

Digger

SEPTEMBER 2024

Blight busters

New boxwood varieties resist growing threat

PAGE 25

ONF scholarships have a lasting impact

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Challenges ahead for nursery industry

PAGE 41

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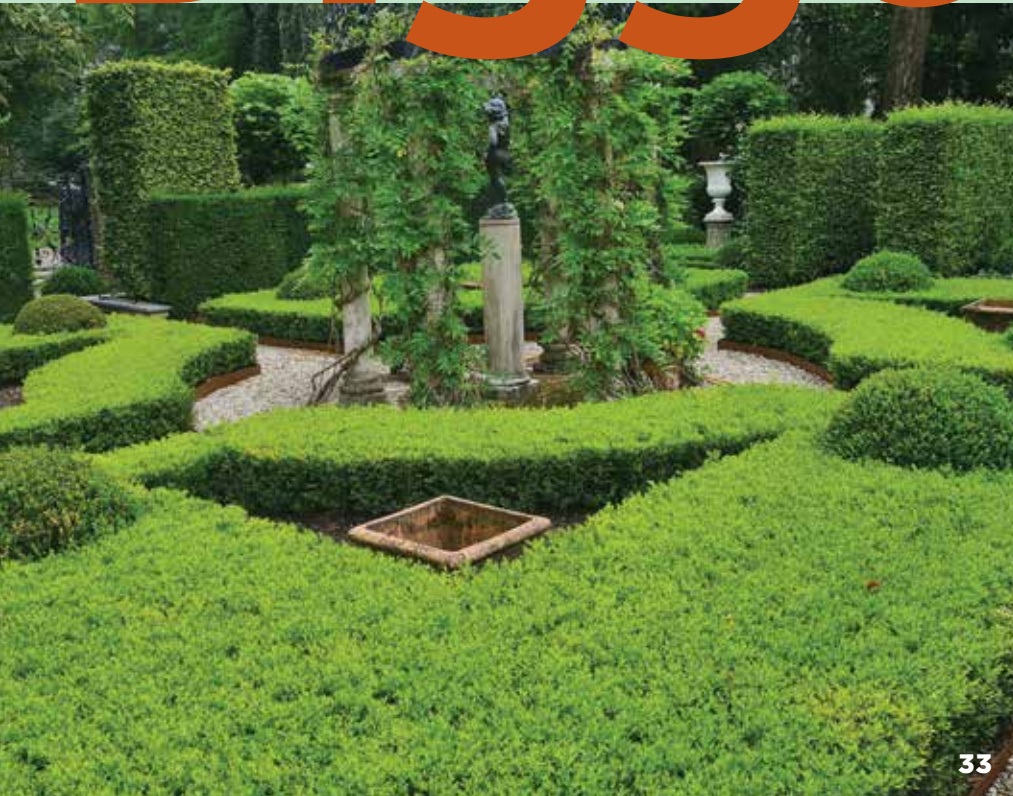
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On the cover: Better Boxwood® is a new boxwood-blight resistant brand with a series of new varieties that not only offers blight resistance, but other improved traits. PHOTO COURTESY OF BETTER BOXWOOD®

On this page: Left: The Better Boxwood® Skylight™ grows quickly and is easily maintained at 3-8 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide, with medium-green leaves. It's suitable for topiary or tall hedges. PHOTO COURTESY OF BETTER BOXWOOD® Right: Water resource management has been a key issue for nurseries.

PHOTO BY ARTURSFOTO

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FAX 503-682-5099 MAIN OFFICE
FAX 503-682-5727 PUBLICATIONS

info@oan.org EMAIL
www.oan.org OAN WEBSITE
www.diggermagazine.com DIGGER WEBSITE

STAFF

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

Tess Chapman TChapman@OAN.org
MARKETING COORDINATOR 503-582-2004

Stephanie Collins SCollins@OAN.org
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION 503-582-2001

Beth Farmer BFarmer@OAN.org
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES 503-582-2013

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

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

Jamie Moore JMoore@OAN.org
EVENTS AND EDUCATION COORDINATOR 503-582-2010

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

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

DIGGER

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

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

Tess Chapman TChapman@OAN.org
E-DIGGER PRODUCER 503-582-2004

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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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	Peoria Gardens Inc. 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
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patrick Peterson ASSOCIATE MEMBER	Simplot Turf & Horticulture Patrick.Peterson@Simplot.com 541-214-5802
Adam Farley CONTAINER GROWER	Countryside Nursery AFarley@CountrysideNursery.com 503-678-0511
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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
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Excited for a new season and a new year

Fall is almost here, and I can feel the change happening. To me it is always the most obvious that seasonal change is upon us first thing every day. There is nothing like that cool, crisp morning with a beautiful sunrise and a light layer of fog covering the ground.



Amanda Staehely

I thoroughly welcome that change every year. No more daily watering, checking the heat index, or, for me, coming up with something to entertain my kids for the day.

School is back in session! I truly love having them home all summer, but we are all ready for the routine to start again when September comes.

Perhaps it is because of the ages of my kids right now, but September still feels like the beginning of a new year for me in many ways.

We are planting our new fields, accepting fall and spring orders for the next season, and gearing up for winter. It is definitely a new chapter for us every year at this time.

I also get a moment to reflect on the end of summer and especially the Farwest Show. I felt like the Farwest Show had great enthusiasm and I loved seeing new and old friends throughout the three days. I felt so encouraged and excited seeing new nurseries exhibit for their first time as well. It is a testament to our thriving industry, and I love to see that.

I was able to sneak away from our booth and walk the show a little bit and was amazed with how the plant material all looked. Truly! Top notch! I am always so impressed with the plant material, but everything seemed to look even that much lusher and more beautiful this year. If you were a plant exhibitor at the show, kudos to you and I am proud and humbled to exhibit next to you.

My oldest son, Luke, has spent the

last couple years gaining more and more knowledge and information on drone sprayers. I am more than confident that if they needed a new sales rep, he would absolutely be able to do it at the age of 11. It is all we hear about the week of the show. He is absolutely convinced that we need it and that it will solve any issue we could ever have in regard to our nursery operation here at Columbia Nursery.

This year, we apparently need at least several other "cool" machines, robots, drones, remote control mowers, etc. after talking with him. It is incredible to see how many new innovations in agriculture (and even nursery in particular) are available right now. And they just keep coming!

Innovation and mechanization are here for the nursery industry and is only improving year after year. It's a train I am excited to get on, but I still need to figure out "what" and "how" for us personally.

I will say, I truly feel reinvigorated and ready for the "new year" and the fall season ahead. It makes me excited to see all the beautiful plant material, new machinery, suppliers, and especially my friends. It is a great time to be in the nursery industry and I don't take that for granted.

I feel ready to get these fields planted and then welcome the inevitable rain and cooler weather that's around our corner. ☺



Calendar

Get the word out about your event! Email details to Calendar@OAN.org by the 10th day of the month to be included in the next issue of *Digger*.

SEPTEMBER 17

OAN OPEN HOUSE/MEMBER SOCIAL

Join the Oregon Association of Nurseries at an OAN Open House/Member Social at Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, 39318 Jasper-Lowell Road, Lowell, Oregon, on Tuesday, September 17 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. This event is all about enhancing your membership experience. Connect with your peers and explore our exciting new Leadership and Professional Groups. These groups, including NexGen, HR Leadership Professionals, the upcoming Hispanic Leadership and Grower Segments Groups, are designed to bring together like-minded individuals to tackle the industry's toughest challenges. Enjoy complimentary beverages and light bites as you mingle with fellow members and guests and join a guided tour of the nursery. We also welcome non-members to join and learn about the advantages of being part of the OAN community. **RSVP at OAN.org/Event/FallCreekOpenHouse.**

SEPTEMBER 10

MOUNT HOOD HARVEST PARTY

Join the Mount Hood Chapter's fall Harvest Party at J. Frank Schmidt Arboretum from 5-8 p.m. Cost is \$25 per person, children under 12 free, includes food and drinks (taco truck and canned alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages). Yard games will be provided and all are welcome. For questions, contact Vladimir Lomen at VladimirL@JHNSY.com.

