

# Digger

DECEMBER 2023

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# Digger



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Printed in Oregon on domestic recycled paper when available.

On the cover: Drakes Crossing Nursery covers more than 12,000 acres near Silverton. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

On this page: Right top: Researchers are studying olive trees to determine which varieties are suited for Oregon. PHOTO BY NEIL BELL. Right bottom: Improving plant knowledge and skills in plant production is the key to healthy crops. PHOTO COURTESY OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

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29751 S.W. Town Center Loop West  
Wilsonville, OR 97070

PH 503-682-5089 PORTLAND  
PH 888-283-7219 NATIONWIDE  
FAX 503-682-5099 MAIN OFFICE  
FAX 503-682-5727 PUBLICATIONS  
info@oan.org EMAIL  
www.oan.org WEB  
www.diggermagazine.com NEWS BLOG

## STAFF

**Jeff Stone** JStone@OAN.org  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 503-582-2003

**Beth Farmer** BFarmer@OAN.org  
COMMUNICATIONS & WEB DESIGN MANAGER 503-582-2013

**Curt Kipp** CKipp@OAN.org  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS 503-582-2008

**Mary Claire Lamm** MCLamm@OAN.org  
EVENT & EDUCATION MANAGER 503-582-2004

**Tana Klum** TKlum@OAN.org  
OFFICE COORDINATOR 503-582-2012

**Allan Niemi** ANiemi@OAN.org  
DIRECTOR OF EVENTS 503-582-2005

**Vic Panichkul** VPanichkul@OAN.org  
PUBLICATIONS MANAGER 503-582-2009

**Stephanie Weihrauch** SWeihrauch@OAN.org  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION 503-582-2001

## DIGGER

**Curt Kipp** CKipp@OAN.org  
EDITOR & DISPLAY ADVERTISING 503-582-2008

**Vic Panichkul** VPanichkul@OAN.org  
MANAGING EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR 503-582-2009

**Beth Farmer** BFarmer@OAN.org  
E-DIGGER PRODUCER 503-582-2013

**Dr. Lloyd Nackley** Lloyd.Nackley@OregonState.edu  
GROWING KNOWLEDGE SERIES COORDINATOR Oregon State University

**Jon Bell, Mike Darcy, Erica Browne Grivas, Mitch Lies, Emily Lindblom, Kym Pokorny, Debbie Teashon** CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

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## 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Amanda Staehely**  
PRESIDENT  
Columbia Nursery  
29490 S, Jackson Road  
Canby, OR 97013  
Wayne@Columbia-Nursery.com  
503-810-2598

**Todd Nelson**  
PAST-PRESIDENT  
Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.  
17280 Boones Ferry Rd. N.E.  
Woodburn, OR 97071  
Info@BountifulFarms.com  
503-981-7494

**Ben Verhoeven**  
PRESIDENT-ELECT  
Columbia Nursery  
32355 Peoria Rd SW  
Albany, OR 97321  
BenV@PeoriaGardens.com  
541-753-8519

**Darcy Ruef**  
VICE PRESIDENT  
Al's Garden & Home  
1220 N. Pacific Hwy.  
Woodburn, OR 97071  
DRuef@Als-GardenCenter.com  
503-981-1245

**Patrick Newton**  
TREASURER  
Powell's Nursery Inc.  
5054 SW Boyd Rd.  
Gaston, OR 97119  
PowellNursery@gmail.com  
503-357-0631

**Jesse Nelson**  
SECRETARY  
Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.  
30120 S.E. Waybill Road  
Boring, OR 97009  
JNelson@HansNelson.com  
503-663-3348

**Chris Robinson**  
MEMBER-AT-LARTE  
Robinson Nursery Inc.  
chris@robinsonnursery.com  
877-855-8733

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Patrick Peterson**  
ASSOCIATE MEMBER  
BASF Turf & Ornamentals  
Patrick.Peterson@BASF.com  
971-286-1457

**Adam Farley**  
CONTAINER GROWER  
Countryside Nursery  
afarley@countrysidenursery.com  
503-678-0511

**Dave Daniel**  
CONTAINER GROWER  
Fall Creek Farm & Nursery Inc  
DaveD@FallCreekNursery.com  
541-937-2973

**Blake Nelson**  
CONTAINER GROWER  
Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.  
Blake@BountifulFarms.com  
503-981-7494

**Joe Dula**  
FIELD / B&B GROWER  
Moana Nursery  
joed@moananursery.com  
503-266-8170

**Sam Barkley**  
FIELD / BARE ROOT GROWER  
J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.  
SamB@JFSchmidt.com  
503-663-4128

**Jay Sanders**  
FIELD / BARE ROOT GROWER  
KG Farms Inc.  
jsanders@kgfarmsinc.com  
503-678-3245

**Andrea Avila Aragon**  
GREENHOUSE  
Smith Gardens  
Andrea.Avila-Aragon@  
SmithGardens.com  
503-678-5373

**Tyler Meskers**  
GREENHOUSE  
Oregon Flowers Inc.  
tyler@oregonflowers.com  
503-678-2580

**Gary S. English**  
RETAIL  
Landsystems Nursery  
gary@landssystemsnursery.com  
541-382-7646

## My fourth grade son, Luke, has been playing the famous Oregon Trail video game.

Besides some updated graphics, the game is essentially the same one I played at his age.

For those unfamiliar with the game, you must embark on the Oregon Trail and hopefully make it to Oregon City before winter hits. Many obstacles and misfortunes await you along the way.

So far, he has attempted the game maybe four times and hasn't made it to Oregon yet. His party has died of rattle-snake bites, cholera, the wagon falling on him and he now has my 5-year-old, Grant, scared to death of dysentery (which honestly, isn't that bad if you knew him).

He finally asked me, "Good grief! Did anyone actually ever make it to Oregon?"

Without even hesitating, I replied: "Obviously, only the strongest pioneers."

But isn't that the truth if you look around our industry? We are all incredibly blessed to grow the most beautiful nursery stock in this fertile state we live in. I believe that Oregon nurseries produce an unmatched product. But just because it may be easier to grow a beautiful plant here, does not make it easy to own a nursery in this state.

We may not have rattlesnake bites and a wagon falling on us, but it feels like it at times when more and more legislation is passed that makes it harder for us to do what we love. It's not easy.

In the last few years, we have had to deal with minimum wage increases, ag overtime, a new Corporate Activity Tax, water rights changes, and constant new Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) rules just to name a few.

Aside from the legislative challenges, we have also endured record heat waves, horrific wildfires, and an ice storm that left many of us without power for weeks.

The cost of doing business in Oregon is undoubtedly higher than it is in many of our competing states. But I look around our industry, and see the MOST hard-



Amanda Staehely

working, patient, and focused group of people that are here because they love what they do, and they are the best at doing it.

Talk about that true Oregon pioneering spirit. I am a firm believer that you must love the work you do to do it well, and the people that make up Oregon's nursery industry inspire me constantly with their perseverance. The people within this organization are what makes Oregon "Nursery Country."

As I start my year as OAN president, I see many goals ahead of me, but a few stand out today.

I would encourage everyone to take part in an upcoming advocacy training. It is incredibly helpful to learn how to use your knowledge to enlighten legislatures. I am excited and ready to tackle some political challenges ahead. I promise to speak and represent the organization as a whole — and not for the betterment of my personal business — as I know that our voices are so much stronger when we speak as one.

And finally, I hope to meet as many of you as possible and earn your respect and friendship over this upcoming year. It is an honor to represent this group of talented growers, business owners, and individuals that share that Oregon pioneering spirit and make this amazing state truly "Nursery Country." ☺

*Amanda Staehely*



# Calendar

Get the word out about your event! Email details to [calendar@oan.org](mailto:calendar@oan.org) by the 10th day of the month to be included in the next issue of *Digger*.

## DECEMBER 8

### LAST CHANCE PESTICIDE CREDIT

Join Washington State University, University of Idaho, and Oregon State University Extension Services for a Last Chance Pesticide Credit event from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, December 8 at Umatilla Hall, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton, Oregon, or attend virtually online. The event will feature speakers on a variety of dryland grain, rangeland, and weed management topics. Participants will receive five continuing education credits for pesticide license holders in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Additional in-person locations will be offered in Walla Walla, Washington, Clarkston, Washington, and Colfax, Washington. You can also attend the event virtually via Zoom. For more information and to register, go to <https://TinyUrl.com/PesticideCred> or contact [Cody.Copp@OregonState.edu](mailto:Cody.Copp@OregonState.edu) or 541-938-5597.

## DECEMBER 13

### SUPER EL NIÑO AND WHAT THAT MEANS FOR WINTER/SPRING 2024

The Oregon Association of Nurseries Willamette Chapter is hosting Phil Volker, founder and president and senior meteorologist of extended range weather forecasting company ERF Inc. He will discuss the impact of the Super El Niño on weather this winter and spring at Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm, 33814 S. Meridian Road, Woodburn, Oregon from noon-1:30 p.m. Cost is \$20 per person, food truck available and two drink tickets provided. Register at [TinyUrl.com/OANElNino](http://TinyUrl.com/OANElNino).

## DECEMBER 13, 14; JANUARY 17, 18, 2024

### FIRST AID/CPR CLASSES AT OAN

Need a first aid/CPR certification renewal for yourself or one of your employees? The Oregon Association of Nurseries is holding sessions in English on December 13 and January 17 and sessions in Spanish on December 14 and January 18. Class times are 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The cost is \$60 per person whether you are renewing certification or taking the class for the first time. Certification is good for two years and includes instruction and a certification card. Classes are held at the OAN office, 29751 S.W. Town Center Loop West, Wilsonville, Oregon. Register at [www.OAN.org/Page/CPRclass](http://www.OAN.org/Page/CPRclass).

## JANUARY 1, 2024

### HORTICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Do you know a high school, college or graduate student who is considering a career as a nursery or landscape professional? If so, applications are being taken beginning January 1, 2024 for 20 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 from the Oregon Association of Nurseries Foundation. The scholarships are sponsored by individual OAN chapters, and its members. April 1 is the last day to apply. Go to [www.OAN.org/ONF](http://www.OAN.org/ONF) for more information, or contact OAN Director of Finance Stephanie Weihrauch at 503-582-2001



In 2019, the recipients of the OAN Hall of Fame award were (from left): Brad Klann (representing Henderson Luelling), Bob Fessler, Jean Fessler, Keith Warren, Paul Iwasaki (representing Art and Teri Iwasaki), Mark Krautmann, and Jolly Krautmann. OAN FILE PHOTO

## DECEMBER 8

### NOMINATIONS DUE FOR OAN HALL OF FAME

Now's the time for you to nominate a deserving individual for the Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame Class of 2024. The award was established to honor and recognize those who have been instrumental in the development of the Oregon nursery industry, have brought credit and recognition to the industry or have had profound historical impact on the industry. Nominations to be submitted by December 8 at [www.OAN.org/Page/AwardsNominate](http://www.OAN.org/Page/AwardsNominate). The event will be held in February with details to be announced.

or [Scholarships@OAN.org](mailto:Scholarships@OAN.org).

## JANUARY 10-12, 2024

### MID-ATLANTIC NURSERY TRADE SHOW

The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show will once again take place at the Baltimore Convention Center, 1 W. Pratt St. in Baltimore, Maryland. MANTS, produced by the state nursery and landscape associations of Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia, is one of the largest private trade shows serving the horticulture industry, with more than 11,000 attendees and 900 exhibitors in 2023. Registration is open and convention lodging is available. There is a waiting list for exhibitors. For information or to register, go to [www.MANTS.com](http://www.MANTS.com).

## JANUARY 17-19, 2024

### NORTHWEST AG SHOW

The 54th Northwest Agricultural Show will take place at the Oregon State Fair and Expo Center, 2330 17th St. N.E., in Salem, Oregon. For more information, go to [www.NorthwestAgShow.com](http://www.NorthwestAgShow.com). A sister show, the Central Oregon Agricultural Show, will take place April 6-7 at the Deschutes County Fair and Expo Center, 3800 S.W. Airport Way, in Redmond, Oregon. For information, go to [www.NorthwestAgShow.com/Central-Oregon-Ag-Show](http://www.NorthwestAgShow.com/Central-Oregon-Ag-Show).

