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DECEMBER 2022



The POWER to GROW

OREGON IS NURSERY COUNTRY

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STARTING ON PAGE 19

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On the cover: Evans Farms LLC grows more than 300 varieties of field and container plants on 320 majestic acres in Oregon City, Oregon.

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The collaborative spirit of Oregon

The pioneer spirit is truly the heartbeat of the Oregon nursery industry's growth.



Todd Nelson

In 1847, Henderson Luelling and his family loaded their wagons with personal possessions — including two wooden boxes filled with a composite mixture of charcoal and rich soil for over 700 grafted tree seeds — and departed west. Reading excerpts from explorer John C. Fremont and the journals of Lewis and Clark, Luelling marked their destination as the beautiful Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Luelling's former neighbor and fellow nurseryman from Iowa, William Meek, arrived in Oregon a short time later, along with his 20 varieties of grafted trees. Knowing that the best was ahead, Henderson and William collaborated and formed the Luelling and Meek Nursery, the first for grafted plant material in Oregon.

From its humble beginnings on the Henderson Luelling homestead, the Oregon nursery industry has experienced steady growth over the past 175 years. Today, there are well over 600 nurseries growing more than 61,000 acres of nursery production, and 46 million square feet of greenhouse production, in Oregon.

There are many factors that contribute to the successful growth of the nursery industry. The rich Willamette Valley soil, combined with near-perfect growing climate and ample water supplies, make Oregon the ideal place to grow desirable plant material for people all over the United States and Canada.

Technological advancements allow us to work more efficiently, completing challenging tasks in a fraction of the time it would have taken in years past. This allows us the flexibility to be creative and do more with less, leading to innovation that keeps us moving onward and upward.

The collaborative spirit first demonstrated by Henderson Luelling and William Meek back in 1847 is truly the heartbeat of the Oregon nursery

industry's growth. Their willingness to share ideas, knowledge and wisdom learned through experience truly inspires us to be our best. The Oregon Association of Nurseries is the hub for such collaboration.

One of our main objectives as an organization is to bring people together where meaningful relationships are made and developed. It has been extremely beneficial to me over the past 25 years to know that I can call, text or visit other nurseries when I've needed to work through some issue, challenge or idea. I know that on the other end, I will always find a friend willing to work through it with me.

The diversity of thought in our industry allows me to see things from different perspectives. It helps me to make more informed decisions. I am grateful for the collaborative mindset that prevails in our business.

There are many nurseries I have not worked with — YET. I'm excited about the opportunity to get to know you, become a friend and collaborate with you.

If you haven't already, or haven't lately, I would encourage you to attend more OAN events. Seek opportunities to meet your peers in the business and expand our amazing collaborative network. Like the roots of a tree, each one of us are so critically important to the health and sustainability of the nursery industry in Oregon.

Like Henderson Luelling and William Meek, I am excited for what is to come. The best is ahead of us. Thank you for your contributions to this business we all love. ☺

Todd Nelson



Calendar

Spread the word about your event! Email details to calendar@oan.org by the 10th day of the month to be included in the next issue of *Digger*.

VARIOUS DATES

FIRST AID AND CPR CLASSES

The Oregon Association of Nurseries offers First Aid and Adult CPR classes so that employees have the needed certification and can render assistance if needed in the workplace. Successful completion results in certification that is good for two years. Participants are urged to register early to guarantee a spot. Registrations are only accepted up to two days before each scheduled class. For December, classes will be offered in English on December 14 and in Spanish on December 15 at OAN's offices located at 29751 SW Town Center Loop W, Wilsonville, OR 97070. Classes take place 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Cost is \$60. Additional classes will be offered monthly and take place either at Lifeline Training Center in Portland or at the OAN offices. For more dates, details and registration, visit www.oan.org/cpr.

DECEMBER 5-9

2022 IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

The Irrigation Association will present its 2022 Irrigation Show and Education Week from December 5-9 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, 3150 S. Paradise Road, Las Vegas, Nevada. The trade show portion of the event will be December 7-8, with other events happening all week. The gathering will offer unique education opportunities, access to the latest in irrigation technology, and networking within a community of peers. Details are available at www.irrigation.org/2022Show.

JANUARY 18-20, 2023

NORTHWEST AG SHOW

The 53rd edition of the Northwest Ag Show will take place at the Oregon State Fair and Expo Center, 2330 17th St. N.E., Salem, Oregon. The annual event focuses on emerging trends in agriculture, including small farming, technology, and education. The show is looking for exhibitors as well as sponsors. For more information, log on to www.northwestagshow.com. A sister show, the Central Oregon Agricultural Show, will take place March 24-25, 2023 at the Deschutes County Fair and Expo Center in Redmond, Oregon. The show debuted in 2022 and will return for a second showing in 2023. Details are available at www.northwestagshow.com/central-oregon-ag-show.

JANUARY 19-20, 2023

IDAHO HORTICULTURE EXPO

The Idaho Nursery & Landscape Association's two-day trade show bring together more than 1,100 attendees to the Boise Center on the Grove, 850 W. Front Street, Boise, Idaho. The



JANUARY 11-13, 2023

MANTS

The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) will return to the Baltimore Convention Center, One West Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Sponsored by the State Nursery and Landscape Associations of Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia, the show averages more than 900 exhibitors and 11,000 paid registrants (including exhibitors). For full details, visit www.mants.com.

show will also feature educational seminars and demonstrations. For more information and to register, visit <https://inlagrow.org>

JANUARY 23-25, 2023

UTAH GREEN

Presented by the Utah Nursery & Landscape Association, the event will be held at the Mountain America Expo Center, 9575 State St., Sandy, Utah. The show features green industry vendors from across the nation and offers seminars on topics such as business management, landscape design, plant material, irrigation, and many others. Full details are available on www.utahgreen.org.

JANUARY 24-27, 2023

IPPS WESTERN REGION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Annual Conference of the International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS) Western Region will take place Jan. 24-27, 2023, at the Holiday Inn Portland South in Wilsonville, Oregon. This event will bring together educators, researchers, professionals and students in the fields of plant propagation, plant production and related disciplines. Early-bird registration ends December 16, 2022. Details are available at <https://wna.ipps.org>.

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1, 2023

PROGREEN EXPO

ProGreen EXPO is the only green industry conference in the Rocky Mountain Region of its kind. More than 4,000 green industry professionals gather every year to gain vital knowledge and skills to improve business, educate employees and discover the latest information for the upcoming season. The event takes place at the Colorado Convention Center, 700 14th Street, downtown Denver, Colorado. For details and to register or exhibit, log on to www.progreensexpo.com.

FEBRUARY 9, 2023

NOR CAL LANDSCAPE & NURSERY SHOW

The 2023 Nor Cal Landscape & Nursery Show will take place in the San Mateo Event Center Expo Hall, 1346 Saratoga Drive, San Mateo, California. The show is a one-day collaboration between California's horticulture and landscape industries featuring more than 250 exhibits and five educational seminars. To register, log on to www.norcaltradeshow.org. For more information, contact Margo Cheuvront, margoc@frontiernet.net or 530-458-3190. ©

OREGON ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES CONVENTION

October 28-29, 2022

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The OAN sincerely thanks the sponsors of the 2022 OAN Convention for their generous support! Members and guests enjoyed their stay at **Skamania Lodge** in Stevenson, Washington, socializing with old and new friends, talking about the issues that are vital to the industry, and honoring the best of the best at the annual President's Awards Banquet.

Congratulations to everyone!

We're already looking forward to next year's get-together! Stay tuned for details at oan.org/convention



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Northwest News

OAN members and chapters are encouraged to send in relevant news items, such as new hires, new products, acquisitions, honors received and past or upcoming events. Email news@oan.org.



Department of Homeland Security announces H-2B visa cap increase

The Department of Homeland Security announced its plan to release 64,716 additional H-2B visas for the fiscal year 2023, potentially providing relief for green industry professionals experiencing labor-related challenges. The H-2B visa program allows for the temporary admission of foreign workers to the United States to perform nonagricultural labor or services of a temporary nature if unemployed U.S. workers are not available.

Green industry professionals make up the largest group of participants in the H-2B program, comprising between 40–50% of all H-2B visas every year. The next closest industry is hospitality, accounting for about 12%.

AMERICANHORT SURVEY: TWO-THIRDS OF GROWERS CAN'T FILL LABOR NEED

Only one-third (33%) of survey respondents were able to hire all the workers they needed in 2021 and more than half (62%) who reported a workforce shortage said COVID exacerbated it.

These are other findings were presented in the “2022 Greenhouse and Nursery Labor Employment Survey.” The survey was conducted in collaboration between AmericanHort, the leading trade association for the green industry, and researchers from the University of California Davis and Michigan State University. The purpose of the study is to help understand the depth of labor scarcity impacting the greenhouse and nursery sectors of the green industry.

The bottom line: Growing labor scarcity in the post-COVID-19 era is one of the most critical issues facing the green industry. The survey’s authors noted a dwindling supply of farm workers from rural Mexico, the main source of hired labor for U.S. agriculture.

To offset labor scarcity, farmers are reporting adjustments to their production practices, labor management techniques and technology use. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic further incentivized growers to switch to more labor-saving technologies or crops or to seek new ways of recruiting workers.

Log on to <http://bit.ly/3UHAgsf> to read the full report.

AG OVERTIME REQUIREMENT TAKES EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2023

A friendly reminder to Oregon agricultural employers who have not yet updated their time, pay and recordkeeping practices: Now is the time to do so. For those who are unfamiliar with the new state overtime requirements, the law firm of Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt published a handy blog post (<http://bit.ly/3EAKFFi>) that outlines the new regulations, exemptions and tax credits.

Passed in March 2022, House Bill (HB) 4002 imposed new overtime pay requirements for agricultural workers beginning on January 1, 2023, overriding the federal overtime pay exemption for agriculture.

The legislation also established a refundable tax credit for eligible employers to help offset all or part of the additional wage expenses attrib-



Only one-third of survey respondents were able to hire all the workers they needed in 2021.

The average workforce shortage:

20%

There is an increasing number of growers using the H-2A visa program.

35%
of surveyed growers used the program in 2021.