SEPTEMBER 21

PLANTFEST

The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon's popular annual event is back but in a new location at Clackamas Community College's campus, Gregory Forum, in Oregon City, Oregon, September 21, doors open at 9 a.m. and presentation begins at 10 a.m. Free for students, \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members. Plant sale starts at 11:30 a.m. Lecture program starts at 10 a.m. in Gregory Forum. Parking is available around the campus and coffee, tea and cookies will be provided. For information, go to HardyPlantSociety.org/2024-PlantFest.

SEPTEMBER 23-25

PLUG & CUTTING CONFERENCE 2024

The road to better performance starts at the AmericanHort Plug & Cutting Conference in Orlando, Florida. This conference is the place to learn the newest and best strategies, technologies, and techniques in the world of plugs and cuttings. Learn at in-person and on-demand sessions on best practices, production inputs, and diseases and pests. Get a behind-the-scenes look at Florida operations like Costa Farms, Agri-Start, Knox Horticulture, and AG2 TC. Register at AmericanHort.org/Event/Plug-Cutting-2024.



PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

VARIOUS DATES

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 September 18, and October 16, and sessions in Spanish on September 19, and October 17. Class times are 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The cost is \$60 per person. It's the same for first-time certifications as well as renewals. 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 OAN.org/Page/CPRclass.

SEPTEMBER 27

NWREC 2024 ANNUAL HARVEST DINNER

Join Oregon State University's North Willamette Research and Extension Center for the annual Harvest Dinner to celebrate agriculture by highlighting the success of various research and extension programs. NWREC faculty, staff, OSU leaders, elected officials, and our stakeholders join this popular event to appreciate and celebrate our efforts in addressing our stakeholders' needs, contributing to thriving local economies, and promoting healthy communities and the environment. This year, a silent auction is part of the celebration, with items donated by members of the ag industry. Proceeds support the expanding research and Extension activities at NWREC. The event starts at 5 p.m. with cocktails and dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. Cost is \$100. NWREC is at 15210 N.E. Miley Road, Aurora. Register at TinyURL.com/OSUHarvestDinner.

OCTOBER 9

WOODY RESIDUE MANAGEMENT

Join the OSU Extension Service for a tour of suburban forestland parcel undergoing fire risk reduction and habitat restoration to explore alternative approaches for managing woody debris. There will be demonstrations of mastication and air curtain incenerator as well as presentations and discussion. Topics include fire risk reduction, invasive insect sanitation, cost-share options, biochar production, smoke management and protecting public health.

Lunch is provided and the event is free. Go to TinyURL.com/WoodyResidue for more information or to register.

OCTOBER 23-26

FFA NATIONAL CONVENTION & EXPO

The 97th annual Future Farmers of America (FFA) Convention & Expo will take place in Indianapolis, Indiana. Early bird registration opens September 11 and ends on October 2. For details, go to Convention.FFA.org.

NOVEMBER 4-7

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

The Irrigation Show brings the brightest minds and latest innovations in irrigation to one place, November 4-7 at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center in Long Beach, California. For more details, go to Irrigation.org/2024Show.

NOVEMBER 15-16

OAN CONVENTION

Save the date! Join us at the picturesque Oregon Coast as we celebrate a great year at License to Grow: The 2024 OAN Convention at Salishan Coastal Lodge in Gleneden Beach, Oregon, Friday-Saturday, November 15-16. Enjoy social time with old and new friends, talk about the issues that are vital to Oregon nurseries, enjoy the sandy beaches, and honor the industry's achievers at the annual President's Awards Banquet. Complimentary childcare provided. Registration will open in September. ☺



The 2024 Farwest Show attracted more than 4,000 attendees and 300 exhibitors representing many segments of the industry. PHOTO BY CARLY CARPENTER

Excitement prevails at Farwest as industry ‘Meets the Future’

BY VIC PANICKUL

A sense of optimism and excitement prevailed at the 2024 Farwest Show as the exhibitors put their best foot forward, forged new customer connections, and strengthened existing relationships.

“This year’s Farwest Show floor had great energy with over 4,000 in attendance and more than 300 exhibiting companies representing many segments throughout our industry,” said Allan Niemi, director of events for the Oregon Association of Nurseries, which produces the show. “The show also experienced 8% more grower exhibit booths and over 15% more grower attendees. We heard many positive comments from exhibitors excited about the leads, sales and connections they achieved during the show.

“Overall, the Farwest Show provided strong value for buyers, sellers and industry professionals looking for innovative ideas, products and services to grow their business.”



“It’s the 51st Farwest show and it’s gone really well,” said longtime exhibitor Chris Robinson, co-owner of wholesale grower **Robinson Nursery Inc.** (Amity, Oregon). “It’s a good opportunity to network with our neighbors and customers far and wide. This year we had a tree in the new variety showcase and we were blessed that it won Best in Show and Retailers’ Choice Award. But what’s really the most important thing to me is that ... we brought 55 people to the Farwest show so it gives an opportunity for all the

people that are working hard on our farm year in and year out to come here and learn new things and network with like-minded individuals and come home and make the nursery even better.”

“It’s always a good show. The exposure means a lot to us,” said Kevin Martel, co-owner of **Martel’s Nursery Inc.** (Salem, Oregon), a wholesale rootstock nursery which has been exhibiting for more than 30 years. “You never know when there’s going to be a customer that just stops in and find what they need from your booth. We like to support the OAN, they do a lot for the industry, so that’s part of it as well.”

“We find it’s important to have a chance to connect with our customers face to face. Lots of time we’re doing business with people across the country and its electronic — phone calls and emails,” said Greg Brice of **Alpha Nursery Inc.** (Salem, Oregon), a wholesale grower and





There were 8% more grower exhibit booths and 15% more grower attendees than last year. PHOTO BY CARLY CARPENTER

longtime exhibitor. “It’s important to put a face to the name in this business and thank them for their business in person.”

The show made a special effort to welcome new exhibitors as well as attendees, with floor signs designating first-time exhibitors to encourage attendees to stop by. A star on name badges of first-time attendees made them more visible and encouraged exhibitors to start conversations with them.

Samuel Hoefler of Etera (Forest Grove, Oregon), a *Sedum* grower and supplier of pre-vegetated tiles for green roof plantings and first-time exhibitor, said they decided to exhibit after attending the show previously. “The show has been great, we’ve met with a lot of people and a lot of people are interested in our product,” Hoefler said. “It’s a good audience and we do a lot of business with landscapers and nurseries as well so it’s good to meet people and put names to faces and try to meet people locally and beyond.”

Angus Junking of Botaniworld (Farmingham, Mass) appreciated the organization of the show and the clear communication he received as a vendor. “It’s an excellent show and very well organized. We’re debuting a unique hand tool for fine gardening and landscaping, and we’ve had a lot of interest and a great



Pub Crawl this year included a stop at newly-opened cider taproom Bauman's on Oak. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

crowd here. We’ll definitely be back.”

Teresa Holmes of Mary Lou’s Flower Cart and Greenhouse drove nine hours from Burley, Idaho to attend Farwest for the first time. “It’s been very informative. I love seeing the variety. Bringing all the growers in one spot instead of you having to go out and visit them individually saves time. You try to meet people that can provide you with product and there’s a vast array of products here. We’ve met several people who could become our suppliers.”

The educational component provided

by the seminars and nursery tours were also important aspects of Farwest.

“The feedback from attendees at this year’s Farwest Show seminars has been incredibly positive,” said Events and Education Coordinator Jamie Moore. “Participants were enthusiastic about the valuable insights and practical takeaways from each session. As for my own experience, I found this year’s seminars to be both engaging and thought-provoking, showcasing the depth of knowledge and passion within our industry. It was truly



Participants on the Garden Center Retail Tour get a look at French Prairie Gardens in St. Paul, Oregon, a nursery retailer that is also an agri-tourism destination. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL



The Wholesale Grower Tour participants get a peak at new introductions at Monrovia in Dayton, Oregon. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL



Nita-Jo Rountree gives a pruning demonstration at the Solution Center. PHOTO BY CARLY CARPENTER

rewarding to see such engagement and to be part of an event that drives meaningful conversations and growth.”