## JANUARY 22-24, 2024

### UTAH GREEN

Presented by the Utah Nursery & Landscape Association, the event will be held at Mountain

America Expo Center, 9575 State St., Sandy, Utah. The show features green industry vendors from across the nation and officer seminars on topics such as business management, landscape design, plant material, irrigation, and many others. For information or to register, go to [www.UtahGreen.org](http://www.UtahGreen.org).


## JANUARY 23-26, 2024

### IPPS WESTERN REGION ANNUAL MEETING

The 62nd International Plant Propagator's Society (IPPS) Western Region Annual Meeting will be at Pechanga Resort Casino, 45000 Pechanga Parkway, in Temecula, California. The Western Region will be hosting this meeting in conjunction with UC Nursery and Floriculture Alliance. Speakers will focus on a range of topics from water management to new plants. Early-bird rates are available until December 22. For information or to register, go to [www.IPPS.org](http://www.IPPS.org).

## JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 1, 2024

### PROGREEN EXPO

ProGreen EXPO is the only green industry conference in the Rocky Mountain Region of its kind. More than 5,000 green industry professionals gather every year at the Colorado Convention Center, 700 14th St., Denver, Colorado, to gain vital knowledge and skills to improve business, educate employees and discover the latest information for the upcoming season. For information or to register, go to [www.ProGreenExpo.com](http://www.ProGreenExpo.com). 





# 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](mailto:News@OAN.org).



**Lisa Charpilloz  
Hanson**

## Governor appoints new ODA director

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek appointed Lisa Charpilloz Hanson, executive director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), as the director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Charpilloz Hanson previously served 15 years as deputy director of ODA.

“Oregon faces complex natural resources challenges across our state that require data-driven, resilient solutions,” Gov. Kotek stated in an announcement. “Lisa Charpilloz Hanson brings decades of experience working with natural resource communities to meet the needs of Oregonians across the state.”

“It is an honor to return to the Department of Agriculture and serve Oregonians,” Charpilloz Hanson said.

According to an article in the *Capital Press* agricultural newspaper (Salem, Oregon), ag groups applauded the appointment.

Oregon Association of Nurseries Executive Director Jeff Stone said that Charpilloz Hanson is trusted by the ag community and respected by conservationists and environmentalists. “There’s a lot of big issues in ag, and you need a leader who can talk to all sides but also be able to carry out the mission the governor wants to carry out,” he said. “Lisa is a person who can do that.”



Brian Bauman checks hanging baskets at Bauman's Farm. Bauman's received incentives from Energy Trust of Oregon for opting to replace aging greenhouses with an energy-efficient model made with 100 percent twin-wall polycarbonate. PHOTO COURTESY ENERGY TRUST OF OREGON

## DON'T MISS OPPORTUNITY TO GET CASH FROM ENERGY TRUST

**Energy Trust of Oregon** is offering cash incentives for qualifying equipment purchases and improvements made during the past six months to conserve water or energy.

Qualifying improvements and purchases include building and pipe insulation, fan and pump variable frequency drives, greenhouse natural gas heaters, indoor dehumidifiers, irrigation pumps, steam traps, water leak repairs, battery charges and welders.

Some examples of projects that qualify and possible rebate amounts:

- Condensing unit heaters for greenhouses: \$13.75 per KBTU/hour input
- Under-bench heating: \$2.15 per sq. ft.

- Pipe insulation: \$25 per foot
- High efficiency condensing boiler upgrade: \$6.50 per KBTU/hour input
- Irrigation gasket replacement: \$2 per gasket (limit two per acre)

A completed and signed incentive form with required invoices must be returned to Energy Trust within 180 days of purchase, no later than December 31, 2023.

For a comprehensive list of incentive categories and forms, go to <https://TinyUrl.com/EnergyTrustRebate>.

For questions, or should you have inquiries or a substantial project in mind that falls beyond the scope of covered equipment, contact Whitney Rideout at 503-807-0398 or [Whitney@SkyGardensDesign.com](mailto:Whitney@SkyGardensDesign.com).



## Northwest News

### MONROVIA'S BEE A WINNER PROGRAM GENERATES MORE THAN BUZZ

Monrovia's 2023 Bee a Winner pollinator plant giveaway was a success, and the company says now's the time for garden centers to secure a spot in the 2024 pollinator giveaway.

Monrovia said it has partnered with more than 200 garden centers to promote the importance of pollinator-attracting plants, giving away select varieties during Pollinator Week.

Consumer participation expanded in 2023 with more than 20,000 entries and more than 70% of them opted into their local garden center email list.

Garden centers that placed a minimum order of Monrovia's pollinator-friendly plants received 10 additional 1-gallon plants, for free, to use as customer prizes.

The orders include a poster with an entry form QR code and online entry form for home gardeners to enter. Monrovia sales representatives will have more information.



Monrovia partnered with more than 200 garden centers to promote the importance of pollinator-attracting plants, giving away select varieties during Pollinator Week. PHOTO COURTESY MONROVIA

### WINTER TRUCKS TO TRADE SHOWS PROGRAM NOW ACCEPTING RESERVATIONS

Registration is underway for the OAN Winter Trucks to Trade Shows program. This OAN member benefit allows companies exhibiting in the winter trade shows to ship booth material — conveniently and economically — to The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) in Baltimore, Maryland, the Idaho Horticulture Expo in Boise, Utah Green in the Salt Lake City area, and the ProGreen Expo in Denver, Colorado.

Go to [www.OAN.org/t2ts](http://www.OAN.org/t2ts) for all the details and to sign up.

The trucks to each show have individual reservation deadlines and individual costs. Prices are based on last year's participation and are subject to change if fewer nurseries participate, or if fuel surcharges or increased truck prices occur. Trucks may be cancelled if there are not at least 13 pallets reserved on each truck.

Space will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Full advance payment is required to reserve space.

For questions, please contact Mary Claire Lamm at [MLamm@OAN.org](mailto:MLamm@OAN.org) or 503-582-2004. "If interested in shipping to a trade show or conference that's not on our list, let us know," she said. "This program exists to serve members, and if there is enough interest to make it work, we will try our best to send a truck to any industry trade show."

### OREGON'S NEW POLLINATOR PARADISE LICENSE PLATES NOW AVAILABLE

There's a buzz in the air surrounding Oregon's new "bee plate." Pollinator Paradise license plates are now available through the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles.

The artist behind the plate is Marek Stanton, 16, a student at Summit Learning Charter in Eagle Rock, Oregon. He is the youngest member of OSU Extension Service's Master Melittologist program.

Pollinator Paradise plates have a \$40 surcharge due at first issuance and every two-year renewal. After the deduction of Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicles division administrative costs, proceeds from the surcharge will be directed to the Oregon State University Department of Horticulture to support research programs focused on keeping pollinator populations healthy.

The new plates will be available at



PHOTO COURTESY OREGON DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

DMV and through participating auto dealers just like various other specialty plates, including Salmon, Cultural Trust, Crater Lake, Wine Country, Trail Blazers, Gray Whale, Oregon Duck, Smokey Bear, and Watch for Wildlife. Drivers may also apply for a replacement Pollinator Paradise plate with or without renewal online at <https://TinyUrl.com/BeePlate>.

## Announcements

### MARION AG ADDS NEW STAFF, PROMOTES OTHERS TO POSITION FOR GROWTH

Marion Ag Service Inc. has announced several new hires and promotions to support its horticultural market growth.

Jeff Freeman, the company's director of sales and marketing,



Jeff Freeman



**Erin Galyean**

will transition into a new role as chief strategy and marketing officer. Freeman will lead the company's growth and business development strategies.

The company has also hired Erin Galyean as chief financial officer. Galyean is a Certified Public Accountant with more than 20 years as an accounting professional.

The company has expanded its horticultural team by hiring John Wayland as horticulture business development lead and added Susan Bradley and Ashlee Spickler to the support team. Wayland has worked in the Pacific Northwest nursery and greenhouse markets for decades, leading advancement in the use of controlled release fertilizer and crop protection inputs.

To support the growth of the wholesale market segment, the company hired Justin Horlacher as wholesale sales repre-

sentative. He brings more than 20 years of experience networking with distributors across the West.

To drive growth across all of Marion Ag's market segments, the company has added Doug Grott as director of sales. Doug has a vast network of relationships from more than 20 years in ag retail, business development and his presence in the Willamette Valley.

### LAWLER PROMOTED TO SALES REP AT EASON

Keven Lawler has been promoted to sales representative at **Eason Horticultural Resources Inc.** where he will focus on servicing customers in New Jersey and south-east New York, the company said in an announcement. Lawler previously worked in nursery logistics.

Eason Horticultural Resources is a horticulture broker based in Ft. Wright,

Kentucky. Founded in 1993, EHR serves as a consultant and broker to retail garden center growers, wholesale greenhouse growers, nurserymen, and landscapers.

### ROB ROOD JOINS T.O. PLASTICS

**T.O. Plastics, Inc.**, a leading thermoforming manufacturer of horticultural containers and trays in Clearwater, Minnesota, has named Rob Rood as northeast regional sales manager.

Rood has worked in the green industry for over 25 years, primarily in the tree and shrub wholesale market.

"We're very excited to have Rob on board ... he brings a great amount of industry knowledge and experience to the role with his background in both horticulture and agriculture," said Jared Rusch, vice president of sales and marketing.



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## In Memoriam

### TERRENCE (TERRY) AUGUST MENNINGER

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is saddened to report the passing of Terrence (Terry) August Menninger, a longtime nursery professional.

A celebration of life will be held from 1–4 p.m. February 17, 2024 at Palmer Creek Community Event Center, 606 4th St., Dayton, Oregon.

Menninger was born to Fredrick John Menninger II and Louise Elizabeth Menninger in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on February 14, 1952, the third of six children. He grew up in La Cañada, California and graduated from St Francis High School. He then attended University of California, Santa Cruz studying biology.

After spending a few years work-



Terrence (Terry) August Menninger

ing at Mammoth Ski Resort he returned to La Cañada to take classes at Pasadena City College. It was there that he met his wife, Candace. They traveled together to Germany where he solidified his passion for German lager and the nursery industry. Menninger and his wife returned to California where he attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, earning a degree in horticulture.

Menninger had a love for traveling and the outdoors, dedicating his life to a 40-plus year career in the nursery industry in Oregon where he eventually settled down and raised his two daughters with his wife.

Menninger is survived by his wife, Candace; his daughter and her husband, Kate Menninger and Nate McCoy, and grandson August McCoy; and his daughter and her husband Melissa and Patrick Molomby. He is also survived by his brothers Fredrick Menninger and his wife Margaret, Kevin Menninger and his wife Kim, Chris Menninger and his wife Kim, Ned Menninger and his wife Andrea, and his sister Linda Healy and her husband John. He is also survived by his mother-in-law Helen Donaldson, sisters-in-law Cyndi Wood and her husband David, Gayle Onorato and her husband Pat, brother-in-law Rich Donaldson and 16 nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Menninger devoted his entire working life to the nursery business and working with Hispanic laborers. Contributions can be made to PCUN, an organization that supports farm workers in Oregon. ©

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# OREGON ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES CONVENTION

## Staehely takes reins at Convention

**A**MANDA STAEHEL, co-owner of **Columbia Nursery** in Canby, Oregon, took the reins as president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries Board of Directors at the 2023 OAN Convention. The convention was held October 27-28 at Brasada Ranch, a destination resort east of the Bend area in Central Oregon.

Staehely accepted the gavel from Todd Nelson of **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**, Woodburn, Oregon, who became the immediate past president. Joining them on the 2023-24 OAN Executive Committee are President-Elect Ben Verhoeven, **Peoria Gardens**, Albany, Oregon; Vice President Darcy Ruef, **AI's Garden & Home**, Woodburn, Oregon; Treasurer Patrick Newton, **Powell's Nursery Inc.**, Gaston, Oregon; Secretary Jesse Nelson, **Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.**, Boring, Oregon; and Member-at-Large Chris Robinson, **Robinson Nursery Inc.**, Amity, Oregon.

