Highlights of Virtual Grower 3.0

(0:02)   Welcome to Virtual Grower tutorials, an online series designed to help users navigate different aspects of the Virtual Grower software.

(0:13)   Virtual Grower is a decision support tool designed to assist growers in the management of their greenhouse facility. Since its debut in 2006, Virtual Grower has undergone several changes with contributions, suggestions, and comments from the greenhouse community. Virtual Grower 3.0 incorporates those improvements in a new, easy-to-use layout with added features for managing your greenhouse facilities.

(0:39)   Most significantly, Virtual Grower 3.0 is now compatible with Mac and PC, and can now run on newer 64-bit processors, opening up service of the program to a broader range of users.

(0:52)   The main page has a slightly different layout than earlier versions, with the design buttons on the left side of the screen as opposed to tabs across the top. Version 3 is much more visual than previous versions, incorporating graphs and maps that help you set your location and see differences in typical daily temperatures and light between regions. Six hundred additional locations have been added, bringing the total to over 800 US sites, which should help users find a good, representative weather database for their location.

(1:26)   Enhanced visuals are available in designing your greenhouse, allowing the user to see the greenhouse grow as spans are added or visualize differences in light transmittance from the placement of different greenhouse materials. Similar to earlier versions, you are still able to design multiple custom heating and lighting schedules.

(1:46)   The plant list includes 40 different species and additions will continue to be made. We've included pictures of each species and additional information, such as recommended photoperiod, temperature, and sources on the internet that will help users take some of the guesswork out of choosing and simulating these plants. You can still simulate plant growth and development to see how a plant will grow in a given environment, and a new feature in the output menu allows you to calculate when a plant should be planted for a specified finish date, given your greenhouse conditions.

(2:19)   In older versions of the program, heating and lighting systems needed to be created for each individual greenhouse. Now, you only need to create the heating and lighting system once and can link it to as many greenhouses as you require. Another addition taken from real-world scenarios includes the option to choose a multi-stage heating system, in which one of your heating systems becomes the primary system, with an additional one supplementing heat when the heating demand reaches a set threshold.

(2:49)   Calculating costs has never been easier. You can generate reports for a single or multiple greenhouses at once. Your monthly and yearly costs can be given to you as totals or broken down into individual greenhouses. Graphs are included to help you visually identify cost differences.

(3:08)   Virtual Grower 3.0 is available as a free download at www.virtualgrower.net.