Larry Espinoza of Luis Nursery (Visalia, California) participated in the retail nursery tour this year. “We’ve always done private driving tours on our own, nothing organized,” he said. “But this is our first time we came on the retail tour. We’re rebuilding our retail nursery and we’re trying to make it a destination nursery and I saw the different places we were going to visit so it made sense.”

At the first stop, **Sebright Gardens**, Espanoza was wowed by the demonstration garden. “This is probably the best first stop because I want to make a garden walk. This is exactly what I’m looking for so I can’t wait to get back to start some drawings. The animals here (peacocks and other rare birds) were a big surprise,” he said.

“We buy lots of plants from nurseries in McMinnville, Tennessee and they get their plants from Oregon so we wanted to come and see ourselves and maybe get the plants from the source instead of the middleman,” said Mike Wadlington, owner of Wadlington Nursery & Landscape in Sturgis, Kentucky. It was his first Farwest Show and he and his son, Michael Nash Wadlington, signed up for the grower tour. While Mike was admiring the plant material at their stop at Monrovia, Michael was amazed at the demonstration of drones being used at **Monrovia** for plant inventory.

“And that’s what Farwest is all about,” said OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone. “It’s all about getting people connected in the industry, getting buyers to come see our products for themselves, see exhibitor booths filled with lush plant material, and see our nurseries. Because of the concentration of our growers, you can travel just a few miles and see several nurseries.” ©

Vic Panichkul is publications manager at the Oregon Association of Nurseries and managing editor and art director for Digger. Contact him at 503-582-2009 or VPanichkul@OAN.org

Hopper Bros. wins Best in Show booth award

The Oregon nursery industry is known for its camaraderie but the spirit of competition at Farwest always results in some fantastic creative booth displays.

Judges walked the floor to find the best of the best, recognizing several winners with the Ted Van Veen Best in Show booth awards for 2024.

“The exhibitors at Farwest this year really pulled out all the stops,” Show Director Allan Niemi said. “I thought last year’s winners would be hard to beat, but there were some real head-turners this year.”

Winning the overall Best in Show booth award was **Hopper Bros.** of Woodburn, Oregon, for their booth containing pumpkins, gourds, and conifers, including one giant poodle-trimmed specimen conifer that was purchased on the show floor by another exhibitor.

“We really appreciate it and it’s very special to be given the award,” Joni Hopper said. “It’s not the glitzy modern type, it’s kind of homey, but it resonates with people.” Her



From left: Farwest Committee Chair Mikaela Eaton awards the Best in Show booth award to Joni and Denny Hopper of Hopper Bros. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

husband, Denny, designs the booth every year.

The Best in Show booth award comes with a free 10x10 booth space for the 2025 Farwest Show. Other Best of Division award winners included the following:

- Growers:** Best 10x10 Booth — **Schwope Brothers West Coast**, Cornelius, Oregon. Best 10x20 or Larger Row Booth — Hopper Bros., Woodburn, Oregon. Best Island Booth — **Gold Family Farms Inc.**, Hillsboro, Oregon.
- Service and Supply:** Best

- 10x10 Booth — The Harvest Company, Greenwood Village, Colorado. Best 10x20 or Larger Row Booth — **Down to Earth**, Eugene, Oregon. Best Island Booth — **Flier Systems USA Inc.**, Kenneshaw, Georgia

The show also recognized exhibitors who put extra creativity into their booths with three **Far From Ordinary** booth awards: **Busco LLC**, Molalla, Oregon; **Smith Gardens**, Bellingham, Washington; and **Walla Walla Nursery Co. Inc.**, Walla Walla, Washington. ©

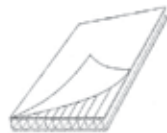
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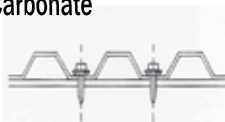
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Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell swept both the judges' ballots and the People's Choice voting in the New Varieties Showcase.

Judges awarded Cleopatra Flame Violet an Award of Merit.

Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell sweeps New Varieties Showcase honors

Professional judges and show attendees agreed on the best plant in the New Varieties Showcase at the 2024 Farwest Show: Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* 'RNI-Rixed' PP35353).

The reblooming tree, with a spiral of petite star-shaped flowers, each with a shimmering, almost metallic effect, was discovered in a group of seedlings by Chris and Josh Robinson at **Robinson Nursery Inc.** in Amity, Oregon. After observing it for years, the two brothers decided it was a winner. They turned to **Spring Meadow Nursery** in Grand Haven, Michigan, to introduce the plant to the marketplace.

"I had no idea *Styrax* could look like that," Chris Robinson said. "It looks like a spiral staircase going up."

The tree is being propagated from tissue culture in the lab at Knight Hollow Nursery Inc. in Middleton, Wisconsin. It is available as bare-root and container-grown liner trees from Farwest exhibitors Proven Winners, Robinson Nursery, and **Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery**.

The introduction of Starway to Heaven marks the completion of the dream for the two Robinson brothers, who grew up on the nursery their parents, Rick and Roxanne, founded. "When we were kids, it was our dream to have an introduction that was successful, or different enough to attract attention," Josh said.

Starway to Heaven was one of 25 outstanding new selections on display at the 2024 Farwest Show and available from at least one show exhibitor.

"The quality of plants in this year's showcase was once again high," OAN Event Coordinator Jamie Moore said. "Our judges were impressed with the variety and dazzling looks. New introductions keep the industry moving forward. They deliver new options for landscapers and homeowners to dress up landscapes and bring more functionality and pizzazz."

It is somewhat rare for one plant to win Best in Show from both judges and voters, but it happened two years ago and it was another snowbell. Nightfall Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* 'JFS 6SJ') from

J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. won both people's and judges choice in 2022.

In the voting by professional judges, the following three plants won Awards of Merit:

Cleopatra Flame Violet (*Episcia cupreata* 'Cleopatra'), introduced by **Cascade Tropicals** of Snohomish, Washington. This easy-care houseplant offers a showy combination of pink, white and green satin foliage. It reaches 12 inches wide by 10 inches tall. Outside it would be hardy to zones 10–12. The plant is available in 2-inch, 4-inch and 6-inch containers from Cascade.

Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'HakBri2' PPAF), introduced by **Briggs Nursery** of Elma, Washington. Lime Zest features eye-catching lime colored foliage with white to cream variegation along with plum-colored shoots. It adds texture and movement to a landscape and accompanies well with dark leaved shrubs. Lime Zest is a great new addition to complement its predecessor *Hakonechloa macra* 'HakBri1' Lemon Zest. It looks great when planted





Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass

alone or in mass plantings and brightens up those lower light areas. It reaches 12–14 inches tall by 18–24 inches wide and is hardy to zones 5–8. The plant is available as liners and containers from Briggs.

Paisley Pup™ Doghobble (*Leucothoe fontansiana* ‘Smnlfgvr’ PPAF), hybridized by Proven Winners and introduced by **Walla Walla Nursery Co.** of Walla Walla, Washington. This broadleaf evergreen is native to North America and is filled with eye-catching variegated foliage in shades of pink, green, cream, and bronze. Tiny bell-shaped blooms are strung along arching branches, feeding pollinators in the late springtime. Shade-tolerant, deer-resistant, and low-growing. Hardy to zones 5–8. The plant is available as 2-gallon containers from Walla Walla.

And in the People’s Choice voting by show attendees, the following won Awards of Merit:

SUMMERIFIC® Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus hybrid* ‘Cookies and Cream’ PPAF CPBRAAF), hybridized by Proven Winners and introduced by Walla Walla Nursery Inc. It offers a night and day combination of matte black foliage and pure white flowers. Like other dark-leaved hardy *Hibiscus*, full sun is necessary to bring out the deepest foliage color. Compared with older varieties of herbaceous *Hibiscus*, ‘Cookies and Cream’ is exceptionally compact and sturdy. Despite the smaller habit size, this selection does not lack for flowers. Blooms will appear the length of the stem, for top to bottom flower coverage, causing ‘Cookies and Cream’ to bloom both earlier and longer than traditional varieties. Hardy to zones



Paisley Pup™ Doghobble

4–9. Available as 2-gallon containers from Walla Walla Nursery Co.