The Executive Committee is a subset of the OAN Board of Directors. That board also includes 10 members representing specific industry sectors. There are five



2023-24 Oregon Association of Nurseries President Amanda Staehely began her term at the 2023 OAN Convention at Brasada Ranch Resort, Powell Butte, Oregon. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

new such representatives joining the board and five returning representatives. The new members include Patrick Peterson of **BASF Turf & Ornamentals**, representing associate members; Dave Daniel, **Fall Creek Farm & Nursery Inc.**, representing container growers; Blake Nelson, **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**, representing container growers; Sam Barkley, **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.**, representing field and bare root growers; and Andrea Avila Aragon, **Smith Gardens**, representing greenhouse growers.

Returning members include Adam Farley, **Countryside Nursery**, represent-

ing container growers; Joe Dula, **Moana Nursery**, representing field/B&B growers; Jay Sanders, **KG Farms**, representing field/bare root growers; Tyler Meskers, **Oregon Flowers Inc.**, representing greenhouse growers; and Gary English, **Landsystems Nursery**, representing retailers.

Those concluding their board service in 2023 include past president Josh Robinson of **Robinson Nursery Inc.**, Tom Brewer of **The HC Companies**, Ron Kinney of **Monrovia**, Lorne Blackman of **Walla Walla Nursery Co. Inc.**, and Wes Bailey of **Smith Gardens**. ☺

## Industry service and excellence recognized

**T**HE OAN recognized industry leaders and contributors for their excellence at the annual President's Awards Banquet, held October 27 at the OAN Convention at Brasada Ranch resort, Powell Butte, Oregon.

OAN Past President Jim Simnitt of **Simnitt Nursery** served as master of ceremonies for the evening. An Awards Committee reviewed nominations received from the OAN membership and made the final selections. Most awards were pre-

sented by a past recipient of that award.

The Clayton W. Hannon Distinguished Service Award went to Don Sprague, owner of nursery and garden supplier and retailer **Gallery Iron Works**. It serves to recognize a specific, notable service to the industry. Patrick Newton accepted the award on behalf of Sprague, who was unable to attend.

Sprague was honored for his longtime contributions to the Farwest Show and the former Yard, Garden and Patio Show.

Over many years, he has provided hard goods including tables, chairs, hangers and displays to elevate the experience at both shows. He also has promoted both shows extensively, including providing bus tours from his store to the YGP Show.

The Emerging Nursery Leader of the Year Award went to Allison Pennell, a sales representative with plant brokers **McHutchison Inc.** This award is given to an emerging nursery professional for outstanding service to the OAN and industry. ➤➤

# OREGON ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES CONVENTION

Pennell was recognized for her time in the industry working at retail garden centers, on the OAN staff, as director of development at The Oregon Garden, and finally in her more recent role with McHutchison. She has also continued to serve on the Farwest Show Committee. Past winner Jesse Nelson presented her with the award. “Ali does not do anything half-hearted,” he said.

The Chapter or Committee of the Year award went to the Mt. Hood Chapter of OAN. The award is given to a chapter or committee that is particularly successful in their service to the OAN membership, cultivating exceptional energy, new ideas and member participation. The Mt. Hood Chapter has done exactly that, creating a series of fun get-togethers to build involvement and camaraderie, including pitch-and-putt golf events and taco truck dinners.

President-Elect Ben Verhoeven presented the award, with Scott Ekstrom, Anthony Kinen, Sam Barkley and Vladimir Lomen accepting it on behalf of the chapter.

The Political Awareness Award went to Jesse Nelson of **Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.** It serves to honor an individual who has shown exceptional political awareness in dedicated support of the nursery industry. Nelson served as an industry voice as nurseries rose to object to a proposed City of Portland water treatment plant in the middle of an agricultural zone.

Past winner Mark Bigej presented Nelson with the award. “Jesse Nelson was the tip of the spear in organizing the nursery owners against this proposal,” Bigej said.

The Special Service Award went to Jim Johnson, land use and water planning coordinator for the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The award recognizes a special and specific act of service to the industry. Johnson put together a map showing where nurseries were located in relation to Portland’s proposed water treatment plant.

Rod Park of **Park’s Nursery** presented Johnson with the award, describing him as a talented advocate for farming. “He



Those present and recognized at the 2023 OAN Convention Presidential Awards Banquet included (back row, l-r) Stephanie Weihrauch, Lee Powell, Todd Nelson, Lisa Nelson, Anthony Linen, Jesse Nelson, Leigh Geschwill, Jim Johnson, Allison Pennell, Steve Shropshire, Jeff Stone, Vladimir Women, Sam Barkley, Leanne Van Essen, and (front row, l-r) Scott Ekstrom, Treda McCaw, Paul Fukasawa and Dave Van Essen. Those honored but not present included Don Sprague, Justin Ford and Blake Nelson. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

paints a picture of the land, the water and the right to farm,” Park said. “His mastery of the subject translates into a picture that people can see.”

The Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Allied Trades Award went to Steve Shropshire, a shareholder with the **Jordan Ramis PC** law firm. It is given to honor an allied trade individual who has shown exemplary support for the OAN, the industry and members. Shropshire has served for years as OAN’s chief legal counsel, and as a member of the OAN’s Advocacy Team, reviewing proposed legislation and often anticipating, and responding to, issues to come that could affect the industry.

OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone presented Shropshire with the award. “I asked to present this award for one reason, and it’s because Steve Shropshire deserves it,” Stone said.

The Outstanding Service Award went to Leigh Geschwill, co-owner of wholesale grower **F & B Farms and Nursery Inc.**, which also has a retail operation, Happy Bee Garden Center. It is given in recognition of long-term service to the industry and association. Past winner Kyle Fessler presented her with the award.

“She has stepped up and done so many more things for our industry,”

Fessler said. “She joined the Horticultural Research Institute board of directors and will be president next year. She has brought forth hundreds of thousands of dollars of research for our industry.” He added that Geschwill is a compelling and effective voice for the industry on a variety of issues, including most recently taxation.

The awards presentations also included outgoing president Todd Nelson’s Five Star Service Award presentations, traditionally given to individuals who provided key support or assistance to help make it a successful year.

This year’s representatives include Justin Ford of **Bountiful Farms**, for assistance with Nelson’s monthly President’s Message columns in Digger; Blake Nelson of **Bountiful Farms**, who co-owns the nursery and watched over it when Nelson was absent; Todd’s wife, Lisa Nelson, for her support during his year as president; OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone, for serving as an effective industry advocate and organizer, as well as tour guide during a visit to Congressional and federal offices in Washington, D.C.; and Stephanie Weihrauch, OAN director of finance, for her mastery of accounting and numbers that helped the OAN board make sound, well-grounded decisions. ☺

OREGON ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES  
**CONVENTION**

## OAN awards five Honorary Life memberships



2023 OAN Honorary Life member Paul Fukasawa, with wife Linda (left) and presenter Mark Bigej (right). PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



2023 OAN Honorary Life member Treda McCaw (left), with presenter Crystal Cady. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

**T**HE OREGON ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES has five new honorary life members. All were announced at the 2023 OAN Convention, held at Brasada Ranch, Powell Butte, Oregon. This honor is given in recognition of a lifetime of invaluable service to the nursery and greenhouse industry.

The newest OAN Honorary Life members are Paul Fukasawa, **Al's Garden & Home**; Treda McCaw, **Kraemer's Nursery** and **Vertical Accents Nursery**; Lee Powell, **Garland Nursery**; and Dave and Leanne Van Essen, **Van Essen Nursery Co.** They join 27 other living OAN Honorary Life members and 47 in all that have been awarded, according to OAN records.

Mark Bigej made the presentation to Fukasawa on behalf of his father, Jack Bigej. Fukasawa worked for **Fred C. Gloeckner & Co.**, as well as for **Al's Garden & Home** and other companies.

Mark said that what stood out him was Fukasawa's three main passions — plants, people and the nursery industry.

Fukasawa served as OAN president in 1990 and as Greenhouse Chapter president. In 1985 he was honored as the OAN's Young Nursery Person of the Year and in 1994 he received the Pacific Coast Nurseryman Outstanding Service Award. He was also credited with the push to promote Oregon as "The Nursery State."

"Everyone just loves Paul," Bigej said. "He loves interacting with people and learning from them .... He's always in it for everyone else's betterment.

Crystal Cady presented McCaw's honorary life membership. Treda recently retired from the sales team at **Kraemer's Nursery Inc.** in Mt. Angel, Oregon, and also owns **Vertical Accents Nursery** in Silverton, Oregon, with her husband, Darrell Massung.

McCaw has taken on a variety of roles with the Mt. Hood Chapter Board, the OAN Education Committee, the Yard Garden & Patio Show Committee, the Awards Committee, the Convention Committee, the Farwest Show Committee and the Oregon Certified Nursery Professional program.

"Treda is an excellent listener, and views the big picture in >>>



2023 OAN Honorary Life member Lee Powell, with wife Linda (left) and presenter Darcy Ruef (right). PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



2023 OAN Honorary Life members Dave and Leanne Van Essen with presenter Mark Krautmann (right). PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

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a unique way,” Cady said. “She’s a leader ahead of her time, and the industry turns to her for ideas. She’s also a magnet to the next generation. They want to near her all the time. She is always in support of everything, thinking of and looking out for others, sending them ideas. She’s a mentor to many and a friend to all.”

Darcy Ruef presented the award to Powell, who is a fourth-generation owner at **Garland Nursery**, a retail nursery with landscape services in Corvallis, Oregon. Powell played collegiate football and then worked for Bechtel Engineering on the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) project in the Bay Area, and on rapid transit projects in Greece.

Powell returned home to Corvallis in 1992 to work on the family nursery business. He has remained active in the OAN, serving as president of the Retail Chapter, and president of the OAN in 2005. He was awarded with the Young Nursery Person of the Year award in 1998 and Retailer of the Year in 2000.

Mark Krautmann presented the award to the VanEssens, who are retired from owning wholesale nursery **Van Essen Nursery Co.** in Lebanon, Oregon. Dave Van Essen started in the nursery industry in 1974 at a landscaping firm in Corvallis. In 1976, he purchased 10 acres on the South Fork Santiam River in Lebanon, founded Van Essen Nursery Co., and started growing plants from liners he purchased. In 1978, he and Leanne were married. The nursery soon signed up for an OAN membership.

“They have 45 years in the business,” Krautmann said. “The OAN was instrumental in getting this shy farm boy involved in the industry and opening doors of opportunity.”

Dave Van Essen served as OAN president in 2007 and received the OAN Outstanding Service Award in 2018. The couple retired in 2020 and sold their business, part of which continues under new owners as Breeden Family Farms.

“Every day now they are happy not to be at the helm of a large company in a difficult business environment, but they miss the people,” Krautmann said. “They may be quiet, but they are thoughtful and amazing people.” ☺



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ask us about





# Olive trees are migrating north



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](mailto:ITGMikeDarcy@Comcast.net).



There are 420 olive trees that include 118 distinct cultivars planted at the Oregon State University North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, Oregon. PHOTO BY NEIL BELL

**I**N THE EARLY 2000s, I was very much involved in gardening, both my own and visiting other gardens, but I had no knowledge of olive trees being planted in Oregon. Not only were they not seen in local gardens, but they were also not readily available in local garden centers.

Olive trees were considered a Mediterranean plant that could grow in California and Arizona, but not in Oregon. Our winters were too cold and too wet — those were the commonly heard objections.

My opinion on growing olive trees in Oregon changed in 2008 on a visit to Red Ridge Farms in Dayton, Oregon. Olive trees were being planted as a commercial crop and there was even a state-of-the-art olive mill to press the olives for their oil, process it, and then offer it for sale.

Today, almost twenty years later, Durant at Red Ridge Farms has 17 acres of olive trees. Olive trees are now available at most local garden centers and in most cases, have seemed to grow well in our local conditions.

Many local gardeners have planted olive trees, including me. My garden has three ‘Arbequina’ olive trees. They have thrived in a location that receives very hot summer sun

and very little supplemental water.

If olive trees can grow in home gardens — albeit mostly for ornamental purposes in Oregon thus far — are there cultivars that would produce enough fruit to make it viable and successful commercially? That is one of the questions that the Oregon State University North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) in Aurora, Oregon, is researching.