Half who used H-2A also struggle to fill non-seasonal (> 10 months) jobs that don't currently qualify for H-2A.

Results presented in The 2022 Greenhouse & Nursery Labor Employment Survey Summary of Findings. ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF AMERICANHORT

uted to overtime pay. The Oregon Association of Nurseries and other agricultural groups lobbied heavily against the measure.

The new law established a four-year incremental phase-in period for the new agricultural overtime pay requirements:

- In 2023 and 2024, employers must pay overtime to agricultural workers for hours worked beyond 55 hours in a work week.
- In 2025 and 20236, employers must pay overtime to agricultural workers for hours worked beyond 48 hours in a work week.
- Beginning January 1, 2027, employers must pay overtime to agricultural workers for hours worked beyond 40 hours in a work week.

When applicable, employers must pay overtime hours at the rate of one and one-half the employee's regular rate of pay.

Northwest News

Award winners at the 2022 OAN Convention. **Top (l-r):** Curt Kipp, Mark Krautmann, Elizabeth Peters, Jeff Stone, Jolly Krautmann, John Coulter, Pete Brentano, Wendy Brentano, Kyle Fessler, Jay Sanders, Josh Robinson, Chris Robinson and Mark Bigej. **Bottom left:** Kyle Fessler (right) with Jeff Stone. **Bottom right:** Josh, Kaden, Ashley, Thomas and William Robinson.



OAN PRESIDENT'S AWARDS BANQUET RECOGNIZES IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS

The best and brightest of the industry were honored at this year's OAN President's Awards Banquet, which took place Saturday night, Oct. 29. The evening's gala awards ceremony was part of the weekend-long OAN Convention, held at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington. **Mike Coleman** of Arrowhead Ornamentals (Hubbard, Oregon) served as convention host, and past president **Jim Simnitt** of Simnitt Nursery (Canby, Oregon) served as the master of ceremonies.

Award recipients included **Jesse Nelson** of Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc. (Boring, Oregon) as Emerging Nursery Leader of the Year. The OAN Government Relations Committee received Committee of the Year honors, and **Pete and Wendy Brentano** of Brentano's Tree Farm (St. Paul, Oregon) were presented with the Pat Richardson Memorial Award, which honors an individual or company who has been innovative in implementing new technology into the nursery business. Brentano has a long record of nursery industry involvement, including serving one year as president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries in 2006.

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Northwest News

Axe-throwing activity at OAN Convention hits the mark: Kyle Fessler (left), Madison Bigej and dozens of other convention attendees channeled their inner lumberjack and gave it their best shot at axe-throwing, one of several outdoor recreation activities offered at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington, site of this year's OAN Convention. PHOTOS BY CURT KIPP



Service Award was **Jay Sanders** of KG Farms (Woodburn, Oregon) for his decades of service to the Farwest Show, Northwest Ag Show, OAN Marketing and Trade Shows Committees and the OAN Board of Directors. OAN President Jeff Stone presented the Outstanding Service Award to **Kyle Fessler** of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas (Woodburn, Oregon) for his exceptional leadership as chairman of the Government Relations Committee.

"When Kyle spoke, U.S. senators, congressmen and governors listened," Stone said.

OAN Honorary Life Memberships were presented to **Doug and Kathy Femrite** of Femrite Nursery Company (Aurora), **Jolly and Mark Krautmann** of Heritage Seedlings & Liners Inc. (Salem) and **John Coulter** of Master Nursery Garden Centers. Now based in Arizona, Coulter has a long list of involvement in Oregon's nursery industry, as past president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries (2001-02) and as chair and member of numerous committees.

Capping the President's Awards Banquet, five recipients received the Five Star Awards, which are traditionally given by the outgoing president in recognition of outstanding service or support during the year. Outgoing OAN President **Josh Robinson** of Robinson Nursery (McMinnville) presented awards to his brother and business partner, **Chris Robinson**; his wife Ashley and sons Kaden, Thomas and William; efficiency experts **Rick and Elizabeth Peters** of The Peters Company (Wilsonville); **Kyle Fessler** of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas (Woodburn); OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone; and OAN Director of Publications and Communications Curt Kipp.



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Mickey Hatley (left) and Dave Dillon were recognized by the Oregon Association of Nurseries for their contributions to the state's nursery and greenhouse industry.



FRIENDS OF NURSERIES AWARDS GIVEN TO KEY NURSERY SUPPORTERS

At the OAN Annual Meeting, held the morning of Oct. 29 and convening this year's OAN Convention, **Mark Bigej** (Al's Garden & Home) and **Kyle Fessler** (Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas) presented the Class of 2022 Friend of Nurseries Awards. The awards recognize individuals and legislators who have made a difference to the nursery and greenhouse industry, either through their career service or outstanding performance in 2022.

Award recipients included:

- **Marc Beyer**, account executive, Fern Exposition & Event Services: Beyer, who recently retired from service at the Oregon Convention Center, was a true partner in making sure the Farwest Show went on without a hitch.
- **Mickey Hatley**, branch manager, Northwest Farm Credit Services: Hatley announced his retirement from a remarkable career of service spanning more than 41 years at Northwest Farm Credit Services. Hatley engaged with the OAN through providing critical business analysis as well as a volume of commitment to OAN's events.

- **Dave Dillon**, CEO, Food Northwest: The OAN recognized Dave Dillon for his long-standing commitment to the health and well-being of the agricultural industry. Dillon served the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation for 30 years and recently accepted the position of president/CEO of Food Northwest (formerly the Northwest Food Processors Association). >>



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Northwest News

Alexis Taylor (left) and Kurt Schrader were recognized by the Oregon Association of Nurseries for their contributions to the state's nursery and greenhouse industry.



- Alexis Taylor, Director, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA): Taylor served as ODA's director for six years and during that time worked closely with the OAN to ensure market and pest and disease programs served the industry. Taylor recently accepted the position of USDA Undersecretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs offered

by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack of President Biden's administration.

- U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Congressional District 5): Kurt Schrader will conclude his distinguished elective office career at the end of this year. Schrader was recognized for his unfettered partnership and support of the industry and becomes the only four-time recipient of the Friend of Nurseries Award.

OAN also awarded Co-Legislators of the Year Awards to two members who stood out in the 2022 Legislative Session:

- U.S. Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis (R-Albany): For her leadership on Agricultural Overtime, Boshart Davis showed outstanding commitment and flexibility to seek compromise that worked for both the employer and employee.

- U.S. Rep. Daniel Bonham (R-Hood River): Like Boshart Davis, Bonham moved the needle on advocacy of the agricultural coalition's effort to pass a reasonable Agriculture Overtime bill. Bonham is now running for the Oregon Senate.

The OAN sincerely thanks these individuals for their exemplary work for the betterment of Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry.



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PETER SZYMCZAK REJOINS OAN STAFF AS PUBLICATIONS MANAGER

The OAN is pleased to announce that Peter Szymczak (pronounced SIM-chak) has rejoined the association's staff, returning to the role of publications manager which he previously held from 2013–2017. Szymczak will serve as managing editor and art director of Digger magazine and DiggerMagazine.com, and as the primary author of the weekly Member Update. He will also support the advertising and special editorial projects of the OAN.

Szymczak will report to Curt Kipp, director of publications and communications, who oversees the above projects. "We are so glad to have Pete on board," Kipp said. "He is an excellent writer, editor and designer, but more than that, he cares about our industry and can step right in with industry knowledge. He will be a tremendous asset to our members, our readers and the industry, and will contribute greatly to the continued improvement of *Digger*."

Szymczak is taking over the role previously filled by Bill Goloski, who accepted a position with the University Studies Abroad Consortium after five years serving at OAN.



OAN TASK FORCE ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHAPTER HEALTH

For many OAN members, regional chapters are where people get together to learn, socialize and make connections. But these chapters have faced involvement, participation and even leadership challenges in recent years, particularly with COVID putting a damper on gatherings.

A task force appointed by Past President Josh Robinson and chaired by current OAN Board Secretary Ben Verhoeven has made several recommendations to help boost the chapters back to better health. The task force issued a report to members at the recently held 2022 OAN Convention. "A lot of members have put a lot of energy into chapter activity," Verhoeven said. "We want to use that and build on it."

The task force recommended, for starters, that the OAN develop a consistent succession plan for chapters so leaders don't burn out; that each chapter hold two events per year; and that the OAN facilitate one annual, family-friendly event for all chapters. The full report, with some additional recommendations, is downloadable at <http://bit.ly/3UXEeNh>.



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Employees at Pac Fibre Soils in Canby, Oregon include (front row, l-r) Jose Gracia, Juan Sum, Brad Zimmerman, Jolene Neuberger and Rogelio Razo; (back row, l-r) Brayan Rosas, Paul Carter, Dave Yager, John Graser, Dan Clifford and Filiberto Rosas. Not pictured: Ward Benjamin and Nate Marsh. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

PACIFIC FIBRE PRODUCTS PURCHASES PHILLIPS SOIL PRODUCTS

Pacific Fibre Products has purchased Phillips Soil Products in Canby, Oregon and is now operating it as Pac Fibre Soils, a division of Pacific Fibre Products Inc. The newly purchased location at 26050 S. Highway 170 in Canby offers custom soil mixes for the nursery industry.

“We are proud of the reliable quality we offer in our soil products, which is backed up with excellent customer service,” bark sales and logistics manager Nate Marsh said. “We look forward to carrying on the reputation of quality that Phillips delivered, with the added resources of Pacific Fibre to serve customers even better than before.”

Although ownership has changed, the same customer service contacts remain on board and ready to serve customers. Administrative and operations manager Jolene Neuberger can be reached at 503-266-4700. Soil construction and technical specialist Brad Zimmerman can be reached at the same number. Marsh can be reached at 360-644-4640.

Pacific Fibre Products (www.pacfibre.com) offers bark-dust and bark products in addition to soil products from the



Canby location. The company is headquartered in Longview, Washington, with other locations in Molalla, Oregon; North Plains, Oregon; Central Point, Oregon; and Weiser, Idaho.