Hearts A’fire® Redbud (*Cercis canadensis* ‘JN100’ PPAF). Seedling discovered by Cindy and Ray Jackson in Tennessee and introduced by Garden Debut/Greenleaf Nursery Co. A unique small tree that bursts into color in spring with dark pink flowers and heart-shaped leaves that are multiple colors of burgundy-red, tangerine and gold. Leaves turn reddish-green in summer. It reaches a mature height of 10–15 feet and spread of 10–15 feet. Available as bare-root liners and 5-gallon containers from Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery (Boring, Oregon), Heritage Seedlings and Liners (Salem, Oregon), and Bountiful Farms (Woodburn, Oregon).

Skyward™ Lilac Long-Leaf Speedwell (*Veronica longifolia* ‘Balskywac’).

Introduced and hybridized by Darwin Perennials. Veronica Skyward Lilac boasts dramatic lilac-colored spikes on a dense, naturally compact habit with sturdy stems. It has a high flower count and continuous blooming which makes it an excellent pollinator plant. It is also powdery mildew resistant. It reaches a mature height of 14–18 inches and spread of 14–17 inches. Available as unrooted cuttings and liners from Ball Seed. ©



SUMMERIFIC® Rose Mallow



Hearts A’fire® Redbud



Skyward™ Lilac Long-Leaf Speedwell



Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell



Artemisia Garden Ghost™



Philodendron 'Carmel Marble'



Cherry-Go-Round™ Reblooming Hydrangea



Forsythia HILLIER™ 'Discovery'



Skinny Skip Laurel™

Dazzling introductions win Retailer's Choice Awards

As part of the Retailers' Choice Awards™, a jury of volunteer garden retailers browsed the aisles and highlighted 15 different products that caught their attention at the 2024 Farwest Show in Portland, Oregon.

The awards as chosen by the judges were presented August 22 at the show, in a presentation emceed by Danny Summers, managing director of The

Garden Center Group. Both live goods and hard goods were eligible.

Briggs Nursery and **Youngblood Nursery** had two selections each while 11 other exhibitors had one each.

One of the winners, Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* 'RNI-RIXRED' PP35353), offered by **Robinson Nursery Inc.**, Amity, Oregon, also won Best in

Show and People's Choice awards at the New Variety Showcase.

Other award winners:

- Artemisia Garden Ghost™ (*Artemisia* 'Garden Ghost' PP33773), offered by **Walla Walla Nursery**, Walla Walla, Washington.
- Philodendron 'Carmel Marble,' offered by **Cascade Tropicals**, Snohomish, Washington.



Basil Everleaf Lemon



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Flame Thrower® Redbud



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Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass



Mojo Berry® Mulberry



Asian Jasmine 'Ogon Nishiki'



Canna Red Golden Flame



Sustee Innovative Water Checker

- Cherry-Go-Round™ Reblooming Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Hokomaburlac'), offered by **Van Belle Young Plants**, Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada.

- Forsythia HILLIER™ 'Discovery' (*Forsythia × intermedia* 'Discovery' PP35765), offered by **Meridian Young Plants**, Lynden, Washington.

- Skinny Skip Laurel™ (*Prunus lauro-cerasus* 'Mariblon'), offered by **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas**, Woodburn, Oregon and introduced by **Colony Nursery** of Canby, Oregon.

- Basil Everleaf Lemon (*Ocimum basilicum*), offered by Ball Seed, West Chicago, Illinois.

- Beneficial Insectary, offered by **Sound Horticulture**, Bellingham, Washington.

- Flame Thrower® Redbud (*Cercis canadensis* 'NC2016-2' PP31260), offered by **Monrovia**, Azusa, California

- Garden Gems® Amethyst Cercis (*Cercis canadensis* 'NC2017-6' PP35279), offered by **Alpha Nursery**, Salem, Oregon

- Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass

(*Hakonechloa macra* 'Hakbri2') — offered by Briggs Nursery, Elma, Washington

- Mojo Berry® Mulberry (*Morus rotundiloba* 'Mojo Berry' PPAF) offered by Briggs Nursery

- Asian Jasmine 'Ogon Nishiki' (*Trachelospermum asiaticum* 'Ogon Nishiki'), offered by Youngblood Nursery, Salem, Oregon

- Canna Red Golden Flame, offered by Youngblood Nursery, Salem, Oregon.

- Sustee Innovative Water Checker, offered by Sustee Innovative, Japan. ☺

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Northwest News

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

Oregon's workforce is aging, and ag workers are among the oldest

The number of older workers in Oregon has more than doubled since 1990 and ag workers are at the top of the age bracket.

According to a report from *The Oregonian* newspaper in Portland, Oregon, 33 % of workers in the combined agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting segment are over the age of 55.

Nearly 1 in 4 Oregon workers is over 55, according to a new report from the Oregon Employment Department. Oregon is one of the oldest states in the nation, with the median resident about 17 months older than the median American.

If there's a big wave of retirements, that could limit future economic growth — especially in those industries with the highest share of older workers, like agriculture. And Oregon's aging population will increase demands on social service agencies and on the state's health care system.



Plants on display at Al's Garden & Home in Woodburn, Oregon. Oregon's overtime and minimum wage laws are driving up the cost of business, the state's nursery owners say. PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITAL PRESS

HIGH COSTS, LABOR ISSUES WEIGHING ON OREGON NURSERIES

Although Oregon nurseries continue to be the state's most valuable ag sector, with \$1.22 billion in sales in 2022, some in the industry are expressing increasing concerns about labor issues and high costs, according to a report from *Capital Press*, an agricultural newspaper based in Salem, Oregon

Amanda Staehely, president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, said statewide sales are still strong despite her worries about a potential slowdown. Her nursery — **Columbia Nursery** in Canby, Oregon — is exporting plants outside North America for the first time this year, including Japan, which she said proves a demand for Oregon crops. "There's not another state that has such a diverse and beauti-

ful product," said Staehely. "We're really lucky to be able to grow here."

A new overtime law, which took effect in 2023, requires that Oregon agricultural workers be paid time-and-a-half for work exceeding 55 hours per week. Next Jan. 1, that will change to 48 hours a week.

"The ag overtime law is going to require farmers to change the way they manage their employees," said Timothy Delbridge, an assistant professor of applied economics at Oregon State University. "I believe the impact is going to be negative for nurseries (and) will be good for some workers and bad for others."

A 2023 Agricultural & Applied Economics Association study indicated that many workers earn less from their employers due to working fewer hours. Darcy Ruef, a part owner of **Al's Garden & Home**, said Oregon nurseries are

already dealing with high costs on top of the overtime law, including an increased minimum wage and higher energy costs. “Even though our sales seem to be growing, our expenses are growing faster than our sales are. We’re getting squeezed,” Ruef said.

The OAN is working on an effort to address the burden of agricultural overtime requirements for the 2025 session of the Oregon Legislature, Executive Director Jeff Stone said.

ODA ISSUES ALERT ON JAPANESE CEDAR LONGHORNED BORER

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has detected the Japanese cedar longhorn borer (JCLB, *Callidiellum rufipenne*) in the Portland area after a tip from the public in 2023 and subsequent trapping in 2024, according to an ODA alert.

This wood-boring beetle can attack and kill several conifers, including arborvitae, cedars, *Cryptomeria*, cypress, firs, junipers, pines, and other culturally and ecologically valuable host plants in the *Cupressaceae* family, including *Taxodiaceae*.

The source of the wood and woodchips was narrowed to four properties. These sites were trapped in 2024. New populations were detected at three additional sites as far as 6 miles north of the original site. Known populations are all east of the Willamette River.

It is uncertain how far adults may fly. Beetles are most likely spread in infested trees intended for planting, cedar firewood, or green waste. JCLB was most likely brought to Oregon in infested arborvitae trees intended for planting, although it originally arrived in the United States in solid wood packing material.