In July, 2021, the Oregon State Small Farms Program Joint Research Project planted 420 olive trees that included 118 distinct cultivars. These trees were all in one-gallon containers, so all were about the same size.

The trees were planted in an open field receiving full sun and no protection from the elements. When I asked Neil Bell, retired OSU Community Horticulturist, if this trial is the first and only Extension sanctioned olive trial in the Pacific Northwest, he said: “The plot is actually more unique than the Pacific Northwest.

“There really exists nowhere else in the world a replicated trial, (meaning more than one tree per cultivar), of so many olive cultivars, planted in one place at the same time and all of the same age,” he said. “It’s a unique planting for those

reasons and gives us an opportunity to directly compare all of these 118 cultivars for growth, yield, fruit and oil characteristics as well as cold hardiness. We are only getting started.”

On a recent visit to this olive planting project, I visited with two other members of this project team: Heather Stoven and Hayley White. My visit was to coincide with the harvest.

Olive fruit from the trees in the trial would be collected, bagged, observed for color, size and then weighed. With so many cultivars available, it is necessary to sort through them and select those that both have cold hardiness and good fruit production.

“The aim of our project is to support the emerging olive industry in Oregon by evaluating olive cultivars to determine which are best suited for our western Oregon climate” Stoven said. “Currently, the major obstacle for olive production in our region is winter injury to trees. However, we are keeping our eye on the emerald ash borer as a future pest. Along with rating cold damage each spring, we also collect plant size, flowering, and fruit data. We hope to be able to evaluate the oil characteristics of some of the olive cultivars in the future as well.”

Observing the difference in growth patterns in the trees was surprising. Considering that all were about the same size and were planted at the same time, differences in growth were remarkable. There were a few trees that looked as though they were struggling to survive, but most were in the 3–4 foot height range.

There were a few that were 5 feet or more. Most looked healthy.

“The olive industry is still very 

## What i'm Hearing

new compared to other crops grown in Oregon, and the only research available for our area is from this group,” White said. “Our goal is to help the producers in Oregon make informed decisions when planting olive trees to increase economic feasibility, giving farmers the tools they need to continue to make top quality olive oil while diversifying their farm.”

The OSU Aurora Extension Station has a yearly Oregon Olive School and olive field day, which is an excellent way to get more information on growing olive trees in Oregon. While this event is geared toward commercial growers, it can also provide information for interested home gardeners and local garden center owners.

Actually, in the past few years, local garden centers have begun to offer more cultivars for home gardens. The cultivar ‘Albequina’ has been the standard, but more cultivars are becoming available. Since most



Olives mature on cultivar ‘Picudo’, one of those being tested at the OSU Aurora Extension Station. PHOTO BY NEIL BELL

home gardeners are probably more interested in treating an olive as an ornamental tree, fruit production is less of a concern. With their soft gray green foliage, an olive tree can provide a striking evergreen winter foliage plant in the garden.

What an exciting time for local garden centers! They get to attend an actual research field day to learn more about

what additional cultivars of olive trees to stock for the discerning gardener.

Planting evergreen olive trees is a newer trend in planting ornamental trees, but one that local garden centers can take advantage of in a big way. Various cultivars of olive trees have been readily available in California for years. Now it is time for them to migrate to Oregon. ☺

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**W**ITH A RECORD \$1.37 BILLION worth of sales in 2022, Oregon's nursery industry continues to grow. And if you want to know why, you can ask the families that are driving the growth.

Ask Jan, Cindy and Jason Hupp, who run **Drakes Crossing Nursery** in the Cascade Range foothills, founded 1967. They've made huge investments in the future, leveling new production space to grow seedlings for reforestation.

Ask Nathan and Angie Holmlund, the siblings who are taking **John Holmlund Nursery**, founded in 1968 with Mount Hood as the backdrop, into the next generation with field-grown and containerized material for nationwide markets. They are extending the legacy of what their father, John, started 55 years ago.

Ask Alfredo and Maria Fernandez, owners of **AF Nursery**, founded in the Willamette Valley in 2010. Starting from nothing, they've built a fast-growing operation that produces 100,000 trees, shrubs and liners annually.

Or ask Tom and Laura Dufala, owners of **Bentwood Tree Farm**, a specialty grower of cloud-sculpted pines and other handcrafted landscape material for Japanese-style gardens, founded 2011. They've been able to pursue their passion for natural beauty.

The nursery and greenhouse industry continues to be Oregon's top agricultural powerhouse. Oregon continues to produce more conifers, more shade trees, more flowering trees and more Christmas trees than any other state in the nation. It's also among the top growers of woody shrubs, while offering a wide assortment of annuals, perennials, houseplants, and other material as well.

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Alfredo and Maria G. Fernandez own AF Nursery, based in Woodburn, Oregon, encompassing 150 acres of fields between four farms. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

# AF Nursery

BY EMILY LINDBLOM

**A**S HE PASSES BY HIS ROWS and rows of conifers, maples, skip laurels and grafted liners, Alfredo Fernandez reflects on what has led to his success.

“I feel like I started at the right time and had good luck,” he said. “I’m pretty happy with what I’m doing.”

Alfredo and Maria G. Fernandez own **AF Nursery**, based in Woodburn, Oregon, encompassing 150 acres of fields between four farms.

Alfredo Fernandez estimated they sell about 100,000 plants per year, both finished plants and tree starts used for grafting.

“Most of the nurseries sell finished plants to re-wholesalers, but I sell to other growers too,” Alfredo Fernandez said. “I sell liners and starts to local guys around here, including **Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas**, and **A&R Spada Farms**.” AF Nursery’s

clients also include **Bountiful Farms**, **Willamette Tree** and **KG Farms**.

He said about 40% of what AF Nursery sells stays in Oregon, about 20% goes to other places on the West Coast, and the other 40% gets shipped to the East Coast, including New York and New Jersey.

As Maria Fernandez runs the loader area to prepare a shipment of Japanese maples, Alfredo Fernandez points out the first greenhouse the couple started with in 2011 at the Woodburn farm. Now, that location has 12 greenhouses, and another location in Salem has 10 more, with two currently being built to add to the list.

At the 80-acre Salem location, the main priority is growing maples in the greenhouses, and then a mix of different trees and shrubs in the ground.

The plants there spend about a year or



About 40% of what AF Nursery sells stays in Oregon, about 20% goes to other places on the West Coast, and the other 40% gets shipped to the East Coast, including New York and New Jersey. PHOTO COURTESY AF NURSERY

two in the greenhouses before they are big enough to be moved to the fields. Some of the greenhouses are extra-long, stretching 585 feet.

Alfredo Fernandez said Oregon is a great place to operate a nursery.

“It’s because of the climate and the good soil that we have here in the Willamette Valley,” he said. “We have good water and the spring season is long, so we have good moisture in the soil, making it easy to dig.”

Maria Fernandez said she loves spending her days outdoors.

“I enjoy working outside,” Maria Fernandez said. “The time flies outside, even when it’s raining. I love nature.”

Her main job at the nursery is book-keeping, shipping and watering the plants at the main location in Woodburn.

After Alfredo Fernandez interacts with the customers as a salesperson, Maria Fernandez coordinates with him about when to ship each order.

“The main thing for me is to (get) the exact right order on the right truck to the destination, and the paperwork,” Maria Fernandez said.

She also oversees the scheduling of the automated irrigation systems so the fields will be watered after the employees leave.

“I have to pay attention (to) where they’re working, so I set my clock all day so I don’t have to bother them with the water,” Maria Fernandez said. “Everyday when they leave, I have to program whatever I need to water.”

She attributes the nursery’s success to hard work.

“Alfredo is a really smart person and knows how to manage people,” she said. “That, and the hard work we do — that’s the key.”

### Starting out on their own

The Fernandezes both previously worked at **J&S Farms & Nursery LLC** in Gervais, Oregon. Alfredo Fernandez got

his start in the industry there in 1998.

He said he contributes his success today partially to what he learned while working at J&S.

“I think that is what really helped me, the experience of working for someone else,” he said. “That was one of the keys for sure.”

He worked his way up through different positions at J&S and became a manager.

“Since I was little, I knew I wanted to have my own business when I grew up,” he said. Working with J&S as a manager gave him the experience he needed. “I was running the whole nursery, so that allowed me to learn a lot.”

Maria and Alfredo Fernandez met and eventually got married. Less than a year later, Maria joined Alfredo to work at J&S, where they both stayed for about seven years.

“We decided not to have kids at that time so we could save some money to focus on the future, and to start



## AF Nursery

a little business,” Maria Fernandez said. The two now have four kids — two boys and two girls, all between the ages of 6 and 13.

After years of saving up, they bought the Woodburn farm in 2010. They continued to work at J&S Farms for a while in the beginning, coming to the Woodburn farm after work and on weekends.

“Sometimes we would stay until 12 a.m. or 1 a.m.,” Maria Fernandez said. “We started from nothing, so we were the only employees and we had to do everything on our own.”

He added that they started at the right time, just after the Great Recession.

“Back in 2008 to 2010, the industry really got hit with the recession,” he said. “A lot of people were just scared of what happened, and I came with that experience in the industry at the right time.”

They hired their first worker in 2012.



At the 80-acre Salem location, the main priority is growing maples in the greenhouses. PHOTO COURTESY AF NURSERY

AF Nursery began by growing hedges, particularly emerald green arborvitae and laurels. They expanded over the years to include Japanese maples and boxwoods.

“I don’t do a lot of variety, but I try to have good quality plants, so that’s what I concentrate on,” Alfredo Fernandez said.

In 2015, AF Nursery expanded by purchasing a farm located in Gervais. They bought the Salem location in 2019,

and then another 45-acre farm next to their Woodburn farm in 2022. They employ 26 staff members across all four farms in a year-round operation.

Alfredo Fernandez said so far the nursery hasn’t faced too many issues, but he’s keeping up with the latest technology and planning for more automation in the future.

“I think we just have to do more automation because the labor is going

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to (become) harder and harder,” he said. “There’s not much we can do, so I think we just have to do more automation.”

As of now, AF Nursery has 140 acres of ball and burlap (B&B) and 10 acres of containers. The Fernandezes want to expand on that.

**Looking ahead**

“My goal for the future is to get out of the B&B, which is more heavy work,” Alfredo Fernandez said. “We’re trying to do more to move toward other work that’s not too hard on people — to move out of B&B and do more pot-in-pot. What I want to do in the future is turn all those 150 acres ... into containers.”

He said he’s inspired by Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas, which has an extensive pot-in-pot system. The trees and shrubs are kept in transportable containers that are placed inside stationary containers at specific spots in the ground.

AF Nursery has already started planting with GPS coordinates to keep track of where each plant is located. This way, they will be able to eventually use automated pruning devices to trim the plants without much labor.

“I’m trying to do whatever I can afford to do for more automation,” Alfredo Fernandez said. “I’m that type of guy who likes to keep up with technology. I really like to keep it upgraded.

“When I started (AF Nursery) that was one of the things I knew was going to become big, we needed to do anything we could for automation to replace labor.”

He and Maria Fernandez started toward this goal with irrigation. AF Nursery has an entirely automatic watering system based on a timer.

“Water is one of the supplies we use six months of the year,” Alfredo Fernandez said. “If you don’t do automation, you’re going to have labor those

whole six months.”

Maria Fernandez said the main goal is to keep growing, improving, and making the work easier for the employees so they can do more with less work.

“We have to get involved with more machinery that can help us grow,” she said.

She added that she enjoys what she does at AF Nursery and she’s proud of what she and Alfredo Fernandez have done.