Pac Fibre Soils daily hours are 7 a.m.–3 p.m. Monday–Friday. For more information, log on to www.pacfibresoils.com.

For general inquiries, email customsoil@pacfibre.com, or call Jolene Neuberger at the Canby location at 503-266-4700.

For technical questions or to create a custom mix, call 503-266-4700 and ask for Brad. To inquire for new customers, or to request a visit or samples, call Nate at 360-644-4640. ©



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The importance of being customer oriented



A good retail garden center display of plants uses complementary colors and atypical shapes in a way that draws the consumer's eye. The use of tiers creates upward direction, making it a much more dynamic display. PHOTO BY DOREENWYNJA.COM PHOTOGRAPHY

WITH 2022 ENDING and a new year approaching, it seems like a good time to discuss independent garden centers and what customers want and expect from them. All businesses strive to be better, or if they don't, they probably won't survive.

At one time, garden centers had almost a captive audience of customers wanting to buy plants and garden supplies. However today, that is no longer the case. Today, the choices and selections of places to purchase plants are numerous, particularly during the spring and summer months. During those months plants are readily available at drug stores, grocery stores, farmers' markets, garden club sales, box stores, independent garden centers and online.

Choices, choices and more choices

I participate in a small writing group as part of The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon. There are eight of us, and we

all strive to become better writers, with gardening as our primary theme. We meet virtually once a month, read something that we have written and then discuss it as a group. At our November meeting, instead of reading, I asked the question, "What do we as consumers want when shopping at a garden center?" Everyone in this writing group is a gardener and they are probably more knowledgeable and more intensely involved in their gardening than the average gardener. However, they are representative of the average consumer and their responses were similar to what one would expect from any other consumer.

Having a knowledgeable consumer-oriented staff was high on the list for everyone. It is acknowledged that hiring staff is difficult in these times, but when going to an independent garden center, the service level expectation is higher than it is at a grocery, drug or box store.

It is important to have a staff that is familiar with where specific plants are, or if



MIKE DARCY

Head "plant nerd," longtime speaker, host of gardening shows on radio and TV, and author of the In the Garden email newsletter. You can reach Mike or subscribe to his newsletter at itgmikedarcy@comcast.net.

they do not know where they are, to say so, offer to check and then actually go find out and come back with the answer. To point in the direction of where a plant is does not fit the idea of consumer-oriented service.

Consumer-oriented service was mentioned more than once in the group. People have been solitary for so long that there is a strong desire for in-person contact. This type of service is important for any type of business and not just the nursery industry.

For example, at a local restaurant, it is common practice for the manager on duty to stop by the table and ask if everything is satisfactory and to say "thank you" for choosing them. That practice is somewhat unusual for some businesses, but it certainly makes a very strong statement of appreciation to current customers and is a simple way to appeal to all consumers.

Plant labels and signage are other important features. Signage above groups of plants can be very helpful. The signs can be straightforward: for instance, ROSES, HERBS, NATIVE PLANTS, LOW WATER PLANTS, SHADE PLANTS, SUN PLANTS, NEW INTRODUCTIONS, POND PLANTS, etc. Grouping like plants together is helpful for consumers.

Changing displays with the seasons seems like it would be a logical business move, but that is not always the case. Some garden centers wait too long before introducing the appropriate seasonal plants. "I don't want to see marigolds, long past their prime, in a dis-



play in October,” said one member of the Hardy Plant Society group. “In the fall, or in the spring or summer, I need to change my containers and I like to get new ideas for plant groupings,” said another. For local garden centers, the changing seasons are a wonderful opportunity to show off new plants, pots and accessories.

It was not many years ago that the opportunity to order plants online was non-existent. Now it is not unusual, but I still find that most gardeners prefer to visit a local garden center and view and touch their plants before purchasing them. Plus, the opportunity to visit with garden center staff as well as other gardeners is a secondary benefit.

It is usually difficult for gardeners to visit a garden center and only leave with the one plant they came to buy. This is all the more reason to have displays that cater to the season and new introductions. It is impossible for gardeners to



Good, old-fashioned consumer-oriented service is essential — and hard to beat.

bypass attractive displays.

The electronic age has dramatically changed the way many of us buy not only plants but almost everything. The one area that everyone in the group agreed upon was the importance of an up-to-date website for any local garden center. This is especially true when one is looking for a particular plant and, in particular, if it is a plant that may not be commonly grown or available.

“I don’t want to drive from one garden center to another in order to find the plant that I am searching for. Having the plant listed on a website, and its availability and size of container is very useful information,” said one member of the group. “If I see that it is available, I will often actually call the garden center to confirm and then ask if they will save a plant for me.” This is another aspect of good consumer-oriented service.

None of these responses is new, but sometimes it is good to reinforce what we already know but that may have been neglected or forgotten. With the continued shortage of labor and rising labor costs, as well as the increased costs of plants, soil, utilities, water, fuel, fertilizer and other supplies, the basics matter more than ever. Good, old-fashioned consumer-oriented service is essential — and hard to beat.

Happy New Year! ☺



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MOTZ & SON NURSERY



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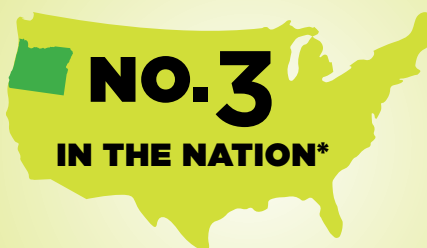
The POWER to GROW

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EVANS FARMS LLC

OREGON IS NURSERY COUNTRY



PAGE 33



OBERSINNER NURSERY INC.

ANCHORED BY multigenerational farming families, some dating as far back as the 1850s, Oregon's nursery industry is deeply rooted in the past.

Want to know more? Listen to Cindy Lou Evans Pease spin tales about her great-great grandfather, Christian Frederick Vonderahe, who in 1857 settled on land that is known today as Evans Farms. Ask Nancy Richards and Anne Marie Boyd, the mother-daughter team at Motz & Son Nursery that grows trees on land that's been in their family for 101 years.

Or perhaps chat with David Obersinner, who founded Obersinner Nursery 42 years ago, when he was in his 20s, with help from his parents, Alan and Margaret.

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in sales[†]

But even with a glorious past, no nursery survives without meeting the future head on and seizing its opportunities. Evans, Motz and Obersinner are all doing this in their own way.

Meanwhile, North American Plants has seen explosive growth thanks to the miracle of tissue culture propagation. This technology enables propagators to generate a million plants in a year from a single parent plant. This allows growers to roll out the newest plant introductions with blazing speed.

Nurseries are Oregon's #1 agricultural crop. Turn the page and learn more about just a few of Oregon's wonderful nurseries and the people behind them.





MOTZ & SON NURSERY

The Motz & Son Nursery crew. Standing from left to right: Frank, Silvino, Samuel, Carlos, Anne Marie Boyd, Daniel, Isidro, Armando, Nancy Richards, Simon, Jose V., Salvador, Edgar, Jose Juan, Antonio, Jorge, Juan C., Felipe and Higinio. Kneeling from left to right: Juan Jesus, Martin, Napoleon, Oniver, Gustavo, Anatolio, Agustin and Arturo.



STORY BY ERICA BROWNE GRIVAS | PHOTOS BY CURT KIPP

IF THEY WERE GROWING fruit trees in Oregon, it's very likely your great-great-grandparents were customers of the Motz family nursery. A true family legacy, Portland's Motz Brothers began in 1921 with Theodore (Ted) and John Motz, joined by Ted's son Donald (Don) in 1957, when it became Motz & Son Nursery.

Today, the nursery is co-run by Don Motz's daughter, Nancy Richards, and granddaughter, Anne Marie Boyd. The nursery specializes in bareroot stock, with a focus on fruit trees as well as ornamental trees and shrubs. The breakdown, Richards said, is approximately 70% fruit and nut trees, 20% shade and flower trees, and 10% deciduous shrubs, including lilacs. The bulk of Motz & Son's sales are to re-wholesalers in the United States and Canada, with some garden centers. The nursery favors consistency over novelty.

"Some of the older customers have been customers for generation after gen-

eration," Boyd said. "They say things like, 'I always know what to expect. I know I can get the varieties and sizes I want.'"

New this year are *Malus* 'Triumph' and *Pyrus* 'Juicy Jewel', but even adding two new varieties is unusual for Motz & Son, Boyd said. "My grandpa told me he never changed the percentage of anything more than 10%."

The fruit trees boast a rich range of dwarfs, semi-dwarfs, combination-variety grafts, columnars and up to six-way espaliers. Among apples alone this year's catalog lists 53 varieties, with a strong lineup of antique varieties like 'Spitzenberg' and 'Cox's Orange Pippin'. Boyd says among the heirloom apples 'Roxbury Russet' is a longtime favorite, being both beautifully stippled and delicious for baking. Other fruits include apricot, cherry, peach, pear, nectarine, plum and quince. Nut trees include almond and walnut.

'Frost' is one peach Boyd says she can't keep in stock. "People will be order-

ing in quantities of 10 for everything else, and then when it comes to 'Frost', it's 60," she said.

For shade trees, Motz & Son offers a multitude of maples, such as perennial favorite 'Crimson Sentry' (Norway Maple), along with birch and serviceberry, redbud, hawthorn, ash, locust, *Laburnum*, poplar, aspen, willow, *Sorbus*, linden, elm, *Zelkova* and various flowering varieties. Motz & Son's ornamental shrubs include cistena, dogwood, smokebush, hibiscus, *Spirea*, willow and more. Richards said she is seeing heightened interest in bare-root shrubs, especially *Althea* and *Cornus*.

The nursery follows an integrated pest management program, and Motz & Son is part of Oregon's Virus Certification program, verifying virus-free stock, which made it one of first to be able to sell to Canada. "In the past we were one of the few, but the Canadian market has really taken off, which is great," Boyd said.



FOUNDED

1921 as Motz Brothers,
1957 as Motz & Son

OWNERS

Nancy Richards, President;
Anne Marie Boyd, Vice President

KNOWN FOR

Bareroot stock; fruit, shade and
flowering trees and shrubs

PEOPLE

28 employees including
management

CONTACT

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126 listings

Trees grown in the field at Motz & Son Nursery include (left) London planetree as well as (right) cistena flowering plum aka purlpleleaf sandcherry (with the purple leaves), and Autumn Blaze red maple (green leaves).



