

Change is constant



Dancing Oaks Nursery and Gardens in Monmouth, Oregon, created a display garden to show customers how to use some of their unusual plants in the landscape. PHOTO COURTESY DANCING OAKS NURSERY AND GARDENS

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE. Whether we like it or not, change is constantly with us and the nursery business is no exception. Sometimes the change can be a step forward with the result either creating a better environment, or perhaps the change could be keeping a business, like a garden center, alive.

We, as gardeners, have very little, if any, input into these matters and can only hope that the change will be beneficial for our gardening needs.

Several years ago, Joy Creek Nursery, a specialty nursery in Scappoose, Oregon, closed. The owners wanted to retire and there were no viable buyers. This was a sad time for many local gardeners because Joy Creek Nursery was well known in the garden community as being a source for many hard-to-find plants. They also had plant collections of hydrangeas, clematis, penstemons, and hardy fuchsias, many of which were featured in their display garden.

When a nursery like this disappears, it is a loss to the garden community because there is often no viable alternative available.

When **Dancing Oaks Nursery and Gardens** opened 27 years ago in Monmouth, Oregon, the owners, Leonard Foltz and Fred Weisensee, had a long-term vision. They wanted to create a nursery that would feature perennials, trees, and

shrubs that were not readily available in many mainstream garden centers. They wanted to be known as a specialty nursery where plant collectors could find the unusual plant.

Of course, they also wanted to introduce these plants to the average urban gardener and thus, a display garden was created. Here gardeners could see and learn about new plants and see them growing in an outdoor environment. It was an instant hit, so who could envision a subsequent change?

A possible future transition

At the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon's Plant Nerd Night this past year, when Fred Weisensee began his presentation, three of Fred's nieces came onto the stage and were introduced as possibly a new generation to carry on the legacy of Dancing Oaks. Fred and Leonard are not ready to retire, but need to have some options when the time comes. They do not want to pressure these nieces, but it would be nice to keep Dancing Oaks in the family. So, maybe all change is not inevitable.

Other changes

Ernie and Marietta O'Byrne of Northwest Garden Nursery in Eugene, Oregon, began a hellebore breeding pro-



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gram over 30 years ago. During the early years, they dabbled in breeding hellebores but also had a retail nursery to run, a 1.5-acre display garden to maintain, plus they participated in many plants sales throughout the area.

When Plant Nerd Night began in 2001, they were one of six presenters at the inaugural event. They have since been presenters several times.

Wanting to obtain the best hellebore stock available, they traveled abroad to get first-rate breeding stock and visited premium breeders in England, Holland, and Germany. All of this takes time, and the hellebore breeding program began to become a major focus of their business. They have created new colors and new color combinations of both single and double forms.

Through their efforts, hellebores have become widely planted in many Northwest gardens. They have been instrumental in introducing gardeners to the wide and varied selection of hellebores that we see in garden centers today.

Now, after more than 30 years of hybridizing hellebores and creating many varieties, Ernie and Marietta have come to a time in their lives when they need to pass the torch. Thus, they are exploring their options. They are very pleased and gratified to find that **Little Prince of Oregon Nursery** is willing to take on the breeding and sales of Winter Jewels® hellebores and continue their legacy.

"Little Prince of Oregon Nursery is honored that Ernie and Marietta deem us worthy to carry on the legacy of the Winter Jewels Hellebores," the company stated in a release. "We recognize



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What I'm Hearing

that their diligent and patient work over many decades has created the most beautiful and desirable hellebore hybrids found anywhere in horticulture. Some changes are welcome.

The physical presence of Ernie and Marietta will be missed at many of our regional plant sales, but it is satisfying to know that their hellebore collection and breeding program are in good hands.

Change in the nursery industry continues with the sale of **Buchholz and Buchholz Nursery** of Gaston, Oregon, which is renowned for a vast selection of maple trees, and also for conifers and other hard to find trees and shrubs.

In 1979, Talon Buchholz bought 25 acres and created not only a magnificent display garden, but a renowned maple nursery. But as Ernie and Marietta O'Bryne discovered, sometimes there comes a time when there is a need to pass the torch. Talon did that with the sale of Buchholz & Buchholz Nursery to MrMaple, a well-known nursery in North Carolina. Sometimes change is distant.

Retail change

In the local retail world, Lori and Richard Vollmer of Garden Fever!, have sold their very popular northeast Portland garden center to two employees, Tim and Shawna O'Neal.

Garden Fever! has been such a unique and eclectic garden center and the hope of many gardeners is that it will retain the same good vibe that it has had. Tim and Shawna have similar thoughts and hope is to continue the great things that the store has provided gardeners and plant enthusiasts with for the past twenty years, while also making some changes along the way to reflect their own interests and creativity. Change can be innovative and creative.

Change often reflects the best of things that can happen and what customers can anticipate, but it also can stimulate gardeners to incorporate changes and to explore new changes that reflect their interests. Let us hope that all of these new owners can maximize the changes and continue to provide successful garden centers that attract customers and thrive. ☺