“I’m hoping that one of our kids in the future would like to go into the industry so the nursery can stay on the map for years to come,” she said. ☺

*Emily Lindblom is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master’s degree in multimedia journalism. Visit her website at [EmilyLindblom.com](http://EmilyLindblom.com) or reach her at [Emily@EmilyLindblom.com](mailto:Emily@EmilyLindblom.com).*

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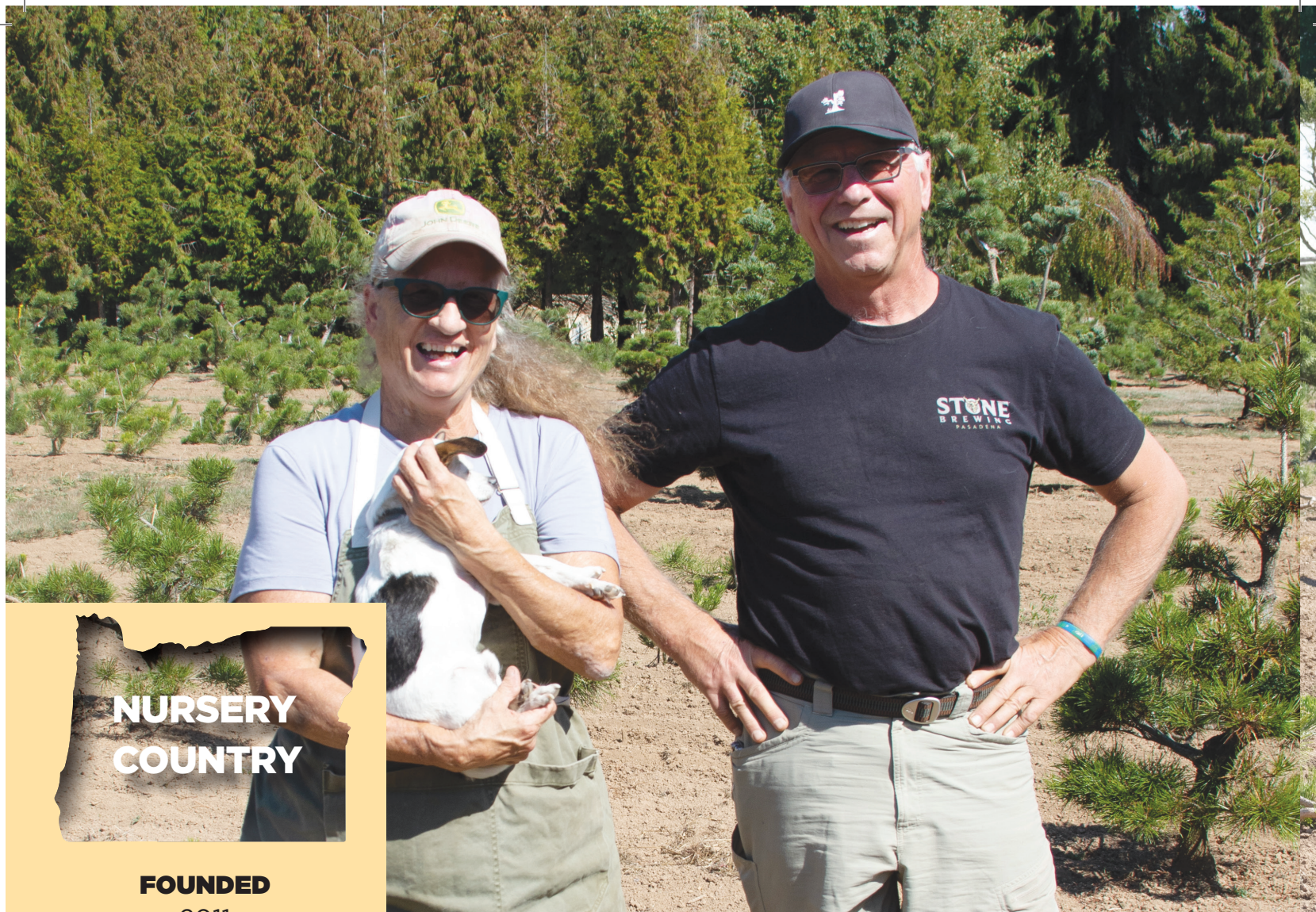


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Laura and Tom Dufala have become a trusted resource for mature specimens that convey an instant air of tradition and history to a Japanese or Northwest-style garden. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

# Bentwood Tree Farm

BY ERICA BROWNE GRIVAS

**I**T'S SAID THAT if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. Based on their shared obsession with Japanese gardens and traditional pruning techniques, Laura and Tom Dufala haven't worked a day in 40 years.

You can't run a nursery without contributing significant time and physical labor, but that doesn't keep them from enjoying the heck out of it.

**Bentwood Tree Farm**, located in Boring, Oregon, is a true passion project for the couple. The farm fills a very particular need for retail and wholesale customers — hand-

trained and cloud-pruned trees and shrubs that bestow a garden with distinct character.

The farm is 4 acres, with 2.5 in production, harvesting about 225–250 pines each year. When asked how many employees they have, Tom smiles and counts to four, pointing to himself, Laura, Ray, and Sam. (Ray and Sam, the two resident dogs may excel as official greeters, but they can't help a lot with the pruning.)

However, they do have customers who volunteer to prune — more on that later.

Bentwood Tree Farm focuses on a choice selection of trees and shrubs, mainly evergreen, that thrive with intense pruning. In





Betwood Tree Farms has a focus on cloud-pruning or Niwaki techniques on pines. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

September, the availability list included six pines, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘Filifera’ and *Ilex crenata* ‘Convexa’, in various sizes ranging from 12 inches to over eight feet tall. Their potted bonsai pines are sold in places like **Portland Nursery**.

Sometimes Bentwood will offer Japanese maples and other deciduous trees, but pines, led by *Pinus nigra*, are the main players.

The couple has become a trusted resource for mature specimens that convey an instant air of tradition and history to a Japanese or Northwest-style garden.

Bentwood’s customers include landscape designers, contractors, public gardens, nurseries, and private gardeners. The couple’s handiwork — often donated — is growing in public gardens at Duke University, Gresham Japanese Garden, Ashland’s Lithia Park, the **Oregon**

**Garden** in Silverton, and Oregon State Penitentiary’s Healing Garden in Salem.

The nursery sells mainly along the West Coast, although it has been known to ship to the Midwest and Southeast.

“We’re definitely what you call a niche,” Laura said.

“It’s ridiculous, actually,” agreed Tom, laughing. “No one does this unless you really like it a lot.”

Their unique model is driven by a strong mission to promote the beauty and art of Japanese gardens.

#### **In the beginning, there was bonsai**

Tom and Laura each have more than 40 years of experience in the growing industry. Laura grew up on a potato farm in Idaho, where her mom cultivated a Japanese garden. She remembers even at a young age asking every year if she could

help prune the pine trees. She moved to Oregon at 18 and worked on her brother’s carrot farm, but it was when she joined a burgeoning conifer nursery that she got her wish.

It was in the late 70s and Laura was working at **Iseli Nursery** when founder Jean (“John”) Iseli noticed her interest in collecting and pruning pre-bonsai starts.

“He was an artist first. A lot of people don’t know that. That’s how we bonded. He was probably an early aesthetic pruner. He definitely mentored me, and I was kind of his teacher’s pet,” Laura said. “I was the only person he took pruning in the field for several years.”

She also met Tom at Iseli Nursery. Tom who holds a degree in horticulture, went on to work as a horticulturist in City of Portland Parks Department. Laura’s bonsai fever was contagious, inspiring >>

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## Bentwood Tree Farm

Tom to learn more about Japanese design and pruning. The pair married in 1984.

The idea took root in Laura to start a bonsai business, but she wasn't interested in selling conifer bonsais as houseplants — a tricky operation at best — which was the trend at the time.

Like their pines, their business has taken a few directional twists in direction. Laura began growing bonsai and pre-bonsai liners under the name Black Sheep Bonsai in 1982.

In 2000, a friend at Portland's Japanese Garden suggested they grow pines — and the nursery was reborn as Bentwood Pines with a focus on cloud-pruning or Niwaki techniques on pines. It evolved into Bentwood Tree Farm in 2011.

"We just took all of the bonsai crop I had at that time and just tossed them all on the ground for starters," Laura said. Tom points out this is a common bonsai technique to "age" the plants in the ground to bulk up their trunks. They harvested those starters almost two decades later. "Neglect was our greatest tool," Tom jokes.

They continued applying and adapting bonsai techniques to in-ground specimens, a departure from some Japanese tree pruning, which encourages a single slant in the trunk. The Dufalas cut and customize bamboo stakes and tie branches with twine to bend the pines, working to reveal their inherent beauty.

They eschew zig-zags as too contrived, they say, but train or prune out any hint of verticality.

"It's kind of a dialogue with the tree," Laura said. "You're following the energy of the tree. You know that tree is telling you the direction it wants to go, you just follow it, accentuate it and work with it."

### Why pines?

Laura said Japanese garden design has three main features: rock, water, and pine tree.

"One of the reasons why the pine tree is such a focal point is because it has so much beauty in its trunk. Where the trunk meets its root system, that's called the *nebari*. And then as you go up through the

branching and structure, of course the bark itself, and the branching and how it appears like a cloud, and you can see the structure of the branch. And so what that does in a garden is, it causes you to slow down and kind of relax. It gives you the feeling of wanting to read the story of the tree.”

In addition to suiting Northwest-style gardens, pines grow exceptionally well in the Willamette Valley. The farther east you get, pines are easier prey to humidity and pests, like pine bark beetle and sequoia pitch moth. That’s another reason they mainly ship locally.

Tom calls the nursery “basically organic,” using horticultural oils and mechanical controls as much as possible.

They prefer to purchase two-year seedlings and will sell them from three years to about eight or nine more years when they reach approximately seven feet tall.

The two also work to spread love and appreciation for Japanese-style gardens. They are active in the North American Japanese Garden Association, and they volunteer their time teaching the adults in custody at the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, Oregon, how to prune the trees in the prison’s Healing Garden.

### It’s all in the wrist

Laura said their style of aesthetic pruning, which she calls more Western-influenced, differs from traditional Japanese in that it creates fuller branching and “clouds” near the base, and creates a tree that stays more compact. Compared to topiary, it’s much healthier for the tree, because the thinning allows more airflow in the canopy, she said.

“You’re going to have a tree that stays in context,” says Laura. “You can keep that tree in that landscape forever if you continue to prune it and maintain it, and then it looks attractive.”

The trick is that the trees require consistent pruning in winter and spring, using specialized techniques.

In spring you remove all the “candles” on the pines in spring, which forces back budding forming the clouds. Midsummer may require a second candle break, but perhaps only taking half to let

some clouds form. Fall and winter brings selective pruning to open the canopy and needling (removing discolored needles). There’s some flexibility, but Tom says, “If you miss several cycles, you’ll end up with a beautiful Christmas tree at the top of their tree.”

The couple recommends customers start their new tree off right by hiring an aesthetic pruner for the first year or two. Many are willing to teach the homeowner how to maintain the tree themselves.

Those who are really committed can train with Tom and Laura. Many of their customers volunteer to prune at the nursery regularly, some for years, unofficially, or as an apprentice-in-training. Some have gone on to become aesthetic pruners.

“A lot of urban people that have gardened in the past, that do not have gardens now, who really have been into bonsai, don’t have trees, so they come out,” Tom said. “I’ve got one gentleman, Dave Wheeler, he comes out once a week like religion. Spends the whole day.”

Although Dave has refused pay, Tom has been known to sneak some cash into his bag.

Despite all the work through the year, they can’t wait for the high pruning season when they get to let their inner artists out.

“It’s a really truly like a lot of nursery and landscaping, a labor of love,” Tom said. “Laura and I really love pruning. We think, ‘Oooh it’s going to be November soon.’ We get to start pruning again, and we’ll be out here at 36 degrees.”

Notice the phrase “we get to” prune again.

Laura added, “I’ll bundle up sitting on our garden bed pruning all day long and just content. Totally content.”

“She’s a machine,” Tom said.

Considering the future, Tom said “I just turned 69. My focus is to share our pine pruning passion with friends and customers. Shaping and twisting pines is a craft that Laura and I will pursue until the last pine is bent.” ☺

*Erica Browne Grivas is an award-winning journalist and gardener pushing some boundaries in Seattle, Washington. She can be reached at [EBGrivas@Gmail.com](mailto:EBGrivas@Gmail.com)*



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Jan and his wife Cindy Hupp run the nursery in a team-inspired style with Office Manager Savannah Barnes, Farm Manager Scott Barnes and Jan's nephew and Manager Jason Hupp. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

# Drakes Crossing Nursery

BY KYM POKORNY

**W**HEN JAN HUPP tells people that **Drakes Crossing Nursery** drapes across the foothills of the Cascades by Silver Falls State Park, near Silverton, Oregon, their jaws drop as they picture the idyllic countryside.