In the beginning

Motz & Son has a long history, but according to family lore — and U.S. Census documents — the Motz family influence on Oregon nurseries goes back even further. Having emigrated from Romania, Elie Motz was working at the Oregon Nursery Co. in the company town of Orenco, Oregon, in 1908. By 1914, he was making 20 cents an hour. He was given a plot of land, on which he built a house and barn and planted the orchard that started everything.

When Elie Motz passed away, sons Theodore (Ted) and John started Motz Brothers Nursery in 1921. The Oregon Nursery Co. collapsed in 1927, but by 1935 the brothers had enough stock for Ted to expand into Portland.

Ted's son Don lived his life in the fields, with stints in the U.S. Army and studying nursery management at Oregon State College. He was riding horseback at age 2 and rode a tractor "every day into his 80s," said Boyd.

Boyd was 21 and a pre-med junior at Oregon State University when it struck her that her friends all disliked their jobs, while her family all loved their jobs. It was like a switch flipped on, and she changed her career path.

"I called my grandpa and said, 'I'm

gonna come and do this.' He was pretty happy," she said.

She applied for and won an Oregon Nurseries Foundation scholarship to pursue an agricultural science major, which she augmented with horticulture classes, graduating in 2016.

"When I received (the award), it was an industry reinforcement that I was making the right decision. It was a very positive experience," she said.

She appreciated that her family let her choose her own path and feels she is more committed as a result. Having only done office work, she wanted to learn every element of the job.

Upon Don's death in 2017 she took over managing the field crew.

The present and beyond

Today, the main office, grading and shipping yard remain at "the homestead" outside of Portland on 120 acres. Their 360-acre growing fields near Hillsboro are a 15-minute drive away.

It's uncommon to have so much land this close to the city, and it has its ups and downs, Boyd said. Sure, it's convenient to get supplies and to hop on Highway 26, but neighbors aren't always happy about meeting tractors on that highway. Production

shuts down during the annual Oregon International Air Show, which is just too noisy to work through. Lastly, some use the farm's wide-open spaces as a drive-through picnic ground to watch fireworks on the Fourth of July, trampling the fields.

With the exception of the red maples (*Acer rubrum*), which are tissue-cultured, and shrubs, Boyd said the stock is budding propagated and often hand-grafted.

One flowering cherry tree Boyd pointed out had wild cherry (*Prunus avium* 'Mazzard') rootstock budded with 'Improved Mazzard' that later will be grafted with either *Prunus subhirtella* or 'Snow Fountain' at around 6 feet. The next plot had even shorter ones meant for smaller specimens for containers or small gardens. Boyd said they are fortunate they can handle all the grafting and budding in-house versus hiring seasonally.

Focusing on bareroot stock has challenges. "You want them to look full and lush for visual appeal, but not be troublesome to dig," Boyd said.

Motz & Son tops its fruit trees, which Boyd says is unusual. "That way they are nicely branched even at one year when they hit the garden center shelves. It looks like a tree. It's not just a stick in a bag or pot."

On the flip side, some trees grow



MOTZ & SON NURSERY

Nancy Richards, holding grandson Daniel, runs Motz & Son Nursery with daughter Anne Marie Boyd (right).



too fast. “Those willows have to be dug after the first year because if we leave them a second year, we’d worry for our digging machine,” Boyd said.

The integrated pest management program includes crop rotation and using only pre-emergent herbicide between the tree rows. For cover crops, in addition to clover, wheat and barley, Boyd said she enjoys Sorghum Sudangrass for its easy elegance, waving off in the distance. “It’s beautiful. You just have to mow it once in a while.”

Asked about differentiators, Richards and Boyd have different answers, but a clear theme emerges: Consistency across multiple measures. Reliable quality, stock, staff and service. Knowing what to expect.

Richards highlighted the longevity of the staff. “A lot of guys have been with us 30 or more years. When we ask them why, they say, ‘When I’m out here I feel free,

and I get to work with people I enjoy.’”

The employees have garden plots and will often have family dinners outside on summer evenings. Boyd credits her grandfather with forging this culture. “My grandpa had a really good leadership style,” she said. “He gave you clear instructions, and then let you go out and do it.”

During the pandemic, as for many in the business, sales not only held but excelled. Today, the lingering effects of the pandemic and the pending recession are making themselves felt in product shortages, begging the question as to what the next decade will bring for this nursery that has stood the test of time.

“A lot of times in recessions fruit trees will maintain sales, while shade and

flowering trees show a decrease. With the current recession, it will be interesting to see how this impacts sales,” Boyd said.

What’s up next? In addition to bolstering Motz & Son’s Instagram page, Boyd said she looks forward to having more virus-certified, completed trees as more rootstock growers offer more inventories of virus-certified material. For sale outside the United States, the bud and rootstock must come from a virus-certified source.

“We’re striving to improve what we do, streamlining as much as possible,” Boyd said while cradling the next Motz generation, 15-month-old great grandson Daniel. “And getting things ready for Daniel, if he wants to take over.” Motz & Son seems well positioned for the future. ☺

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Cindy Lou Evans Pease, owner of Evans Farms LLC, stands in front of the barn designed by her father, Eldon Evans, when he was just 17 years old.



STORY BY KYM POKORNY | PHOTOS BY PETER SZYMCAK

IN 1857, A DETERMINED immigrant from Germany found his way to the lush land around Oregon City. Every day, Christian Frederick Vonderahe walked out of the settlement into the surrounding country looking for the perfect piece of land.

Eventually, he bought 450 acres blessed with good soil, slopes, some timber and, best of all, an abundance of water. Vonderahe knew a good piece of land when he saw it and bought the property from an Oregon homesteader. Cindy Lou Evans Pease, great-great-granddaughter and current owner of Evans Farms, loves the story of Vonderahe's perilous journey to Oregon.

Wanting to go west, Vonderahe threw his hat in with a wagon train. But after a disagreement on the prairie, he left Kansas in the middle of the night determined to walk to Oregon. To fend off potential trouble, he wore a derby hat and carried

a small suitcase; as he walked, he talked to himself. People were convinced he was crazy and Vonderahe made it safely to Oregon — before the wagon train arrived. Pease said his success says a lot about the family that now stretches seven generations. Determination runs in their blood.

“Granny Louise instilled in me that you can do whatever it is in your life that you want to do,” Pease said. “I was raised that way. My parents were raised that way. My boys were raised that way. My grandchildren have been raised that way. It’s all about common sense, values and working hard.”

Pease uses her common sense to run Evans Farms, a 320-acre family nursery and farm just south of Oregon City where it still feels bucolic though development advances. Surrounded by her timber-studded land, Pease drives by the field-grown conifers and talks about fall planting.

“The reason we plant in fall is two-

fold,” said Pease, who is fluent in Spanish, a handy skill for communicating with her crew. “I think plants in Oregon that are fall-planted don’t necessarily push new growth but push root development and then in spring they’re ready to go.”

Years ago, when Pease had to plant every inch of land to pay the mortgage, she planted in spring, too, but it’s more expensive. In fall there’s less reason to irrigate, so money is saved on labor and power. On average, she said, she can finish her crop before those who plant in spring.

Everything grown on the nursery and farm is sold wholesale, as well as to the public, from the living Christmas trees that people come back for year after year to the *Chamaecyparis* in the field. It’s been that way since 1857 when great-great-grandfather Vonderahe planted an orchard of apples and eventually became known as the Cider King of Clackamas County.

“It’s just our rule,” Pease said. “It’s



FOUNDED

1982

OWNER

Cindy Lou Evans Pease

KNOWN FOR

Wholesale grower of conifers, broadleaved and ornamental nursery stock

PEOPLE

Marcelino Perez, farm manager; Betty Florcke, garden center manager; Mario Martinez, container growing manager.

CONTACT

22289 S. Highway 213
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503-632-3475

ONLINE

www.evansfarms.net

NurseryGuide.com

19 listings

EVANS FARMS LLC

our family tradition. If we have Christmas trees, we sell Christmas trees to the public. If we have hazelnuts, we sell hazelnuts. The public is allowed to buy anything the farm grows. It's difficult. It's a seven-day-a-week job."

The best-selling Evans Farms plants in the Pacific Northwest are laurels, especially Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*). Grafted ornamentals go east, where Evans Farms' plants are known for their survivability, Pease said.

All cuttings are done outside with heat and mist and hand planted into 4-inch-deep containers and then planted in the field. With B&B plants, they do a series of root prunes, which makes them more resilient. If the plants are rooted out of the ball at the time of shipment, they put new burlap on them. The job of grafting conifers is done in winter and planted out in fall.

"Since dad (Eldon Evans) started with rooted propagation, we have field-selected the stock," Pease said. "We don't take cuttings or scion off junk plants just because you need to make 1,000 cuttings. We take off the best plants, so genetically the field stock gradually becomes better and better. Our cutting stock is pretty darn good. The Portuguese laurel doesn't need much shearing. It's just perfect. It's fat and perfect. Then we know wherever that plant is going, it's going to survive. If it's not good quality — and that means right down to its roots — we don't sell it."

Evans Farms has a reputation for quality locally, too, said Pease, who sells direct to garden centers, re-wholesalers and landscapers. There are no outside sales representatives and no brokers.

"My dad said, 'If you can't sell it, don't grow it,'" Pease said, "and that means you personally have to sell it. Since you have to sell whatever you're growing, you'd better like it. What's the point of having all these cute little plants if you don't sell them? If I'm selling it well, I like it."

One plant Pease loves to sell — her sentimental favorite — is *Sequoia gigantea* 'Hazel Smith', a plant given to her by its namesake when the woman was 96 and

still running a little nursery in her East Coast backyard. Now, Pease has several huge 'Hazel Smith' planted at the nursery, all from the original plant.

"I was so pleased when she gave it to me," she said of the memory. "Her husband was a sea captain and he brought it home from somewhere."

