management at nurseries and the use of natural processes guarantee more sustainable production.

Related photos:

- Diagram of how the Cleanleach system works
(Download link: <http://www.cleanleach.eu/docs/posterENG.pdf>)
- Sand filter readings from the Cabrils pilot plant
(Download link: <http://www.cleanleach.eu/fotos/PlantaPilot.jpg>)

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