He and the rest of the nursery's staff appreciate the view, as well.

But they say the nursery's family-centered business model is what makes it special.

Jan is the second generation to operate the 50-plus-year-old nursery, which was started by his parents, Delbert and Barbara Hupp, in 1967. Jan and his wife Cindy Hupp run the

nursery in a team-inspired style with Office Manager Savannah Barnes, Farm Manager Scott Barnes and Jan's nephew and Manager Jason Hupp.

No matter who you talk to — Jan, Cindy, Savannah, Scott or Jason — the first thing out of their mouth when asked about the nursery's greatest strength, is the team approach. Each morning, the group gathers around a tall, rectangular wooden table in the office to go over the day's operations and talk about future predictions and growth, anything and everything to do with Drakes Crossing.

"It's a group effort," Barnes said. "We



Drakes Crossing supplies seedlings for Christmas trees, reforestation, nursery stock and native restoration. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

really try to talk through everything. What we are doing in different fields, the trees we're planting, what we've taken out. We talk about what we might want to do differently with the land, how to put up greenhouses, what kind of equipment we need."

Jan has never been the type of boss to say, "This is the way we're going to do this."

"We all do the planning," Jan said. "Even though Mom and Dad started it and I kind of run it, we have a management team. We say, 'I've got an idea' and we all sit around the table and talk a whole lot. That's how we're thinking about what the market will be like next year, in two years. We'll say, 'Oh, I think it will be pretty good so let's plant more seed.'"

One of the things they've discussed a lot is the new Trojan fir Drakes Crossing is now growing. The uniform, dark green tree is like a noble fir, only better, Jan said. He predicts it will be the Christmas tree of the future.

The Hupps' farm covers more than 12,000 acres with some in timber and the

rest dedicated to seedling harvested by Drakes Crossing Nursery and Christmas trees harvested by **Hupp Farms**. Currently, 3–4 million seedlings are sold each year.

The land, which sits at 1,650 feet elevation and is anything but flat, is divided into Christmas tree seedlings and understock, nursery stock, timber land and a small quarry that supplies the nursery. Some trees are pruned sustainably for Christmas boughs and other decorations.

Last year, a million pounds of material went out, making Drakes the largest supplier in the country.

But the big news for Drakes Crossing is a major expansion into greenhouse growing. In 2021, they brought in K&E Excavating to level out an impressive eight and half acres.

"We had to do a lot of work," said Jan as he walked through a greenhouse to the sound of gravel crunching underneath his boots. "In the valley, they have all this nice, flat land and this is what we have. The only thing flat up here is what you've manufactured."

The 12 greenhouses are already stocked with seedlings of Douglas-fir, noble fir, Colorado spruce and a few other species. Next year, those greenhouses will hold 2.25 million plants. As expansion continues — 12 more greenhouses are scheduled to be built by planting season in February — that number will grow to 7–8 million seedlings, Jan said.

### The inspiration to begin

Barbara, matriarch of the Hupp family and farm, lives on a farmhouse that abuts the road in front of the nursery. Even after eight surgeries for hip problems, she keeps her hand in the game. She signs checks and, though she no longer drives to town, you'll still see her driving around the nursery, keeping her eye on things. Sitting at her kitchen table, she looks out on the road to see who's passing by.

"People come and go," said Barbara, who often drives 10 miles a day around the nursery. "I check everything that goes by. The fire station is right there, so I've got activity all day long. I'm the





The Hupps' farm covers more than 12,000 acres with some in timber and the rest dedicated to seedling harvested by Drakes Crossing Nursery and Christmas trees harvested by Hupp Farms. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

spy who knows everything.”

She knows a lot. It was Barbara who was urged to start a nursery. She was working for Ralph Jack at Silver Falls Nursery, a mail-order outfit further up the hill that sold seedlings, while her husband Delbert worked as a welder after retraining from a logging accident. The nursery inspector who dealt with Jack watched Barbara at work and encouraged her to start her own nursery.

“The inspector up there came frequently because a lot of shipments had to have shipping information on them to ship,” Barbara said. “He said, ‘You need to go into business.’”

Jan heard his mother and added, “So that was the man who said you ought to think about getting into the business. That’s awesome. You should have bought him a gift card to a restaurant.”

The first generation of Hupps started out planting perennial grass seed and strawberries, which were common when Jan and his siblings were kids. In late 1967, the couple slowly transitioned to bare-root Christmas tree seedlings with what they called “paycheck financing” and in 1968 the nursery was open for business. Those first seedlings — Douglas-fir and Noble fir — were started in sand beds on the 27 acres that comprised the nursery’s first iteration.

“We had a few Christmas trees up on the hill simply because some neighbors

were growing Christmas trees and it was a steep hill and it was hard to put anything else on it,” Barbara said. “Christmas trees fit what the land was, and the hill back there is the hill we look at every day now.”

Quickly, interest in the quality of Drakes Crossing stock grew. So did business.

“We expanded fairly fast,” Barbara said. “We thought, ‘Oh, that was fun; that was easy. Let’s plant some more.’ You know, you get the seed catalogs and it’s like shopping for new clothes. It was kind of challenging figuring out what to plant, what will sell, but I’ve never had any regrets that we got into something that required so much of our time. I liked it. It gave me a lot of personal satisfaction.”

Delbert and Barbara worked every day and the children participated as they got older. When Jan and his siblings were too young to be left behind, he remembers going on “Sunday drives” with their mom and dad. The drives, it turned out, were delivery trips.

“If it was a Sunday drive, that meant there was a bunch of product in the trunk,” Jan said. “We used to go to Boring a lot and we’d go to up to Heidi’s restaurant for breakfast, so we got a breakfast out of the deal.”

Growing Christmas trees was a way to extend the season and keep employees busy in the summer down season, so they could stay on full time. At first it was Jan and his siblings and some neighbor kids who worked in the nursery. The more trees the

Hupps grew, the more employees they needed, so they kept planting more and more trees and hiring more and more people.

Today, 20-25 employees work full time, many for years, and the nursery pulls in contract labor when needed. Come the first week in November, another 50-60 contract workers will come on board to help with the Christmas tree harvest. Now with the greenhouses, bare root trees — grown in blocks of cells — can be harvested in winter and held in the cooler for spring. Everyone can work, even on days with inclement weather.

A grower oversees the greenhouses and has a dedicated team to harvest the seedlings and move them to the cooler. Harvesting is much easier now, Jan said. The individual cells pull right out, and the roots aren’t disturbed as they are with field-grown seedlings.

“When it’s raining up to 75-80 inches a year, we can’t harvest bare-root trees, because it’s too wet, but we can come into the greenhouse and harvest these things and get them to growers so they can be using them when they’re ready to fill an order,” Jan said. “Last winter we had a nasty winter up here. We had 22 days that it snowed. We couldn’t harvest in the snow. Now we’re doing what we can to farm and not use dirt. I don’t want to be out in the elements. It’s wet to plant and it’s wet to harvest.”

The expansion and new technology

## Drakes Crossing Nursery

offers the nursery the opportunity to fill customer demand on time, Barnes said. They are not dependent on the unpredictable weather brought on by climate change.

“Now we can have the product ready for customers when they need it. The keeps them happy and we keep our reputation for quality trees.”

### The challenges ahead

The only thing that could put a wrench in the system is water. Hupp has filed for water rights to drill another well and is waiting for the application to go through the system. For most of the nursery’s years, they used pond and spring water. Five years ago, they drilled a well, but with the new greenhouses, there’s a need for another well.

“If we don’t have enough water, we did all of this for nothing,” Jan said. “We originally started out with three little

greenhouses to play around with. And then we said, ‘You know, this isn’t doing so bad,’ so last summer we built another nine and the state of Oregon said, ‘Hey, we need you to have the capability to grow even more seedlings for shortages when wildfires come.’ But unless we get water, we can’t do it.”

As they wait, Jan said they will continue to grow quality trees using superior seed sources from their seed nursery and by growing at an elevation that mimics the trees’ native habitat, so they grow better — stronger, hardier, taller, greener and with upright branches. Genetics play a big role, as well. But he has to bring other growers along slowly.

“A friend had his own genetics,” he said. “He believed and father believed it was the right thing. I say, ‘Dude, that’s old technology. We have better stuff.’ And he gets into my pickup, sees our trees and

agreed they looked better. It’s all about the genetics these days. You’ve got to start out with the right genetics to produce the right tree.”

Barbara has always looked to the future. She listened to customers, exhibited at the Farwest Show, went to Oregon Association of Nurseries meetings and paid attention to the market. There were challenges, but she was always ready and willing to face them.

“It was an 18-hour-a-day business,” she said. “It didn’t start at 9 and stop at 5. It’s not a regular job, but I enjoyed it.” ©

*Kym Pokorny is a garden writer with more than 20 years’ experience writing for The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon) and other publications. She is currently a communications specialist with Oregon State University Extension Service. She can be reached at [Kym.Pokorny@OregonState.edu](mailto:Kym.Pokorny@OregonState.edu)*



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It's a team effort that keeps John Holmlund Nursery humming: (from left) Production Manager Mike Reihs, owner Nate Holmlund, Sales Manager Scott Field, General Manager Vladimir Lomen, Cooper Tucker (John Holmlund's grandson), owner Angie Holmlund, and Farmer at Large Terry Brown. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

# John Holmlund Nursery

BY VIC PANICHKUL

**N**ESTLED ON A GENTLE, picturesque slope between Boring, Oregon and majestic Mount Hood, **John Holmlund Nursery** has built a solid reputation of exemplary customer service and quality shade and flowering deciduous trees.

The company's people-centric focus for customers as well as employees stems from a recognition that founder John Holmlund had a lot of help from others.

"My dad's focus has always been on people," second-generation co-owner Angie

Holmlund said. "Dad always said 'The spouting whale gets harpooned,'" meaning that you don't call attention to yourself because others made you who you were. "He recognizes the fact that there's a wide range of people that's made us the success that we are today."

Angie and her brother and co-owner, Nathan, are carrying on their dad's vision for the business with the help of a long-tenured team of managers as their father has taken a step back.

The business is known for its stability and





Since its establishment in 1968, the operation has grown to more than 600 acres. PHOTO COURTESY JOHN HOLMLUND NURSERY

for the quality of the products.

“We grow a quality product and provide great service to our customers,” Nathan said. “We have a lot of old established relationships.”

“We go beyond what customers expect from us,” Angie said. “Since I’ve come back (five years ago), I’ve made a point to get to know our customers. Many of our customers have stories about how Dad helped them.”

Angie recalled a story of how her dad arranged an affordable payment plan for a longtime customer who was in a cash crunch. “There’s a lot of depth in our relationships with our customers,” she said.

“I had a call from a customer who had problems with a product and it wasn’t the nursery’s fault,” said Sales Manager Scott Field. After talking with him about it, John decided to give the customer a \$20,000 credit for their order. “When I called the customer back, he couldn’t

believe it,” said Field.

“When customers have a problem and bring it to our attention, we take care of it,” General Manager Vladimir Lomen said. “We want to create customers for life.”

The longevity of the management staff also lends stability to the company.

“The managers here have a lot of experience — 30-40 years is not uncommon,” Angie said. “A lot of people have stayed because we have a really good working environment, and people enjoy working here. A lot of families work here together.”

Lomen has been with the company for 20 years and Field has been there 50 years. Production Manager Mike Reihls has been there 31 years and Terry Brown, the “farmer at large” who seems to handle everything in the fields, has been there for 40 years. Nathan was the GM from 1990 to 2005 when he left to start his own business.

“Some of our salesmen were originally customers,” said Angie.

### **Self-made, with help from others**

After working with Daniel C. Hanna at Hanna Enterprises, a manufacturer of car-washing equipment, for 10 years, John Holmlund decided to strike it out on his own, but not without help from friends.