Conifers top Pease's preferred group of plants. She is a long-standing member of the American Conifer Society and served on the board for 10 years, including a stint as national president. Members

call themselves "coneheads" and value conifers for their structure as backbone to the garden.

It's obvious Pease loves her land. Conservation of both the environment and her family legacy loom large for her. Evans Farms recycles all their water onsite and they put in solar panels years ago. Brothers Josh and Jeremy Pease, Cindy Lou's sons, thought solar would be a good idea. Josh wrote a grant, got funds and sold energy credits to put in a system engineered to power three shops, a green-



house, two houses and the pipe irrigation well. The power bill for the nursery dropped from about \$20,000 annually to nothing for six years. Some of the original panels need replacement now, but solar still offsets a large part of the power bill. It's more than paid for itself, Pease said.

Conservation efforts have succeeded so well, Pease sees red hawks nesting at the edge of the woodland. When her dad, Eldon Evans, found out DDT softened their eggs, he never used it again. Slowly they came back and are nesting in the timber. >>

(Left) Everything at Evans Farms LLC is sold wholesale and to the public, from living Christmas trees to the field-grown *Chamaecyparis*.

(Below) Cindy Lou Evans Pease hauls a roll of burlap to a site on her farm where plants are being dug out by hand and dressed with new burlap before shipment.




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EVANS FARMS LLC

Cindy Lou Evans Pease, owner of Evans Farms LLC, with garden center manager Betty Floricke.

Before her beloved blue healer, Sequoia, died, Pease would watch from a tractor as one of the hawks circled above Sequoia until she flushed out some game and then swooped down and snatched it up.

“That dog turned around and went, ‘Did you see that?’” she continued, loving the telling of a good story. “‘That son-of-a-gun hawk just stole my rabbit, and I did all the work!’ Sequoia laid down and probably thought, ‘Man, I wish I could climb a tree and get my rabbit back.’ It got to the point where that hawk would show up the minute we came out here and would start circling, waiting for her to flush the game.”

Pease is not a top-down type of boss. She’s out there every day working alongside her longtime partner Marcelino Pérez and her crew. As with all nurseries, the lack of labor holds her back. The younger

generations don’t want to do physical labor and there aren’t enough employees who want to do this type of work.

“Labor is an extremely difficult thing,” she said. “I don’t know what the resolution will be because the bureaucrats are continually making things more restrictive.”

Pease ploughs ahead, literally and figuratively. With her pitching in, Evans Farms is a thriving business. But it’s time to think about succession. She has a bucket list that involves a lot of travel, especially to Spain where she spent a year while in school. But like her dad before her, she’s struggling at letting go.

“I could probably retire, but I’m in good health,” Pease said. “I enjoy what I do. I work too hard because of the labor problem, but I have no intention of retiring soon. My goal is to find the right person that is interested in learning how

to run their own nursery and maybe find someone who wants to take it over.”

Her sons would be the first option, but maybe it will be her granddaughter Lucy. Pease’s granddaughter would be the seventh generation to run Evans Farms and could carry on the family legacy. Once a week, she gets off the school bus to spend time running around with grandma. That means work, but she loves it, Pease said.

In the beginning

Pease, who was shocked and happy to be presented with lifetime membership in the OAN in 2018, has been figuring it out her whole life. She was the first of her immediate family to graduate from college with a master’s degree in education and another in Spanish, both from Lewis & Clark College. She has traveled the world, teaches Spanish, was a Clackamas County Planning Commissioner, and has headed up the nursery for 37 years.

Really, though, she worked at the nursery her whole life. When she was a little girl, 8 or 9 years old, the nursery had a U-dig shrub operation. It was Evans Farms’ first foray into nursery stock. There was a box at the end of the driveway and every day she would walk down to collect the money left on the honor system. Pease discovered a passion for horticulture and slowly the plant stand morphed into a garden center when the old repair shop and chicken coop were transformed in 1982.

When Pease took over the nursery from her dad, it wasn’t an easy proposition to get her father, who she inherited her stubbornness from, to hand over the reins.

“It got to the point where dad had to slow down,” Pease said. “Once he cut himself with a chainsaw while cleaning up the woodland that he had logged and replanted. He didn’t have his phone on him but somehow he got to his truck. He was 87.”

Evans finally acquiesced. In 1985, he sold 140 acres to Pease, bringing her that much closer to acquiring as much of the original 450 as possible. In later years she

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was able to acquire 180 acres of the original farm, bringing it to 320.

“What I’ve tried to do is to make sure I’ve made the provisions so that whoever is going to or has interest in running the existing business or establishing a new business on the property has the ability to do so. I’ve made provisions that it can’t be split up. The boys feel that way, too.”

In a recent conversation with Josh, he told her what she wanted to hear. It made her happy for days when he said, “Mom,

you know we will see that the farm is never, never developed. You have to know we will see that never happens.”

The present and beyond

Pease made arrangements in her trust that the land remain as one. Her sons, Josh and Jeremy, will have the option of continuing the nursery and farm or starting a new business that would fit the land — like a campground, horse complex or outdoor event space. ➤

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EVANS FARMS LLC

"It will remain intact, all 320 acres of this heritage farm," Pease said. "We're a century farm, 165 years old, and still in the same family. It's ready for our next go-round and both boys feel strongly about the land. I take my philosophy from the prior generations, like my father. He always said you have to allow the ability to change, to diversify, to do whatever you have to do to hang on without selling family land. That's the hardest thing to do: To diversify and do what you love to do and make enough money to keep it intact."

Helping with the success of the nursery is the garden center, which began in a remodeled barn in 1982. Betty Florcke, garden center manager, has worked there since 1988.

"I like it here," Florcke said. "I like Cindy. She's nice, very honest and forth-

coming. That makes a difference. And I like that it's a family nursery, a family that has roots here. There's some history. It's a really nice family and they treat you right."

Rod Park, owner of Park's Nursery in Gresham, Oregon, thinks so, too.

"She's a strong, smart, wonderful woman that I've always looked up to," Park said. "There's no one more down to earth than Cindy. She was my member-at-large on the OAN executive board when I was president. She tells it like it is. She isn't afraid."

Park doesn't remember exactly when he met Pease but said it must have been at an Oregon Association of Nurseries Retail Chapter meeting.

"We met at restaurants for OAN meetings, and we sat across the table from guys like J. Frank Schmidt, Jean Iseli, Ted Van Veen, Jack Long, Norbert

Kinen," Park said. "They were plantmen; they just loved plants and learning how to grow and propagate. We learned a lot from them."

When Norbert Kinen, past OAN president, established a new award for political awareness, Pease was the first to receive it.

"Honestly, I am most proud of that award of any I've received," she said. "[Kinen] saw the long-range implications for me to be on that planning committee."


Pease considers those intrepid nurserymen — as well as Park and Jack Bigej, owner of Al's Garden & Home — as mentors in her early years at the helm of the nursery. She adds to that list her father, who taught her common sense and values, characteristics handed down through the hard-working family. ☺

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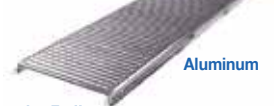
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NORTH AMERICAN PLANTS INC.

STORY BY EMILY LINDBLOM | PHOTOS BY CURT KIPP



Maria G. Marin places plant cuttings into a culture jar for propagation.



FOUNDED

1998

OWNER

Agromillora Group

KNOWN FOR

Tissue culture lab plant starts of shade trees, shrubs, vines, rootstocks, and nut and berry varieties

PEOPLE

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HUNDREDS OF SHELVES of sealed glass jars fill large warehouse-like buildings in McMinnville. At the base of each jar, there are tiny stems and leaves peeking up from out of a concoction of nutrients.

These little plants will be multiplied, planted and eventually sold in nurseries across the world as fruit trees, nut trees and ornamentals.

The McMinnville company, North American Plants Inc., grows these plants using a method known as tissue culture.

Inside the glass jars, the minuscule plant buds or marrow stems will grow and multiply. The lab workers split up the plants into new jars, and the amount grows exponentially.

“We grow them until we get enough plantlets to take to the greenhouse and grow them to a certain height that the customers say they want,” Chang said. “Tissue culture is mainly used for



NORTH AMERICAN PLANTS INC.

Maria Aguilar at North American Plants Inc. prepares young plants for shipment.

new varieties or varieties that have difficulty propagating from conventional cuttings or graftings,” Chang said, giving the examples of pistachios, walnuts, almonds and pears.

Although ornamentals like maple and birch do grow from cuttings, Chang said using tissue culture is more efficient and produces a more consistent quality.

“If you start growing one tree on January 1 and every three weeks make one tissue subculture, by the end of the year you’ll make 1 million plants,” Chang said. “There’s no other way to get that many.”

Shirley Feng has a doctorate in microbiology. She worked in the lab for two years before becoming the lab director eight years ago. Feng said North American Plants collaborates with university professors, and both private and public plant breeders.

Feng said North American Plants has a good reputation for the quality of plants it produces, and customers reach out to the company directly for new varieties. “We also produce plants for research purposes,” Feng said. “We help universities and they help us, and we both benefit.”

Over the last two decades, North American Plants has been propagating new plant varieties from Oregon State University. For example, if Oregon hazelnut orchards experience a blight one year and the university researchers develop a blight-resistant variety, within one year North American Plants can propagate enough of the new variety for all the growers in the state. “Without tissue culture you cannot see so many hazelnut orchards,” Chang said.

Feng said the lab grows different varieties than the year before and keeps adjusting the recipes of nutrition, pH balance, sugar and hormones. The lab has more than 200 recipes for the medium inside the jars.

“Different apples respond differently to different mediums, so we make small changes to grow them well,” Feng said.

Shofu Dong, a horticulturalist with North American Plants for 15 years, oversees 25 acres of greenhouse space. Once the plant starts are ready to leave the jars,



a team plants each one by hand. They are then transferred to a tunnel inside a greenhouse where Dong’s staff controls the moisture, temperature and light.

“The plants in the lab are in artificial conditions where it’s perfect, but they need to get acclimated to become independent,” Dong said. “It’s very critical for the plant.”

Depending on the species and variety, the plants spend a few weeks in the tunnel. The tunnel starts completely sealed, then over time the team starts to open the sides to let in the natural light and air. Eventually, the plants begin to grow strong roots and are prepared to survive in normal greenhouse conditions.