Officials offer the following directives to prevent these pests from spreading:

- Do not move cedar and arborvitae wood with signs of infestation to new areas.
- Inspect trees, particularly arborvitae, intended for planting. Look for signs of borer holes and reject them if present.



The Oregon Department of Agriculture has issued an alert for the Japanese Cedar Longhorned Borer, which has been found in the Portland area. The wood-boring beetle can kill several conifers, including arborvitae and cedars. PHOTO COURTESY OF ODA

- Infested wood should be burned, chipped, or buried.

Report suspected infested material to OregonInvasivesHotline.org or call 1-866- INVADER, and don't forget to take and provide a picture.

To download the ODA fact sheet and pest alert, go to TinyURL.com/JCLBAlert.

THREE OREGON NURSERY LEADERS NAMED TO FORTY UNDER 40 LIST

Greenhouse Product News has announced the 2024

class of Forty Under 40 Award honorees and Kyle Fessler of **Woodburn Nurseries & Azaleas**, Alexa Patti of **Little Prince of Oregon**



Kyle Fessler

and Jonathan Buswell of **Monrovia** are among the recipients.

Honorees are selected for their achievements, leadership and commitment to driving positive change. “This is a great honor and we’re very proud of the recipients,” Oregon Association of Nurseries Executive Director Jeff Stone said.

Fessler is greenhouse production manager and also oversees IT at Woodburn Nurseries & Azaleas, a nursery and greenhouse operation in Woodburn, Oregon. He is an OAN past president (2021).

Patti is nursery manager and head grower, IPM manager, propagator, Hellebore Winter Jewels breeder, and manages the crew and labor in shipping, production, and growing, oversees HR and is safety manager at Little Prince of Oregon, a grower in Aurora, Oregon.



Alexa Patti

Buswell is director of automation and works out of Monrovia's Dayton, Oregon, nursery. Buswell's role involves implementing new technology and automation to help make people's jobs easier.



Jonathan Buswell

CRYSTAL CADY AMONG THOSE IN HRI LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CLASS OF 2025

Oregon Association of Nurseries member Crystal Cady (**Northwest Nursery Buyers Association**) is among 11 new class members in the 2025 HRI Leadership Academy, the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) and the AmericanHort Foundation announced, according to *Greenhouse Grower*.

This will be the third class to complete

the nearly year-long program, which is designed to develop leaders on all levels of the green industry. “The HRI board is pleased to see this program continue to grow as it enters its third year,” said Leigh Geschwill, HRI Board President, OAN past president (2016) and co-owner of **F & B Farms and Nursery** in Woodburn, Oregon.



Crystal Cady

Other 2025 class members include Christopher Brown Jr., Virginia; Pablo Costa, British Columbia, Canada; Mason Day, Illinois; Bob Dickman, New York; Aaron Dillon, California; Jesse Eastman, Colorado; Sonya Westervelt, Virginia; Paul Vaandrager, British Columbia, Canada; Deanna van Klaveren, California; and Chris Wichman, California.

“We congratulate Crystal on becoming the third Oregonian to be selected for the HRI Leadership Academy,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. The initial class of the academy included Jonathan Jasinski (**Microplant Nursery**) and Kyle Fessler (Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas).

APHIS-PPQ UPDATES *RALSTONIA* EXCLUSION PROGRAM FRAMEWORK FOR 2024

The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Office of Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) has updated its *Ralstonia* Exclusion Program (REP) framework for facilities exporting hosts (primarily geraniums) of *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 (Rs R3bv2) to the United States, according to AmericanHort.

Starting October 1, 2024, all participants must adhere to the new REP framework. The framework standardizes offshore facility practices, improves sanitation and testing, and clarifies roles and responsibilities.

The REP also updates procedures for Rs R3bv2 detection. Participants >>



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unable to meet these requirements for the 2024–2025 season can request a deviation from APHIS at least two months before certification or recertification audits. AmericanHort coordinated an industry review and response to address concerns with the previous program, and APHIS has assured AmericanHort that these concerns were considered in drafting the final framework. Download the framework at TinyURL.com/RalstoniaEx.

FARM DEBT ON THE RISE, BUT SO IS VALUE OF ASSETS

Farm debt is expected to reach \$547.6 billion this year, a 40% increase since 2017 and a 5.2% increase from last year. But the value of assets — real estate and machinery, for instance — is predicted to be \$4.283 trillion in 2024, a 42% jump from 2017, according to Agri-Pulse, a website devoted to agricultural news.

Rising farmland and machinery prices are one factor likely driving the growth in outstanding loans, though growing farm sizes are probably contributing, said Brad Zwilling, vice president of data analysis at Illinois Farm Business Farm Management. Low interest rates in 2020 and 2021 could have factored into farmers' decisions to take out loans in those years. The Federal Reserve began upping rates in 2022 to combat inflation.

NEW PESTS THREATENING PORTLAND'S TREES

Foresters say tree pests are the biggest threat to Portland, Oregon's aim to protect the city's hottest neighborhoods by planting more trees, according to a report by Oregon Public Broadcasting. Low-income areas are particularly affected.

Tree shade is crucial to helping urban neighborhoods stay cool. A spot under a tree can be up to 45 degrees cooler than one exposed to the sun. Collectively, shade trees lower overall temperatures by adding moisture to the air.

Two beetle species could threaten the ash and oak trees in that canopy if they take hold in the city. One of the pests that could



Rising farmland and machinery prices are one factor driving growth in outstanding loans. PHOTO BY DUSAN KOSTIC



One of the pests that could threaten Portland trees is the emerald ash borer, a rice-sized iridescent beetle that has killed tens of millions of ash trees across the Midwest and East Coast. PHOTO COURTESY OF USDA

threaten Portland trees is the emerald ash borer, a rice-sized iridescent beetle. It has killed tens of millions of ash trees across the Midwest and East Coast over the last two decades, decimating tree shade in major cities such as Chicago and Minneapolis.

Oregon foresters found the emerald ash borer in Forest Grove, 25 miles west of Portland, in 2022. This was the first detection on the West Coast. Officials have managed to keep the pest contained to Washington County through wood and tree quarantines, but some experts say it's only a matter of time before it spreads.

Foresters are also worried about the Mediterranean oak borer, which tunnels beneath an oak tree's bark, carrying with it a fungus that grows within the tree and becomes the borer's main food source. The fungus can cause a disease called oak wilt and infected trees typically die within a few years.

EPA RELEASES PROPOSED PROTECTIONS FOR MALATHION


The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released the Proposed Interim Registration Review Decision (PID) for the pesticide malathion. Malathion is an organophosphate pesticide registered for controlling pests on fruit, vegetables, landscaping plants and shrubs.

EPA did not find potential human health risks of concern when malathion is used in accordance with its current label, but did identify potential ecological risks of concern, even after considering the measures that EPA has adopted to protect listed species and their habitats. The PID is proposing mandatory spray drift language for boomless ground applications (e.g., one or two nozzles spraying laterally from an all-terrain vehicle) and updated advisory spray drift language for all spray

applications. Download a PDF of the PID at [TinyURL.com/EPAPID](https://www.tinyurl.com/EPAPID).

TWO GROUPS TEAM UP TO STRENGTHEN AG IN WASHINGTON

American Farmland Trust (AFT) announced that it has teamed up with Puget Sound Partnership to prevent the conversion of farmland by supporting the long-term viability of agriculture, provide tools for local governments to better plan for agriculture, and develop policies to strengthen agricultural resilience.

The outcomes of this effort will include a Puget Sound agricultural viability action plan, a toolkit for local governments, and indicators to measure progress implementing farmland preservation strategies, AFT said in its announcement. These products will be shaped by an 



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Corban University will use the \$100,000 AgWest Farm Credit grant to create a soil testing lab, a major advancement for its agricultural sciences program. PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITAL PRESS

advisory committee and informed by a survey of farmers, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a review of existing research and current county plans.

AGWEST AWARDS \$100,000 EACH TO BOOST AG PROGRAMS AT CORBAN UNIVERSITY, SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL

AgWest Farm Credit gave a major boost to Sweet Home High School’s career and technical education program and Corban University’s agriculture program in the form of \$100,000 grants to each, said *Capital Press*, an agricultural newspaper in Salem, Oregon.