“I was used to thinking of dad as a self-made man, but really a lot of people contributed to his success,” Angie said. “He had a lot of help from people to break into the industry.”

One of Holmlund’s friends, Darrell Belcher at Powell Valley Nursery, encouraged him to plant trees. Holmlund took the advice.

Since its establishment in 1968, the operation has grown to more than 600 acres. It produces more than a million trees annually.

“Mom was planting trees when she was pregnant with me,” Nathan said.

“We had a two-acre field next to our >>>



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## John Holmlund Nursery



John Holmlund Nursery now produces more than a million trees annually. PHOTO COURTESY JOHN HOLMLUND NURSERY



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house that he first planted.”

In 1972 another friend, David Tillstrom, owner of Tillstrom Nursery, sold John his inventory and leased him his farm so that he could get the nursery started, Nathan said.

As the business got off its feet, Belcher mentored Holmlund and taught him farming practices. Belcher gave him access to his Tennessee customers to approach them with a different line of products, Nathan said.

In 1974, Robert Taylor, a mentor and friend, sold Holmlund 20 acres at a very favorable rate. He only had to make interest payments for the first year, Angie said.

A big boost came in 1987 when **McHutchison**, a horticultural distributor, wanted to expand their business and invested in John Holmlund Nursery. The investment allowed John to purchase the current property in Boring and grow to about 180 acres.

A successive string of purchases in subsequent years added to the operation.

In 1997, the old Moller's nursery was purchased and 80 acres in east Gresham, Oregon, was added. In 2000, another purchase added 350 acres in Molalla, Oregon.

The nursery also began innovating and changing.

In 1977 the company made a change from container-grown to field-grown material. “John saw a lot more opportunity and profit,” Field said.

“Container and ball and burlap was more of a local market and bare-root and field-grown was more of what East Coast customers were looking for,” Nathan said.

Now, the mix is 20 percent container-grown and the rest is field grown, Lomen said.

“In 1998, we started propagating our own plants,” said Production Manager Reihls. Now the nursery propagates 35-40 percent of the plants.

In 2002, they hired a software developer to help them come up with a computerized system for managing their inventory, allowing them to better manage their growth, GM Lomen said.

Then, in 2008, the recession hit and John consolidated the nursery to half its original size to stabilize the business and stay afloat. “He held the business together for all of us,” Angie said. “It's taken a long time to build the business back to what it is today.”

### Staying ahead of changes

To keep growing, the business is trying to keep in step with trends and get ahead of them.

"We try to read the crystal ball the best we can," Field said. "We have to be open to where the market is going," Angie said. "We want to adapt."

"The needs of customers have changed," Field said. "More variety is what they're asking for, so we have to change and add more diversity in products."

"We still have our mainstays, but containerized production has allowed us to be able to broaden our offerings," Lomen said. "We have to be willing to take some risks with new products and to step out from what we've known."

"We have to be looking down the road 3–5 years. Everything we plant today won't be ready until at least 3 years down the road," Lomen added. "We may hit a home run, but we may not."

"Maintaining the culture and relationships also means that there will have to be others coming along the pipeline," Angie said.

It's why Angie was nicely surprised by her son Cooper Tucker, who expressed an interest a year ago to move to the Willamette Valley from Central Oregon and work in the family business.

"When I was younger, I came and worked at the nursery in the summertime. Back in my head I thought I'd end up back here one day," Tucker said. "I got to travel, and I missed my family, I missed my home, I missed being on the farm."

"Hopefully I'll be the third generation that gets to carry on the family farm when that time comes around."

Vladimir said he asked John Holmlund what changes he'd like to see for the future. "John said what he doesn't want to change is our focus on people, our customers and our employees." ☺

*Vic Panichkul is Publications Manager at the Oregon Association of Nurseries and Managing Editor and Art Director for Digger Magazine. Contact him at 503-582-2009 or [VPanichkul@OAN.org](mailto:VPanichkul@OAN.org).*



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Lakeside Nursery is a container grown wholesale nursery located in Canby. We are looking for laborers interested in working in the Nursery industry to join our team. Desired Skills: • Planting • Pruning • Plant Knowledge • Sprinkler system/ Watering • Plant Shipping • Plant fertilizing and maintenance. Requirements: • Ability to lift 30 – 75 lbs. • Reliable transportation/ Driver's License • Ability to work in an outdoor environment. • Spanish and English required. Not Required but wanted: Farm equipment experience. Full time, in person. \$16-18 hourly Monday-Friday. We offer sick time and 401K with paid time off. Must be able to reliably commute to Canby, Oregon 97013 or relocate before starting work (required). One year plant nursery experience required.

**Please apply in person to Lakeside Nursery,**  
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If interested please contact Eillen Taylor at etaylor@everde.com or 503-495-2261, or forward your resume to recruiting@everde.com.

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### INSIDE SALES REPRESENTATIVE

TSW Nursery Sales Inc. is seeking a plant-knowledgable inside sales representative with 3-5 years of sales experience. The perfect candidate must be proficient in MS Office Suite and Quickbooks software, provide excellent customer service, have strong verbal and written communication skills, manage their time, and be organized. Salary commensurate with experience.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

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**Requirements:**

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- A strong knowledge of plant production, growing, propagation
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We are seeking a Propagation Manager to work out of our Forest Grove, OR location. Job requires Horticulture/Agriculture or related experience and well-developed leadership skills including the ability to listen without judgement, give and receive honest feedback, create a culture of open communication and place a high value on teamwork and accountability. You will get to work closely with the Production Manager for management and oversight of the Propagation department, including all aspects of propagation production from cutting, harvest and preparation, sticking and potting, lay down, growing, finishing, sorting, canning and delivery to internal and external customers.

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- Maintain raw material inventory counts and insure needed supplies are on hand.
- Coordinate daily operations and labor needs for the department.
- Work with team leads to communicate cutting and potting needs from their areas.
- Assist the General Manager in improving productivity and reducing shrink.
- Embrace learning and training on all new mechanization equipment and tools.
- Work with the management team to implement best management practices and efficiencies within propagation and canning, in part by learning and implementing lean projects and processes.
- Work with the Availability team in preparation for and taking of physical inventories & cycle counts in the Propagation department.
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- Oversee the new products department.
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**Job requirements:**

- Experience in nursery, landscape, horticulture or other agricultural-related endeavors
- Bachelor's degree (B. A. or B.S.) from four-year college or university; or 1-2 years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience
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- Must be able to operate a computer using Windows based programs to include but not limited to Excel, Word and Office.

Full time, 8-10 hour shift, Monday-Friday. Benefits to include medical, dental, vision, life, long term disability, vacation and sick time, and more. Compensation to start in the low \$50s, higher based on experience.

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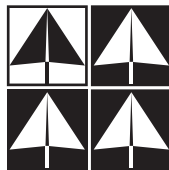
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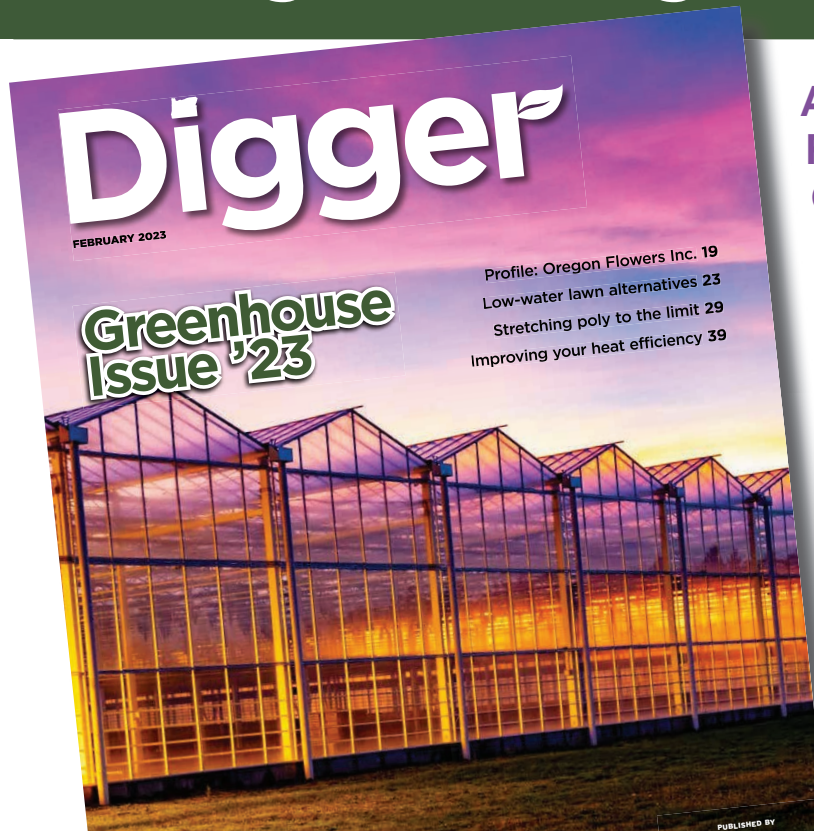


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# GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Series content is coordinated by Dr. Jay Pscheidt, professor of botany and plant pathology at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon.



An ongoing series provided by Oregon State University in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture and in partnership with the Oregon Association of Nurseries



## Protecting healthy plants

Improving plant knowledge and skills in plant production is the key to healthy crops. The certification program emphasizes the critical role of education in adopting and enhancing best management practices. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

### Program equips growers with knowledge to prevent and diagnose nursery crop diseases

BY LUISA SANTAMARIA

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES to prevent plant diseases has been a central objective within the educational framework of the Plant Pathology Program, also known as the Healthy Plants and Bilingual Education Program, at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) in Aurora.

This initiative started by first conducting a comprehensive assessment. It included identifying educational needs, understanding the diverse audience, and gaining insights into the complexities of plant production at various nurseries across Oregon.

During the past decade, the program has thoroughly conducted three comprehensive surveys. These surveys aimed to discern the specific areas of interest among nursery owners, man-

agers, and frontline workers, ensuring that the educational efforts remain well-aligned with their priorities.

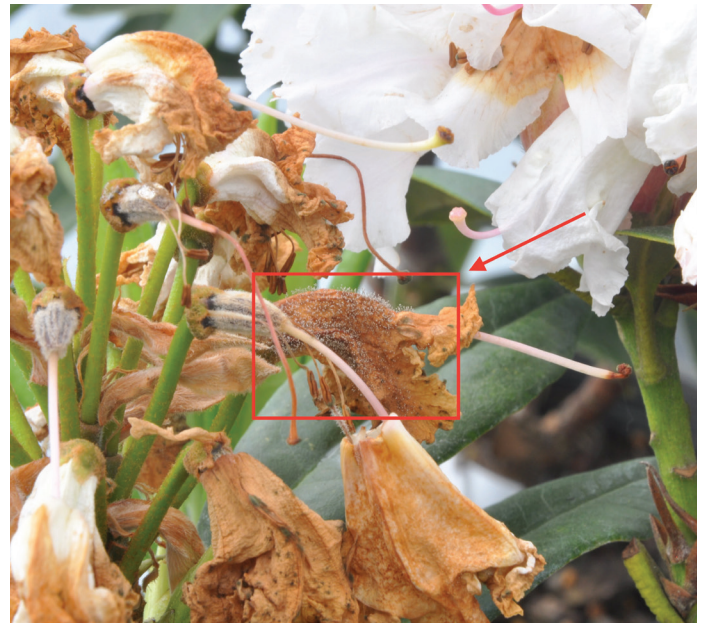
The survey findings revealed a distinct interest among our grower community. A strong emphasis on plant disease identification and diagnostics was at the forefront. This topic obviously mattered to our participants.

Additionally, the concept of integrated pest management came out as a major priority. These insights confirm our program's commitment to addressing these critical challenges in an extensive and comprehensive approach.

Our mission is to provide nurseries and their teams with the information and resources they need to protect and improve plant health. This ongoing commitment to responsive education



## Growing Knowledge



Recognizing symptoms and signs of plant diseases is the crucial first step towards accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. Symptoms caused by *Agrobacterium* spp (top left), *Botrytis* spp (top right) and *Phytophthora* spp (bottom photos). PHOTOS COURTESY OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

ensures that the Healthy Plants program remains a shining example of excellence in the field of plant disease management.