Dong said this process takes a lot of care. “We need to be very detailed and pay attention,” Dong said. “We have a good crew.”

The McMinnville site grows hundreds of different plants at a time.

“We have so many varieties and new types of plants, and we try to do our best to increase the survival rate,” Dong said.

In the beginning

While the tissue culture concept is over 100 years old, the technique began in research labs and was first implemented commercially in the 1960s.

North American Plants started in

1998 as a joint venture with other local nurseries under the umbrella of an international nursery group in Barcelona, Spain, called Agromillora.

Back then, with a staff of about 15 employees, the McMinnville nursery started with a small laboratory.

Office manager Jan Young has worked for the company for 21 years.

“When I first started, this used to be a cow barn on a family farm,” Young said. “We had one tiny office.”

Over the years, the lab expanded to produce fruit and nut trees, ornamental shrubs and shade trees for Oregon nurseries, and then began adding customers in California and Washington. It continued to grow and sell to customers in more states and then internationally.

Michael Remmick, who oversees inventory control for berries and grafted trees, worked for North American Plants from its inception until 2006, and then returned in 2020.

“In the beginning we were doing a lot fewer plants and had less space,” Remmick said, noting that being part of the international group of companies with Agromillora has been advantageous in helping the McMinnville site grow to reach both local and international customers.

By 2006, the company expanded its laboratory and greenhouse to meet the mar-

Key employees at North American Plants Inc. include (back row, l-r) Shufu Dong, Clayton Moore Jr., Jeremy Dewar, Michael Remmick, William Wang, Calxia Li, (front row, l-r) Ella Olague, Jan Young, Yongjian Chang, Nhicolas Michels, Georgina Madrigal and Emily Steadman.

ket's demand for fruit trees and nut trees.

"The best part is working with the customers," Remmick said.

Clayton Moore Jr., who handles customer questions and shipping concerns with ornamentals and hazelnuts, has been with the company for 13 years. When he first started, the nursery would ship out about 3 million plants per year.

Now, the 30-thousand-square-foot lab employs 250 people, depending on the season, and produces 25 million plants per year. These plants are shipped to 40 states in the United States and 40 different countries.

As the largest tissue culture lab in the nation, North American Plants produces a variety of plant species, including temporary products for specific customers.

"As long as the market needs us, we are producing it," Chang said.



The present and beyond

"Over the years we've grown from a small office to what we have now and it's outstanding and a pleasure to be a part of," Young said. "We're in an amazing position right now. We're a stable company that never shut down during COVID."

But this success hasn't come without its challenges. Chang said one of the biggest concerns is mutation: "If we don't know if a plant has a mutation, and we continue multiplying millions of it, then we see the result two seasons later," he

said. "There's no way we can say there is no mutation, but there are a lot of ways to avoid that and check for that, so it does not cause an economic problem."

In 2022, North American Plants began running a separate quality assurance lab on site to test the plants to make sure they're true to type and free of any viruses, harmful bacteria, fungi and major pathogens before growing and multiplying them.

Feng said when customers order new species, the lab ensures the new plant material is clean through the U.S. »

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NORTH AMERICAN PLANTS INC.

Julia Lemus places plant starts by hand in growing medium, a labor-intensive process that's key to the quality of North American Plants Inc.

Department of Agriculture's National Clean Plant Network.

"We receive all the material clean, so there's no virus in the plants," Feng said. "If they know there's a virus, then they do a treatment to remove it."

"We try to make sure to do as much as we can to have a high-quality product and be more competitive," Chang said.

Like many industries, the main challenges are labor costs and labor shortages. From dividing up the jars in the lab to



planting the plant starts by hand, producing millions of plants is labor intensive.

"We try to make it more and more efficient," Chang said. "But there is still a lot of room for improvement."

Chang started working with tissue culture in 1984 and specialized in it for his doctorate. Over the years he's seen how the process has become more efficient by improving the recipe and multiplication of the plants.

The nursery industry has also been facing shipping challenges. Moore said the record amount of plants shipped from the McMinnville site was about 960,000 in one week.

"I work very closely with the companies to ensure nothing is falling through the cracks," Moore said.

Moore said he sees the company expanding and continuing to grow in the future.

"A big part of the business is agriculture and food-based material, and we're seeing those markets change and shift, so we react to that," Moore said.

Feng said the company stays ahead of the market and gets the newest varieties from different plant breeders.

"We're prepared for the market," Feng said. "We talk with different growers and once they're interested, we have the newest varieties here. That's our advantage."

Feng said she sees a positive future for the company.

"We are very happy here and we hope our company continues running very well and very strong," Feng said. ☺

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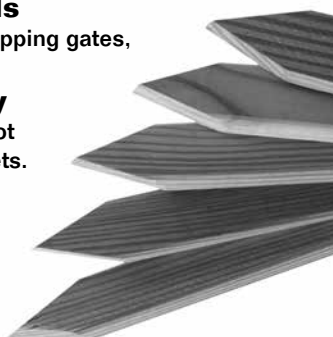
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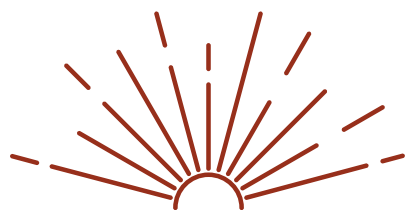
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OBERSINNER NURSERY INC.

Twins Jake and Joe Obersinner bookend their father, David Obersinner, president and CEO of Obersinner Nursery Inc. The twins, both graduates of OSU in agriculture and horticulture, are running the family's Century Farm businesses. PHOTO BY RACHEL DICKMAN



STORY BY TRACY ILENE MILLER

THE OLD MILK HOUSE and the barn that stand adjacent to the fields of Obersinner Nursery Inc. are only some of the original monuments of the century farm the nursery sprang from in 1980. Now managed by a fifth-generation Oregon grower, Joe Obersinner, the family-owned wholesale nursery still specializes in the very first nursery product it started with — rhododendrons, with more than 90 rhododendron varieties — as well as Japanese maples, grafted conifers and woody ornamentals. More than 90% of their production is field-grown, with approximately 35% sold B&B and 65% container-finished.

The nursery was founded by fourth-generation Oregon grower David Obersinner with his parents, Alan and Margaret Obersinner, who financially backed a 20something David's interest in

spearheading an expansion of Obersinner Farms from agriculture to nursery products. David's parents granted him a half-acre of the family farm for his new endeavor of establishing a wholesale rhododendron business.

He would focus the nursery on rhododendrons almost exclusively for more than a decade, during which time he built a customer base and learned the best growing practices. Then he added other trees and woody ornamentals.

"Every year we expanded, but in a slow way," David said, heeding his father's advice to maintain steady but manageable growth. A testament to the quality of the nursery's product is the steadfast customer base the nursery has maintained over time.

"There were always dips in the mar-

ket, but we were always able to sell our product because we're selling a quality product." And because of that consistency and quality, the nursery has continued to expand — from a half-acre in 1980 to 125 acres today, and from one greenhouse in 1981 to today's 51.

The nursery takes a progressive approach to its growing, establishing more than 100,000 rooted cuttings every fall and winter in a heated propagation house and planting them into the field a year later, once the plants have a well-rooted system, to reduce stress. Applying that same mindset, larger, healthy plants are shifted up gradually by moving from cuttings to 4-inch pots to 1-gallon and then to 2-gallon containers in four seasons, then sold in spring — rather than in winter — to give the plants time to settle



FOUNDED

1980

OWNERS

David Obersinner, CEO/
President; Marguerite
Obersinner, Secretary/Treasurer

KNOWN FOR

Wholesale grower of grafted
conifers and woody ornamentals,
and B&B, hybrid field-grown/
container-finished products

PEOPLE

Production Manager Joe
Obersinner and Office Manager
Rachel Dickman

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OBERSINNER NURSERY INC.

and become well-rooted and healthy after that final transition.

The pot-in-pot holding areas are also used to give plants time to recover after having their root ball trimmed, and to yield lighter plants.

“A lot of our field stock, we try to put in containers,” said Production Manager Joe Obersinner. So, instead of taking soaking-wet, 80-pound rhodies and shipping them out, Obersinner digs them out with a small root ball and puts them into a bigger container with bark dust, lightening the load by 20 to 30 pounds. “Which is what our customers want,” Joe said.

Interestingly enough, David said, some customers are unaware Obersinner Nursery is part of a century farm, with a total combined acreage of 1,200. An advantage of the nursery operating as a division of a century farm, Joe pointed out, is the ability to use the land in a variety of ways. For instance, a nursery in proximity to a farm offers an advantage of rotating land use to control weeds. A field of rhodies might someday turn into a field of broccoli, and vice versa.

Another advantage is the ability to sometimes turn farmland into nursery grounds when needed to give the nursery stock space to grow well. Still another benefit is the shared resources, including the crew of 22 working between the farm and nursery operation based on priority need. While Joe manages the nursery and Joe’s twin brother, Jake, focuses on the farm with his father, the twins’ mother, Marge, takes care of accounting and other desk work for both the farm and the nursery, Joe said.

Rounding out the nursery team is Office Manager Rachel Dickman, who grew up on a family farm not far from Obersinner, which she joined in 2008. “Rachel does everything under the sun in the office,” Joe said. Her duties range from interfacing with customers and organizing sales to creating tags, managing online orders, ordering supplies and more.

In the beginning

Before there were crews, there was only David at Obersinner Nursery.

Joe Obersinner in one of the unheated greenhouses the nursery maintains. They process 100,000 rooted cuttings every fall and winter, and most of their rhodies are grown that way. They only have one propagation house that is heated; otherwise, all other greenhouses are unheated. Obersinner container-finishes 65% of its catalog. PHOTO BY TRACY ILENE MILLER



Granted, the nursery started small, as a half-acre project, and David was accustomed to the idea of a self-run operation and hard work. Growing up on Obersinner Farms, he experienced only immediate family — his parents Alan and Margaret, and his siblings — doing the work.

