

ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact UV transmitting acrylic multi-skin sheet



MARKET SEGMENT: Architectural – Greenhouse
LOCATION: Hamilton, Ontario
PRODUCT: ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact UV transmitting acrylic multi-skin sheet

MICRO CROP. MACRO THINKING.

UV LIGHT TRANSMISSION TAKES THINGS IN THE GREENHOUSE TO A COMPLETELY NEW LEVEL

While the crop he's built a business around may be teeny, tiny, Greenbelt Microgreens owner Ian Adamson's big picture thinking is yielding some pretty impressive results.

Since Ian's first days experimenting with greenhouse-grown microgreens in 1998, Greenbelt Microgreens has become Canada's largest producer of organic microgreens. Today, the company's sunflower sprouts, pea shoots, wheat grass, arugula, and lettuces, which are grown in a special soil blend in greenhouses rather than hydroponically, are flying off the shelves at the country's largest grocery chains and most discriminating organic retailers.

In 2016, in order to keep up with increasing demand, Greenbelt Microgreens shifted operations from one-acre of greenhouse space to a 3.5-acre greenhouse complex just outside of Hamilton, Ontario. Having direct experience with the benefits of growing under glass from his first



DESCRIPTION: Greenhouse Glazing
FABRICATOR: Greenbelt Microgreens

greenhouse, Ian knew that replacing the new greenhouse's cloudy double polyethylene covering was a must. A chance encounter with an ACRYLITE® representative would not just change the plan for his new greenhouse covering, it would take his crop to unexpected new heights.

When Ian first heard about the option of 16 mm ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact UV transmitting acrylic multi-skin sheet in a carefully controlled growing environment like his greenhouse he was immediately intrigued. Its advantages include:

- increased light transmission of up to 89%, compared to 72% for 16mm polycarbonate
- the ability to transmit UV light through the covering to the crop
- absence of fogging
- a patented NO DRIP anti-condensate control coating
- significant energy savings and reduced CO₂ emissions
- non-prorated, full replacement 30-year non-yellowing and 10-year light transmission warranties

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While the initial investment in ACRYLITE® would cost more than glass, Ian and his Vice-President, Michael Curry, felt the numbers were worth a closer look. Curry, who worked in private equity prior to joining Greenbelt Microgreens, knows his way around a balance sheet. Ultimately, the pair held true to the company's philosophy of always putting quality first and opted to invest in 160,000 square feet of 16 mm ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact UV transmitting acrylic multi-skin sheet.

Two years later when asked if he'd make the same decision again, Ian answers with an enthusiastic, "Absolutely. I would never grow again without it."

"It's funny, because the things that initially drew me toward ACRYLITE® were that it had these incredible warranties, that I wouldn't have to worry about hail and that it would last significantly longer than other products. As a company that is incredibly focused on our environmental impact, we also really liked the fact that it offered improved energy efficiency. I don't think I was really prepared for all of the other improvements that the UV light transmitting acrylic would drive in our greens. We now have all the advantages of a greenhouse environment with light conditions that truly replicate outdoor growth. It's the best of both worlds and the results we're seeing are amazing," says Ian.

Ian estimates that ACRYLITE® has improved crop yields by 40% compared to growing under poly and reduced the growth cycle by 20% compared to growing under glass. The ability of ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact to allow for UV light to penetrate through the greenhouse covering has also enhanced colour, flavour and nutrient density, and it's a difference that has buyers taking notice.

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Recently, a buyer that's worked for one of Canada's largest grocery chains for over twenty years visited the greenhouse and commented that he'd never seen such deep reds in greenhouse-grown red butter lettuce.

But UV light does more than produce rich colours and great taste. Growing certified organic crops means that spraying to protect plants from diseases is not an option for Greenbelt Microgreens. The ability of ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact to transmit UV light also helps create a stronger crop, that is more resilient against potentially devastating diseases.

With a growing base of raving fans and industry accolades that include the Province of Ontario's Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence, it's safe to assume that Greenbelt Microgreens may be in need of additional greenhouse space in the near future. The easy retrofit process with ACRYLITE® Alltop high impact UVT is another advantage that will make it Ian's go-to choice when it's time to grow again, "When you're producing a crop with a 10-day growth cycle, every second counts. Our current operation has 28 houses across 3.5 acres. Because ACRYLITE® was so easy to work with, it only took a three-man crew a week to complete each greenhouse. That's another significant competitive advantage."

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