### Why a certification program?

The beginning of the certification program idea can be traced back to interactions with workshop and educational event attendees.

These interactions revealed a pressing desire among workers to have a tangible document validating their knowledge and skills, especially after dedicating several years to the industry. Simultaneously,

nursery owners sought a solution that would permit growers to access continuous education without disrupting their work schedules — essentially, an education program custom-made to the individual's pace.

The development of this idea into a comprehensive certification program was a labor-intensive process. It spanned several years and required substantial funding. It culminated in a significant achievement in 2020, when the program successfully launched a bilingual certification initiative. Titled “Disease Prevention

and Diagnosis for Nursery Crops,” it falls under the umbrella of the Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) platform at Oregon State University.

This innovative certification program not only demonstrates the plant pathology program's commitment, but it also fills a significant educational need in the nursery sector.

It provides individuals with formal acknowledgement of their competence, while also giving a flexible and accessible outlet for continued education to nursery workers, plant enthusiasts, and garden professionals. This promotes a culture



The course explores the relationships between plant production practices and the effects of these interactions on plant health and growth. PHOTO COURTESY OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

of constant improvement and excellence within the industry. This innovative approach emphasizes the adaptability and responsiveness of educational programs to the ever-changing demands of the field.

One of the primary objectives of establishing this certification program for disease diagnostics in nursery crops is to comprehensively address critical aspects that strengthen its importance:

**Protection of investments:** Nursery businesses invest significant resources in cultivating and selling plants. Plant diseases can lead to crop loss, reduced product quality, and decreased marketability. Certification helps nursery workers identify and manage diseases promptly, protecting these investments.

**Preventive measures:** This training was designed to help nursery growers understand effective disease prevention and management strategies. Nursery employees can learn about good cleanliness, plant selection, and cultivation procedures that can help decrease disease outbreaks while saving time and money.

The course explores the relationships between plant production practices and the effects of these interactions on plant health and growth. The course promotes a sense of responsibility in each participant at any level of production. Growers will recognize that all processes in plant production are crucial and complement each other to obtain a healthy and sellable product.

**Early disease detection:** Early detection of plant diseases is crucial for effective management. Certified workers are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of diseases in their early stages, allowing for timely intervention. See Figure 1. This can prevent the spread of diseases to other plants and reduce the need for costly treatments.

**Reduced risk of disease spread:** Diseases in nursery plants can spread to other nurseries or landscapes when infected plants are sold or planted. Certified nursery workers are more likely to follow protocols that minimize the risk of spreading diseases, contributing to overall disease management efforts in the industry.

**Help with licensing preparation:** In addition, those who complete the course will be more confident and better prepared to take the pesticide licensing exam.

That's because the information on pathogens, disease, and management presented in this course is the foundation on which the licensing exam material is built. Our online, interactive Disease Prevention and Diagnosis for Nursery Crops Certification Course has been approved for four core Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) pesticide recertification credits.

**Market competitiveness:** Nurseries that employ certified workers can market themselves as knowledgeable and committed to plant health. This can attract more customers who are concerned about the health and longevity of the plants they purchase, giving certified nurseries a competitive edge.

**Environmental responsibility:** Disease management practices often involve reducing the use of pesticides and adopting more sustainable and environmentally »

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## Growing Knowledge



The mission of the program is to provide nurseries and their teams with the information and resources they need to protect and improve plant health. PHOTO COURTESY OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

friendly approaches. Certification encourages nurseries to be responsible stewards of the environment, which can appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

### Overview of disease prevention and diagnosis for Nursery Crops Certification Course:

The course consists of five online modules and is self-paced. There is an assessment at the end of each module that students should complete before proceeding to the next module. The instructor is available via email to answer questions and address concerns.

**First module** — Provides a broad overview of plant diseases and the various microorganisms that can cause them.

**Second module** — Introduces important plant pathology concepts such as the disease triangle and disease cycles.

**Third module** — We discuss best management practices (BMPs) that can be executed to manage and prevent plant diseases.

**Fourth module** — This covers the signs, symptoms, and management of specific nursery crop diseases. In this module, we highlight diseases caused by different groups of plant pathogens and include examples of relevant diseases in the nursery industry, such as boxwood blight, botrytis, and diseases caused by *Phytophthora* spp.

**Fifth module** — The course will finish with a module that introduces Integrated Pest Management and includes scouting and record-keeping procedures as well.

Students will need to pass a final exam before receiving their Plant Health Certificate. A cumulative grade of 70% or more is required to pass. At the end of the course, students will be well-equipped and able to apply their newly-gained knowledge of plant health to create an environment where healthy plants can grow and thrive.

The creation of this initiative dem-

onstrates the Extension Plant Pathology Program's commitment to protecting investments, supporting sustainability, and upholding the highest standards of plant health. The nursery industry acknowledges the vital role of education. By endorsing this program, the nursery sector can consolidate its position as a cornerstone of healthy horticultural practices by committing to knowledge and excellence while promoting a culture of continuous progress and growth. ☺

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*The Certification Program was funded by the Specialty Crops Research Initiative - NIFA grant Award No. 2014-51181-22384.*

*Luisa Santamaria is a professor and Extension Plant Pathologist based at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, Oregon. She can be reached at [Luisa.Santamaria@OregonState.edu](mailto:Luisa.Santamaria@OregonState.edu)*



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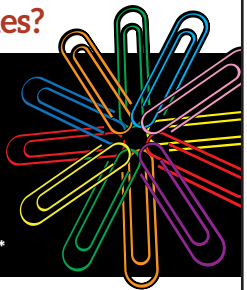


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# The people must step up in 2024

## The din around the political process continues to slide into dangerous territory.

How our nation deals with the challenges ahead appears uncertain, ready to falter. There's a stunning lack of critical thinking and little collaboration between differing views. Many don't understand the basics of how our government works.

Democracy is never guaranteed. It must be actively preserved and defended.

As the building blocks of our society are eroded by extremes on both sides of the political spectrum, our agricultural community can act as ballast for common sense. It's no time to be passive. That only leads to more chaos.

### How did we get here?

Many people of a certain age will remember learning civics as part of a required school curriculum. Sadly, for today's students, civics is a patchwork of social studies classes that only cover the basics, if it's taught at all.

It is astonishing to me that only seven states require one year of civics or government studies; 13 states have no civics requirement at all.

The disinvestment is not solely at the state level. For nearly the past quarter century, federal spending on civics education has been slashed by more than 90% to just \$4 million a year. That's around five cents per student annually.

The results are not surprising. Only 47% of Americans can name all three branches of government, and 25% cannot name any. More than half feel disaffected by our system of government and pessimistic about our democracy.

If people don't have faith in democracy, it can't function.

Some have lost faith in institutions, from the government to business and the media, not to mention elected officials and our electoral process. That's true no matter who is in charge.

Democracies often don't die with a shot from a gun. They die due to indifference and silence from those who can lead,

including ourselves.

## People are key to restoring institutions

Free elections keep our political leaders responsive to the needs of the people. As ordinary citizens, we have a responsibility to understand the world around us and how we elect leaders to represent our interests. Voting keeps everyone accountable, from local school boards to the cities and counties, on up to state elected officials, members of Congress and the president. It only works if we thoughtfully participate.

Some voices have emerged. The Carter Center is leading an effort to turn down anti-democratic noise around elections. They are focusing first on the State of Arizona. The Carter Center has found that distrust of elections has been "normalized" to the extent that some see it as a go-to message in campaigns.

There's a contradiction here. Although such messages are a campaign staple, the great majority of people who live in Arizona actually trust election results.

Restoring civics education will be an important first step. New Jersey recently became the first state in our nation to require that public schools teach media literacy at every grade level, from K-12, as a way to combat misinformation. Advocates say the measure will help students who are bombarded with information from social media and news outlets learn how to discern whether the sources are credible.

Under the law, which takes effect immediately, the state Department of Education must implement literacy curriculum standards. These include researching, using critical thinking skills, and learning the difference between facts and opinions and primary and secondary sources.

### The next great test for our nation

Our nation has two paths ahead: one leads to continued self-destruction, and the other, to rebirth.

There's great fear and anxiety over our 2024 presidential election. Free and fair elections could very well be under threat. The last time America elected a president, it led to a deadly assault on



Jeff Stone  
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

the U.S. Capitol and a failed coup. That gravely damaged the political system and marred the peaceful transfer of power for the first time in U.S. history.

A year from now, the nation's voters will decide another presidential contest. It will probably pit the same two candidates against each other. Three out of four respondents to a recent poll think American democracy is at risk in the election. Nearly a quarter say patriots may have to use violence to save the country.

In Oregon, Reed College's Elections and Voting Information Center filed a report to the Oregon Legislature. They interviewed county clerks and other elections staff from 34 of Oregon's 36 counties. Secretary of State LaVonne Griffin-Valade told members of the House Rules Committee that the report backed up the hundreds of anecdotes from local officials in Oregon and nationwide about increased stress on election offices.

In Oregon alone, top election officials in 12 counties have left their jobs in the last few years. Many cited fallout from the 2020 election and threats and harassment from a vocal minority who denied election results.

Let our nursery and greenhouse industry choose the higher path, together. Use your position in your community, church, family and nursery operation to urge civility and critical thinking, to achieve a greater understanding of how our nation and our government works.

It is not up to someone else; it is up to the person we see in the mirror every day. The lamp of democracy needs a light, and you are the match. ☺

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The OAN is looking forward to another great annual Convention next year! Stay tuned for details.

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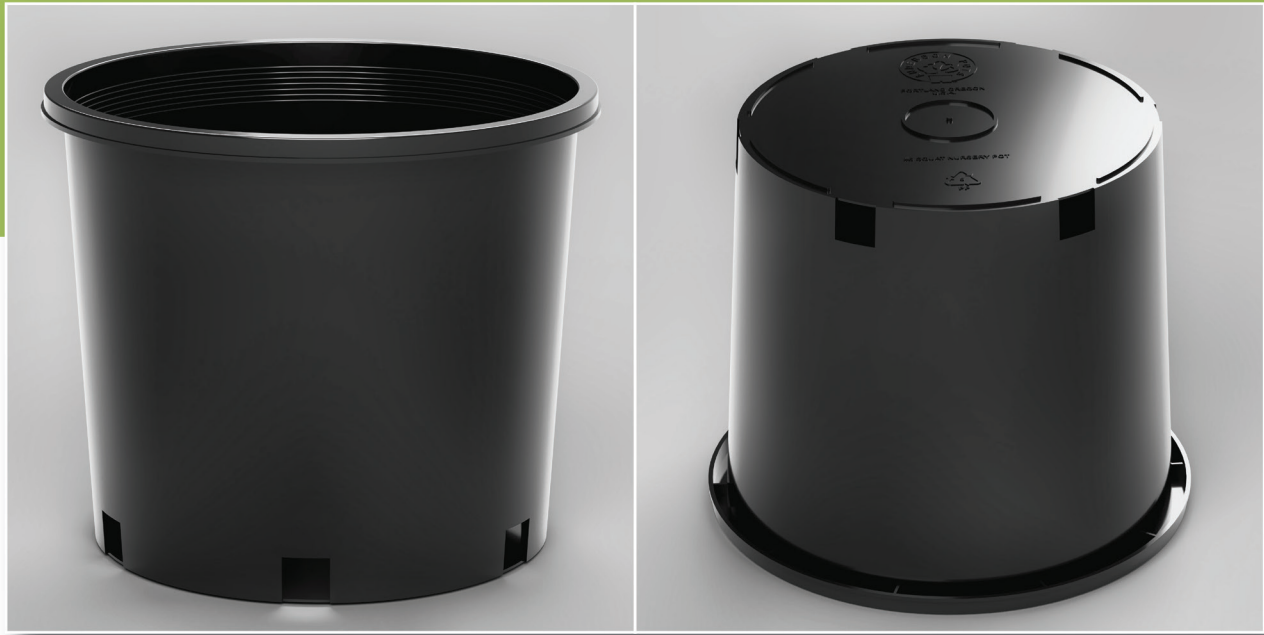


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