“We had no employees,” David said. “If my dad was short-handed, he pulled me out of school to drive the tractor.”

So, with David covering all the fledgling nursery business, learning the intricacies of sales, marketing and growing, the nursery grew slowly to five acres, adding two to four greenhouses per year, and stuck to rhodies, a crop that was guaranteed to sell and did so in the non-farming session.

After 10 years on his own, David was ready to hire a nursery manager. Angela Tovar stayed for 11 years and, before leaving in 2001, started diversification of the plants grown for sale. Each year, the nurs-

ery would try new varieties its customers asked for, managing modest expansions to avoid financial drain, David said, and learned its lessons on how to grow those plants really well, before continuing to expand. From 1980 to 2000, the nursery went from one greenhouse to 28.

Even then, the nursery’s catalog was still mostly field grown. The next big shifts came with the 14-year tenure of Doug Shackelford, who succeeded Tovar as production manager. Shackelford continued to expand field acreage to more than 110 acres and took the next steps toward product diversification in products that have since become the cornerstone of the Obersinner catalog, including Japanese maples, spruces, pine, boxwood and arborvitae. As well, Shackelford was instrumental in a shift toward and the installation of pot-in-pot acreage.

Joe, named for his great-grandfather

(Top) Containerized *Buxus microphylla* 'Wintergreen' (Littleleaf Boxwood) and (below) Japanese maple seedlings are cornerstones of the Obersinner catalog.

PHOTOS BY TRACY ILENE MILLER



who took over management of the farm in 1922, remembers (100 years later!) the day the next phase of the nursery business, and his current management path, was sealed. Shackelford had told David he was looking to retire in fall 2015. Joe was 25, and he, like his twin brother, was only a few years removed from earning his degrees in agriculture and horticulture at Oregon State University.

"I had been on the farm, helping my brother on the grass seed, berries and other crops, wherever we needed hands at the time," Joe said. "At that point, I was doing tractor work, and I remember my father hopping on the tractor, and letting me know I needed to be in Doug's back pocket for the next few months and learn as much as I could."

Shackelford retired officially that fall, but even so, returned a week or two at a time to support Joe, providing his



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expertise where it made sense. A bonus — Shackelford lives not too far away.

“From where I live today, his house is less than two miles away,” Joe said.

Like his father David, who wanted to be a doctor when he was younger, Joe had dreams growing up attached to something other than the farm, like playing in the NBA. “I loved basketball,” he said.

When Joe was in high school, David made clear, especially before college, that he could study what he wanted. “He didn’t push us to work on the farm or nursery, there was no pressure; I didn’t feel I had to come back here,” Joe said. “I’m sure he’s glad to see we did, but ultimately he wanted us to do what we wanted to do.”

And ultimately, both he and his brother chose to come back.

“Farming is a kind of a livelihood and a lifestyle, and that’s what I grew up

in and grew up to appreciate,” Joe said. “Personally, there was a sense of pride in what generations before me had built, and my dad, the diversity he focused on through the ’80s to make the farm what it is today.”

Plus, there was a lot to learn.

“I didn’t gain a full appreciation until I became manager, the detail that goes into the operation,” Joe said. Each variety needs its own type of attention, and “there is never a day where it doesn’t seem something is different, or you learn something new or gain insight into something you didn’t know.”

The present and beyond

Seven years in as production manager and Joe has taken those insights to continue the direction of the nursery toward container finishing, which makes the plants easier to handle, water and sell.

“Most people, when they see a tree in

a pot, it’s easier on the eyes, and they are more inclined to buy it than a 300-pound ball and burlap,” Joe said.

That makes the numbers at Obersinner somewhat deceiving. On paper, field-grown plants make up approximately 90% of the total. But at this point, 65% of the plants are container-finished for a full season. In the last three years, Joe has added six more greenhouses to accommodate the shift to finishing in unheated greenhouses over field-finishing. (“Whenever I put up new greenhouses, they are full.”) And he will continue to move in that direction, using lifts and excavators to extract plants from the field at smaller sizes, and putting them in containers with bark mix to make them lighter. Trees are kept to 3 to 10 feet, and rhodios to no bigger than 3 feet wide.

“This makes it easier for us to handle, and our customers to handle on the back end,” Joe said. “If something doesn’t sell, we can hang on to it in a container much more easily than ball and burlap.”

Also, anything made lighter is a big plus for shipping purposes, as the trucks can only hold so much weight. Customers, most of whom for Obersinner are on the East Coast, get more bang for the buck, more plants per load.

Although container-finishing takes more digging, potting and fertilizing compared with B&B, the quality of the plant being shipped is worth it, Joe said.

With an eye toward quality and machine handling, the future at Obersinner Nursery under Joe’s management includes more pot-in-pot acreage, affording less water usage and better protection from tipping, and fields planted in wider rows to mature plants with more sunlight and air flow and to handle digging mechanically.

“Hand-digging with the shovel is a thing of the past,” Joe said.

Although Joe will continue to introduce and test new varieties — including maples, hydrangeas, magnolias and azaleas — the classic varieties will always be the foundation of their inventory because “that’s what people are asking for.” ©

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EMPLOYMENT

ASSISTANT FARM MANAGER EKSTROM NURSERY

Ekstrom Nursery in Gresham, Oregon is looking for a career oriented individual to work in multiple areas. We are looking for an experienced individual who has a strong work ethic, is disciplined, motivated for personal and professional growth and committed to the vision of our company. We have 200 acres of container, field and bare root ornamental plants. Customer base includes retail, re-wholesale and growers. The person will work closely with the owners in all aspects of container, B&B and bare root production. This is a career opportunity for a person who is interested in diverse plant production and nursery business.

Responsibilities and Qualifications

- 1) Experience in ornamental nursery production and propagation related to field, container and bare root.
- 2) Oversee all aspects of our container production.
- 3) Assist in crew management of field production practices and techniques.
- 4) Assist with supervising and scheduling daily and weekly jobs.
- 5) Must be self-motivated on projects or to work with a group or team.
- 6) Possesses strong communication skills, interpersonal skills and be a person of good character.
- 7) Computer knowledge, skills and abilities, and bilingual (English and Spanish) language desired, but not required.
- 8) Strong work ethic and positive attitude.
- 9) Valid driver's license.
- 10) Ability to work with wide variety of agricultural equipment, such as tractors and implements.
- 11) Have leadership skills with ability to make decisions, train and motivate employees.

Compensation: Salaried position is DOE and includes benefits package. Please send resumes to: ekstrom.nsy@gmail.com

EMPLOYMENT

PLANT HEALTH AND SHOP MAINTENANCE EKSTROM NURSERY

Ekstrom Nursery in Gresham, Oregon is looking for an experienced employee for a position in Plant Health and Shop Maintenance. We have 200 acres of container, field and bare root ornamental plant production.

Responsibilities and Qualifications

- 1) Possess a strong mechanical aptitude to perform light tractor maintenance and servicing
- 2) Oversee/implement plant health related to overall spray program; herbicide, fungicide & pesticide.
- 3) Must have or acquire Oregon Certified Pesticide Applicator License or ability to acquire within 6 months of hire.
- 4) Maintain and operate spray equipment.
- 5) Bilingual (English and Spanish) communication skills preferred, but not required.
- 6) Valid driver's license.
- 7) Basic computer skills helpful.
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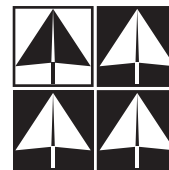


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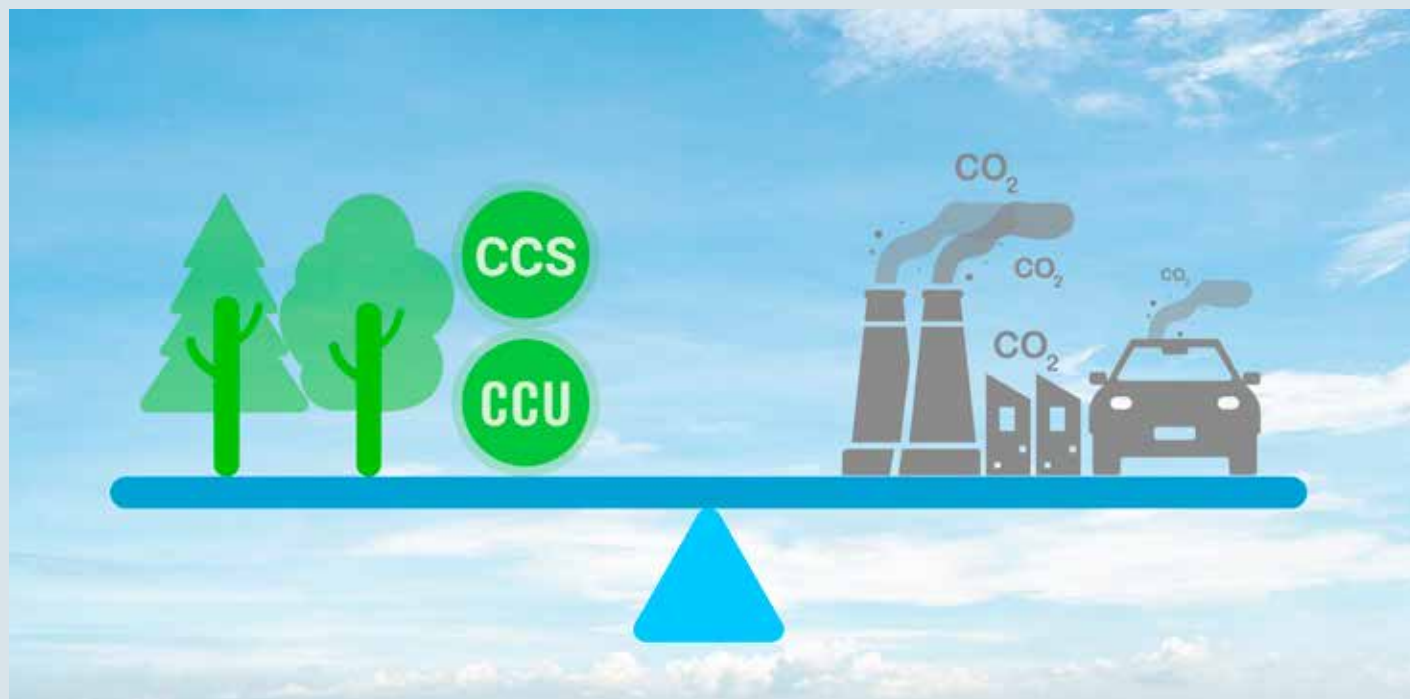


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A carbon balancing act

What effects do mowing, fertilization and irrigation have on carbon sink and sequestration in turfgrass ecosystems?