Corban will use the \$100,000 grant to create a soil testing lab, a major advancement for its agricultural sciences program. Sweet Home High School will use the \$100,000 grant to invest in its career and technical education department, which includes FFA and serves about 500 students. The grants were part AgWest’s \$3 million in donations to rural community organizations.

Announcements

JACK HARRELL III NAMED CEO, CHAIRMAN OF BOARD AT HARRELL’S

Harrell’s LLC announced the appointment of Jack Harrell III as its new CEO and chairman of the board effective August 15. He succeeds his father, Jack Harrell Jr., who recently passed away.

Harrell has more than 15 years of experience at the company, most recently serving as COO and president. “It is an honor to take on this new leadership role. To be the 4th generation Harrell to lead this company means a great deal to me,” Harrell said. “Following in the footsteps of my great-grandfather, grandfather, and father is a tall task and one I do not take lightly. It is impossible to replace my father, but I will work every day to honor the legacy and culture he created by doing all the things he taught me and instilled in me.



Jack Harrell III

“I look forward to continuing to work with our vice chairman, Dave Schermerhorn, as my father did for the last 20 years. It is an incredible honor to get to lead this great team at Harrell’s.”

Harrell’s, based in Lakeland, Florida, is an employee-owned company and the country’s largest distributor of branded fungicides, herbicides and insecticides.

PEAR BUREAU NORTHWEST NAMES NEW PRESIDENT, CEO

CarrieAnn Arias has been named president and CEO of Pear Bureau Northwest, according to a press release from the organization.



CarrieAnn Arias

Previously, Arias served as founder/CEO of TableSpark, vice president of marketing at Naturipe Farms and vice president of marketing at Dole Food Company.

CarrieAnn takes over the duties as President and CEO following the departure of Kevin Moffitt, who held the role since 2001.

In memoriam

JOLLY KRAUTMANN

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is saddened to report the passing of Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame member Jolly Krautmann, co-founder of **Heritage Seedlings and Liners** in Salem, Oregon.

She died July 21, 2024 at her new farm in McMinnville, Oregon, following a 2-plus-year battle with brain cancer, which was her third cancer battle in 25 years. She was 72. A rosary and funeral mass were held July 31 at Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Salem, Oregon.

Jolly was born in Taiwan, the daughter of a civil aeronautics engineer father and a literature teacher mother, who had fled mainland China during the Communist takeover. She studied soil science in Taiwan and earned a bachelor's



Jolly Krautmann was born in Taiwan and met Mark Krautmann, whom she would later marry, while pursuing graduate work at Texas A&M University. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK KRAUTMANN

degree. From there, she pursued graduate work at Texas A&M University in the United States, meeting fellow soil science student Mark Krautmann in the soil lab.

It was love at first sight. The couple married in 1976 and moved to Oregon

after Mark got a job working for a grass seed grower. After a year, he shifted to nursery work. The couple founded Heritage Seedlings in 1982, with Jolly continuing her day job at the time, as a computer systems analyst for SAIF >>



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Corporation. She joined Mark at the farm in 1984.

The business focused on rare and unusual seedlings, rootstock and grafted woody plants, becoming one of the first to propagate woody landscape plants in plugs.

The two became a complementary pair in running their business. Mark focused on propagation, field and greenhouse operations, while Jolly ran the office and focused on customer service.

The business grew over time, eventually amassing more than 20 acres of greenhouse production and more than 2,300 acres of farmland in all in the Salem and Stayton areas. More than 850 acres have been given over to the preservation of oak woodlands, open prairie, wetlands and savannas.

It was just one of the ways Jolly believed in giving back. She had a fondness for her adopted country and took pride in being an American immigrant,

appreciating the warm welcome she received. She gave time and treasure to the Oregon Association of Nurseries, The Oregon Garden, her kids' schools and various regional charities.

Jolly was known for a patient and determined outlook, epitomizing the words of Mother Theresa, who said, "If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive."

"Jolly always followed the logic and principle that to whom much is given, much is expected, and she was always so generous in her quiet charm, empathy for others, and ready smile," her husband Mark said. "Never drawing attention to herself, she simply did the work, helped others less fortunate with a leg up, and aimed higher every day. She kept a humble heart matched with quick wits. What a gifted life she lived and gifted in return to each of us who knew her, loved her, and

savored her dignified company."

Mark and Jolly were inducted into the Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame in 2019 in honor of their contributions to the nursery industry. Their business, Heritage Seedlings and Liners, is in the process of being leased/sold to Octavio Martinez.

Jolly is survived by her husband, Mark, at home in McMinnville; son and daughter-in-law Jonathan and Elizabeth, who live in Puerto Rico; daughter and son-in-law Joan Claire and David who live in Phoenix, Arizona; and five grandchildren. She also leaves a legacy of millions of landscape and native trees grown and planted to cool the earth, provide fresh air and beautify communities.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the International Oak Conservation and Research Fund, 2750 72nd Ave. S.E., Mercer Island, WA 98040, or online to [Bit.ly/ConserveOaks](https://www.Bit.ly/ConserveOaks). ©

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The Better Boxwood® Renaissance™ (*Buxus* × 'HER200B01' PP32274) grows 1-2 feet tall and wide with dark green leaves and is suitable for low hedges. PHOTO COURTESY OF BETTER BOXWOOD®

Fighting the blight

New boxwood varieties shoring up defense against disease that's spreading

BY MITCH LIES

As boxwood blight was spreading in the U.S. in the 2010s, executives at Plant Development Services in Loxley, Alabama, and Saunders Brothers Nursery in Piney River, Virginia, were looking for solutions.

Plant Development Services looked to Europe, where blight had been a major issue since 1998, while Saunders Brothers looked to germplasm it had on hand and started focusing on selecting for blight resistance.

Today, thanks in large part to those efforts, several blight-resistant cultivars are available in the U.S. market, and more are expected.

Boxwood blight, a fungal disease that causes leaf spot, stem cankers and defoliation, was first identified in the U.S. with a siting in North Carolina in September 2011. A few weeks later it was found in Connecticut, followed by other sitings on the East Coast as it quickly became a disease of concern.

"We saw it killing these old boxwood plantings at some of the very nice homes and gardens around the country," said Kip McConnell, business development director for Plant Development Services. "And they were quarantining nurseries, and some nurseries were having to destroy entire plantings when they would find

the blight, because there was no cure, and they didn't have a good program to recognize and prevent it. And so, it was costing nurseries, in particular those in the Northeast and Northwest, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"That was the trigger that we really need to be looking at this," McConnell said.

Better Boxwood®

Plant Development Services started its search for a blight-resistant boxwood by reaching out to Didier Hermans, owner of Herplants BV and a well-known breeder in Belgium. Boxwood blight has been a disease of concern there since 1998, >>

Fighting the blight



The Better Boxwood® Skylight™ grows quickly and is easily maintained at 3-8 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide, with medium-green leaves. It's suitable for topiary or tall hedges. PHOTO COURTESY OF BETTER BOXWOOD®

when it was first found in Europe.

Hermans had started working with the Flemish Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research on developing blight resistant boxwoods in the early 2000s in large part to protect his own business, given that boxwoods were his nursery's top seller.

"He actually broke down the entire boxwood genus and brought in as much genetic material as he could get from around the world and created a collection of 200 boxwood species and cultivars," McConnell said. "They started doing hybridizations and testing and trialing to find the ones that were the most blight resistant, and from more than 10,000 seedlings, four resistant hybrids were selected."

Their efforts resulted in the release of a boxwood-blight-resistant brand called Better Boxwood®, a series of new varieties that McConnell said not only offers blight resistance, but other improved traits.

"They grow really fast, and they have really great root systems," McConnell said. "That is one of the things we noticed in the very beginning is the root systems on these plants are fantastic. And, of course, that usually makes for a better plant. And so, we've been very pleased with that hybrid vigor that they brought, over and above the blight resistance."

McConnell noted that in a trial in Zone 5 in Ohio last winter, only one of the four Better Boxwood® varieties showed any bronzing, and then only a

little. "The other ones had good green color through the winter, which was very good to see because one of the things that a lot of people don't like to see is winter bronzing on boxwoods," he said. "So, we are very pleased with that. And there was no cold damage on any of the Better Boxwood® varieties."

Everde in Orange, California, has partnered with Plant Development Services to bring Better Boxwood® to the U.S. market. Nicholas Staddon, company spokesperson and plantsman, noted that at the Southern California nursery, Better Boxwood® varieties have maintained a dark green color throughout the winter when some of the regular species of boxwoods exhibited a yellow or bronze color.



NewGen Liberty Belle™ (*Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* 'RLH-BI' PP24443) was released in the summer of 2023 and has a billowing shape with excellent shade tolerance. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEWGEN®

“We’re seeing the Better Boxwood® program really does maintain a nice, rich green color,” Staddon said.

The Better Boxwood® varieties also meet a range of needs, from the Renaissance™ (*Buxus* × ‘HER200B01’ PP32274), a low-growing shrub ideal for low hedges, to the Skylight™ (*Buxus* × ‘HER2009B03’ PP32275), a tall variety suitable for topiary and medium hedges. The Renaissance™ grows 1–2 feet tall and wide, with dark-green leaves, while the Skylight™ grows quickly and is easily maintained at 3–8 feet tall and 3–4 feet wide, with medium-green leaves.

In between are the varieties Babylon Beauty™ (*Buxus* × ‘HER2010B04’ PP32273), which grows 3 feet tall and 4–5 feet wide and has light-green leaves; and Heritage™ (*Buxus* × ‘HER2010B02’ PP32309), which grows 3–4 feet tall and 2–3 feet wide, with dark green leaves and is ideal as a hedge or pruning form.

A key to bringing the plants to the U.S., according to McConnell, has been the partnership Plant Development Services formed with Everde Growers, which has which has 15 farms and 6,000 acres in production across the country, including at multiple sites in California, Florida, Texas and one site in Oregon. Together, the companies formed Boxwood Solutions Inc.

“Everde’s production power and Plant Development Services’ track record in introducing new plants, helped persuade Hermans to work with Boxwood Solutions as its sole distributor of Better Boxwood in the U.S.,” McConnell said.

Better Boxwood™ debuted in the Southeast markets this past spring, and more will be available this fall and in spring 2025, McConnell said. Approximately 40 growers across the U.S. are licensed to propagate and market the four varieties, according to Staddon. And Plant Development Services also is working with JRT Nurseries in British Columbia to represent Better Boxwood in Canada.

NewGen® Boxwood

At Saunders Brothers, work started on a identifying a blight-resistance boxwood in 2012.

“Our signature plant for 75 years has been boxwood,” said J. Bennett Saunders of Saunders Brothers Nursery and General Manager of Saunders Genetics LLC. “And when blight hit in 2011, we knew we had to do something if we were going to stay in business, because we quickly found out that most of the cultivars we were growing were fairly susceptible to blight.”

The nursery started focusing on blight resistance in its replicated, multi-season trials, Saunder said.

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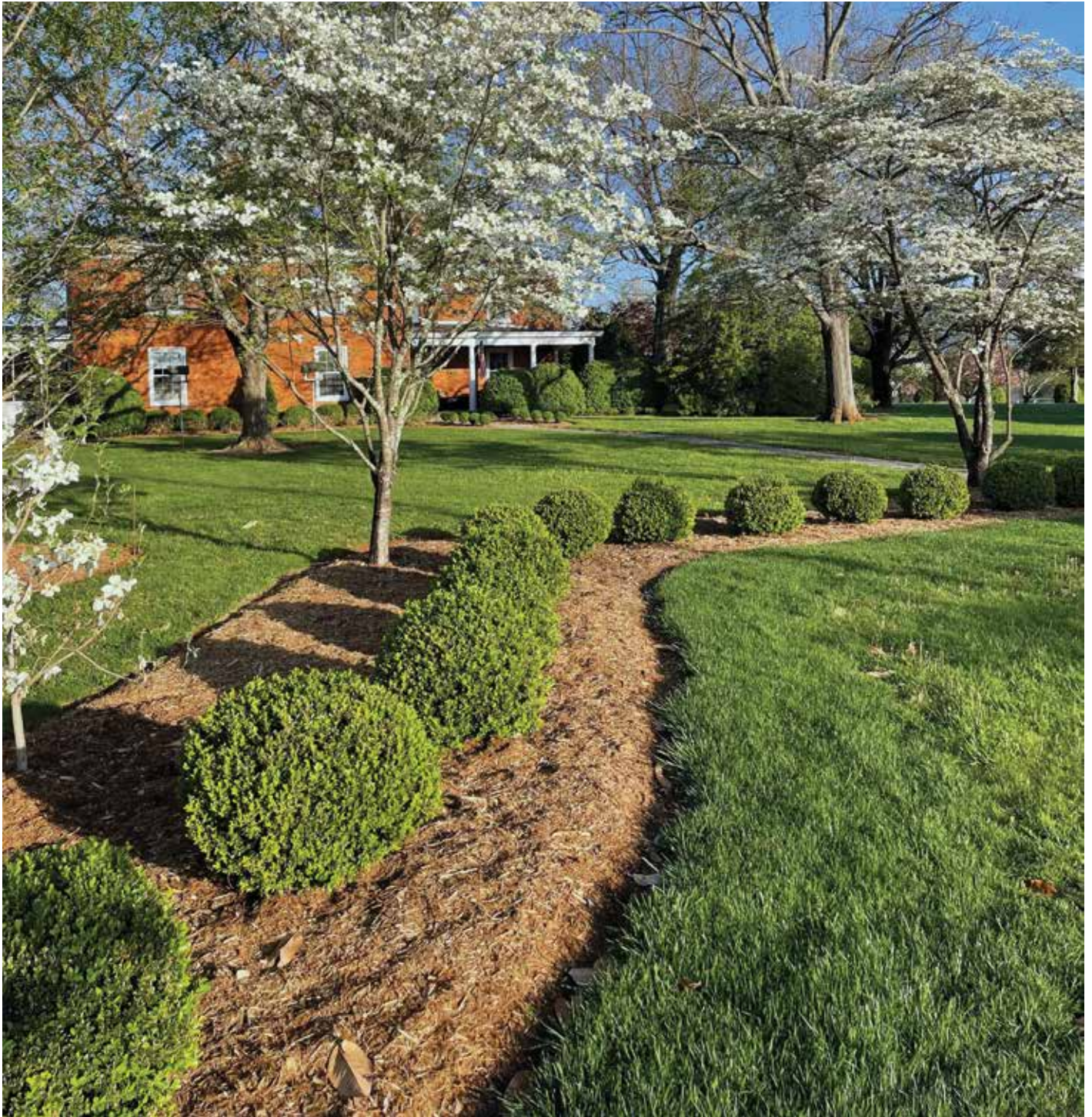
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Fighting the blight



NewGen Independence® (*Buxus* ‘SB 108’ PP28888) is a high-gloss leaf plant with more of a classic boxwood look. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEWGEN®

“People have been giving us plants for years to test, because they know we are into different varieties,” Saunders said. “And so, we already had one mutation and one plant that a friend had given us that had good resistance to blight and the boxwood leafminer, and we quickly got those going within our program.”

Saunders added that in addition to testing for boxwood blight resistance and

leafminer resistance, observations are made regarding resistance to other pests and diseases, as well as grower and garden friendliness.

Today, the company has three blight-resistant boxwood varieties available, marketed under the brand NewGen®, all with leafminer resistance, as well.

NewGen Freedom® (*Buxus* ‘SB 300’ PP32421) is a boxwood Saunders Brothers released in 2018 that is fast-

growing with deep green foliage that tends to be more compact than some boxwoods and is easy to shape. “It is a vigorous grower, so we strongly recommend annual pruning to encourage branching,” Saunders said.

Saunders described NewGen Independence® (*Buxus* ‘SB 108’ PP28888), a second boxwood that the company released in 2018, as a high-gloss leaf plant



NewGen Freedom® (*Buxus* 'SB 300' PP32421) is a boxwood that is fast-growing with deep green foliage that tends to be more compact than some boxwoods and is easy to shape. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEWGEN®

with more of a classic boxwood look. “It is just a really beautiful boxwood,” he said.