BY WRENNIE WANG, CLAIRE PHILLIPS, CLINT MATTOX AND ALEC KOWALEWSKI



PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT climate change and a growing number of government and business commitments to emissions reductions have increased focus on carbon sequestration in vegetated landscapes as a nature-based climate solution. More specifically, landscapes dominated by plants could be considered a carbon sink.

A carbon sink is anything, natural or otherwise, that accumulates and stores some carbon-containing chemical compound for an indefinite period and thereby removes carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the

atmosphere. Turfgrasses are broadly used for sports (golf, football, soccer, baseball, tennis, etc.), residential and commercial areas (home lawns and commercial real estate), and public municipalities (parks, schools, and roadsides), all of which have the potential to mitigate urban carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

The overarching objective of this project is to determine the impact of high versus low levels of mowing, nitrogen fertilization and irrigation on carbon sequestration of cool-season turfgrass. Our goal is to evaluate trade-offs between the resources

required to maintain healthy turf and its carbon sequestration potential, and to ultimately develop recommendations to minimize the greenhouse emissions associated with turfgrass maintenance. To research this objective, we conducted an extensive review of the current literature and performed a meta-analysis. We also initiated several field trials in Corvallis, Oregon.

Findings produced from the literature review showed that newly established turfgrass is usually a substantial carbon sink, rapidly accumulating carbon in the soil for more than a decade. As turf- ➤



Fig. 1. CO₂ flux is recorded every hour with two automatic chambers on a new stand of perennial ryegrass at the Lewis-Brown Horticulture Farm in Corvallis, Oregon.

grass matures, carbon sequestration rates diminish and reach a carbon neutral state around 50 years after establishment. This is due to the fact that, as soils accumulate more organic matter, soil microbes also acclimate and decompose organic matter more quickly, so that accumulation eventually ceases and the total quantity of organic matter stored in soil levels off.

An estimate of net greenhouse gas emissions determined that recently established turfgrass (less than 10 years old) is a carbon sink on average, even when including emissions from mowing and fertilization practices. This analysis also suggested that the use of synthetic fertilizers is a major source of greenhouse gas productions within turfgrass management. Using locally sourced compost, rather than synthetic nitrogen fertilizer, could potentially

help to reduce fertilizer-related emissions.

We wanted to know if turfgrass continued to be a net carbon sink when irrigation, mowing frequency and nitrogen fertilizer amounts were reduced. To quantify this, several field trials were initiated at the OSU Lewis-Brown Farm in Corvallis, Oregon.

For these projects, we are utilizing two methods to quantify CO₂ uptake and emissions between turfgrass and the atmosphere. The first method captures high-frequency dynamics on one field and uses an automatic clear chamber system (EoSense Inc., Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada), which measures CO₂ exchange every hour under optimum management practices (weekly mowing, fertilization four times per year and daily irrigation during periods of heat stress).

This method of data collection provides a continuous measure of CO₂ exchange rate throughout the year and allows us to calculate an annual carbon budget (Figure 1). The second method allows us to measure more plots and treatments, using a portable, manual, clear chamber system (PP Systems, Amesbury, Massachusetts).

We use this device to measure CO₂ exchange at midday, when turfgrass is growing most actively, once every two weeks from plots receiving different management practices of mowing (2 inches and 4 inches), fertilization (0 and 4 lbs. nitrogen fertilizer per 1,000 sq. ft. per year) and irrigation (non-irrigated control to 0.6 cm of precipitation applied four times per week, June through September) (Figure 2).

Preliminary data from the field trials suggest that in our local climate (Willamette Valley, Oregon), cool-season turfgrass was able to assimilate atmospheric CO₂ at high rates during cool months, which suggested a winter carbon sink. During summer, environmental stresses including heat and drought can largely reduce the ability of cool-season turfgrass to assimilate atmospheric CO₂.

Fertilization and mowing height can affect CO₂ flux rates during cool months. When differences were observed, turfgrass maintained at the 2-inch mowing height sequestered more carbon on average than the turfgrass mowed at a 4-inch height. This is likely because the lower mowing height is stimulating more lateral growth or turfgrass density. During the cool months, fertilization typically increased turfgrass carbon sequestration. Fertilizer

applications did not improve summer carbon sequestration.

These results would suggest that fertilizer applied during periods of peak growth and development will stimulate growth and improve carbon sequestration, and fertilizer applications should be avoided during periods of environmental stress (i.e., the summer months). Summer irrigation provided very little to no improvements in carbon sequestration, likely because irrigation not only increased turfgrass growth but also increased soil microbial activity, prompting decay of soil organic matter and releasing CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest that management practices (mowing, fertilization and irrigation) have limited effects on CO₂ flux rate. Therefore, low-input turfgrass is likely

a good choice for reducing management inputs while maintaining carbon sequestration and other environmental benefits.

We will continue to collect data to calculate an annual carbon balance, which will provide a better understanding of the cool-season turfgrass system in our local environment. This effort will provide information on the net emissions of turfgrass, helping turfgrass professionals explain their environmental impacts to a concerned public, while identifying risks and opportunities associated with emerging carbon programs.

We also hope to identify best management practices for enhancing carbon sequestration and to deliver these results to turfgrass seed producers, turfgrass managers (golf course superintendents, commercial turfgrass managers, school and park employees) and other





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About the authors

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Fig. 2. Carbon sequestration is collected every two weeks on a subset of treatments focusing on mowing, irrigation and fertility trials on a mixed stand of cool-season turfgrasses.





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A meaningful foundation

The Pacific Northwest is rich in its history. It was the destination of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, but also developed a rugged trade that brought goods to the world.

Look at the names of rivers, towns and natural features. The influence of indigenous cultures is part of what makes this area special. Travel this diverse state and you will fall in love with it all over again. I am proud to be Oregon born. It has been the only place I would live and raise a family.

A misconception on totem poles

Totem poles are part of the surviving First Nations culture in the Pacific Northwest. They represent and commemorate ancestry, histories, people, or events. They are typically made from red cedar, a malleable wood relatively abundant in the Pacific Northwest. The people would erect them in a visible place within a community.

People sometimes refer to the “low man on the totem pole” as if that means low status. But according to Canadian naturalist Pat Kramer, an expert on First Nations culture, the lowest figures on the totem pole are often considered the most prestigious. The bottom six feet of a totem pole are seen at eye level, after all.

“The helpers do the high up parts, and the master finishes the low end of the pole,” Kramer wrote. “Higher-up figures are more representational and, if anything, slightly less important.” In other words, the foundation is the most critical consideration.

That is the role the Oregon Association of Nurseries embraces on behalf of our awesome community of growers, greenhouse operators, retailers, landscapers, and allied businesses who make up the green industry.

The past informs the future

Oregon was (and is) geographically fortunate when it comes to the nursery industry. Its combination of a mild climate, abundant water and rich, volcanic soils drew those linked to plants.

As reported in our OAN 75th Anniversary book, Henderson Luelling (with William Meek) built one of the first nurseries near Milwaukie in the 1850s. In a sense, he proved to be the “low man on the totem pole,” as a foundational influence

still felt today.

Through world wars, economic calamities, changes in transportation and marketing, and shifting consumer preferences, Oregon cultivated a space as THE preferred provider of quality green goods. The 1980s rise of the industry in its modern form has been well documented in my column in the past. To succeed, there are no days off. New generations are held to the same standard as their forebears. Our future is bright because our members are bright.

Service to industry

Next year, the OAN turns 90 (and the Farwest Show turns 50!). From the base of the Pacific Coast Association of Nurserymen, to the Portland Wholesale Nursery Company to organize marketing and orderly production of nursery stock, and then the creation of the OAN in 1933, Oregon's green industry has always set our own path.

The association became the first nursery group to adopt “caliper standards” and create grades of nursery goods. It was a defining moment to show leadership and innovation by a small state, tucked up north on the West Coast.

Volunteer leaders have shaped the evolution of the association and what it means to serve. I am proud of our state board of directors and every member that volunteers at their church, school, and community.

When I was given the privilege to serve as your executive director over 12 years ago, I pledged to be an honest voice and be clear headed in good times and bad. I promised to match the drive and work ethic of our members, so we all could make this industry the best it can be.

For every member that has remained at the OAN, I thank you for your faith in the association. Former members, I would welcome you back to an organization that spends every waking moment to provide service above self.

Taking service to another level

To better serve the industry and association, the staff at the OAN spent the bet-



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ter part of four days on a process known as “policy deployment” (or “Hoshin Kanri”). As we learned, it's an effective way to go beyond “what you always do” and execute breakthrough improvements.

OAN Immediate Past President Josh Robinson went through this process at Robinson Nursery and urged and supported us in our effort. The Peters Company (Liz and Rick Peters) served as our leaders and guides throughout.

Lean organizations use the method to connect daily activities with long-term goals. Annual strategies are developed in a dynamic process. The plan gives us a roadmap for the year and a simple, self-governing accountability system.

First you need a mission, and we drew on the OAN Mission Statement: The long-term success, profitability and excellence of Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry.

I set three goals to be the compass for the next 3-5 years: 1. Deliver “Gold Standard” value to members; 2. Build fiscal stability and strength; and 3. Grow in political influence.

From there, we came up with our initiatives to help in these goals — things we all agreed would move the needle. We are hitting this head on.

Renewing your voice

Local indigenous nations got it right in thinking of the most important person or element at the bottom of the totem pole. You, the members, are our foundation! Without you, we never can ensure that the industry remains strong.

I ask that you renew your membership, or rejoin, as the case may be. You will have many opportunities to share input and drive the industry forward. Please help us make 2023 the best year it can be. ©

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