The third variety, released the summer of 2023, is NewGen Liberty Belle™ (*Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* 'RLH-BI' PP24443), a plant Saunders described as a little slower growing with a “billowing” shape that makes an excellent shade specimen. He added that Liberty Belle™ “has shown outstanding blight resistance in our trials.”

Saunders Genetics also expects to release a cold-hardy boxwood with blight resistance in the next year or two.

“We have teamed up with a breeder in Wisconsin, Mike Yanny, and we are testing his selections, which are considered more cold hardy,” Saunders said. “We’re looking for the same criteria we are with other boxwoods — attractive plants with insect and disease resistance plus grower friendliness — but add to that cold hardiness. We are very excited to offer that combination of traits to our more northerly growers and their customers.”

To date, the NewGen® Boxwood cultivars are popular sales options in the East and Southeast, and they are gaining in popularity in the West and in the Midwest, according to Ken McVicker, sales manager for **Woodburn Nursery** >>



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Fighting the blight

& Azaleas in Woodburn, Oregon, which is licensed to grow and sell the varieties.

“I think there is room in the market for more NewGen® boxwood sales,” McVicker said. “It’s very popular in the Southeast and on the Eastern Seaboard. It’s less known out in the West at this point and in the Midwest. But I think with the work that NewGen® is doing in its awareness program — their education, their advertising and marketing — it’s gaining more popularity throughout the country.”

Saunders added that the company is expanding its network of licensed growers, noting it now has 33 licensed finishers with right-to-propagate. “Plus, liners are available through Decker’s [Nursery], **Spring Meadow** and **Briggs**,” he said.

Management practices

As for the future of the boxwood blight-resistant varieties, sources said it

will be imperative for nurseries to use best management practices when increasing and maintaining supplies of the varieties.

“I will say to maintain a really good quality boxwood, the cuttings only should be taken from the very best quality plants,” Staddon said. “It is imperative that the cuttings come from the very best stock that is available to us.”

Saunders noted that Saunders Brothers and Saunders Genetics have long collaborated with the research and outreach efforts of the Boxwood Blight Insight Group and the Horticultural Research Institute of AmericanHort in support of best management practices.

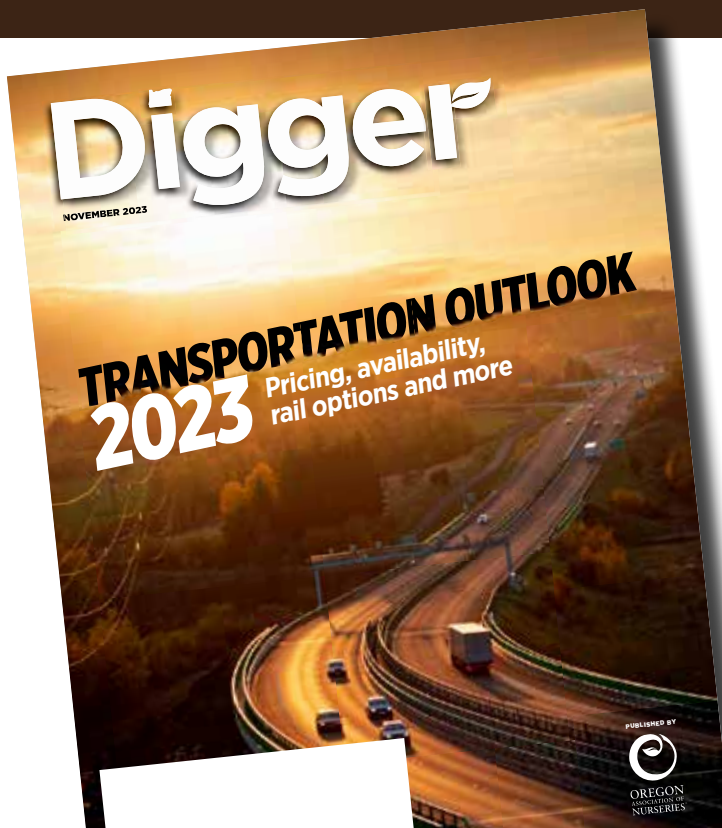
“We have all along stressed best management practices, especially sanitation, and also to use more blight-resistant cultivars,” Saunders said. “We’ve been saying that since 2011 and we continue to say that.”

Working with Keith Yoder, who leads the company’s inhouse breeding program, Saunders Genetics also is continuing to evaluate thousands of seedlings for blight resistance.

Saunders added that he believes the industry has made huge strides in blight mitigation over the last decade. “It’s very quickly becoming a managed disease, not the plague that’s going to kill your business,” Saunders said. “As with other insect and disease issues, you’ve just got to change some of your management practices and utilize more resistant varieties.”

Mitch Lies is a freelance writer covering agricultural issues based in Salem Oregon. He can be reached at MitchLies@Comcast.net.

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A lasting impact

Peter Gregg grew up not far from Iseli Nursery, where he now works as shipping manager. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Looking back, ONF scholarships made a big difference in launching the careers of winners

BY VIC PANICHKUL

The Oregon Nurseries Foundation has given 588 scholarships since its beginning, totaling just over \$530,000. The scholarships have helped the recipients complete their education and start their careers.

Digger caught up with five former scholarship winners to see where they are now and how they're doing.

Their stories provide an inspiration for the industry and reinforce the value of the ONF and contributions to the foundation from members.

Peter Gregg Shipping manager, Iseli Nursery

Oregon State University, 1998

Gregg grew up on a 5-acre farm just south of Iseli in Eagle Creek and was involved in FFA and showed pigs at the fair, so he was no stranger to agriculture. But it was his interest in Bonsai that ended up drawing his attention to horticulture.

When he was at OSU, he had good advisors and he asked one of them about tapping his passion in Bonsai for a career and the advisor recommended



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Iseli Nursery, which had a bonsai program at the time. So he applied for an internship there his senior year and got it. "I worked with Propagation Manager Paul Halladin as his assistant. I loved propagation and wanted to stay on." As it happened, his 3-month internship turned into a 9-month internship and in the end, he was offered a fulltime job after graduating.

"It paid to apply for scholarships as I had very little debt to manage after gaining my degrees," Gregg said.

Working in the industry pretty much reflected his expectations. "I love being outdoors so working in the cold, rain and heat ... it's what I expected. It's what I enjoyed about it. Even though some days now I work in the office, I still want to go out and touch the plants," he said.

For Gregg, giving back is important. "Stephanie [Collins] found me at the Farwest Pub Crawl one year and invited me to be on the ONF scholarship committee and I thought it was a great way to give back, so I said yes."

"We need more people in the green industry to fill the holes There's a whole

generation of nurserymen who are retiring."

For students and those new to the profession, Gregg said having a mentor is key. "Paul Halladin was a great mentor to me. Try to glean as much knowledge from them as you can."

"Things in the nursery business can turn around so quickly. Every year is different. The weather, the economy. Know that there will be ups and downs in the industry," Gregg said. "We thought Covid was going to deal a blow to the industry but it turned out to be the exact opposite. People stayed home and put their energy into their homes and gardens and the industry benefited from that."

Gregg has an eye towards being a production manager or general manager someday. He stays involved, giving talks at Clackamas Community College and OSU. He teaches a grafting class at OSU and a conifer cutting class at Clackamas.

Crystal Cady CEO-designate, Northwest Nursery Buyer's Association

Mount Hood Community College, 2004
Oregon State University, 2006, 2013

Crystal Cady got bitten by the nursery bug at an early age. Her family lived



A lasting impact

next to Drake's 7 Dees in the Gresham area. "After school I would go drop my backpack at the house and go walk over to the garden center and hang out," she said.

"I would go wander around and look at the plants or look at things in the gift shop or the koi pond. Sometimes I'd spend my money on a little plant or trinket from the gift shop. I would just volunteer to help box plants as the cashier would be ringing up the customer."

For years Jerry Gross, who was the manager at the time, said "The day you turned 15, you've got a job here," Cady said. "And sure enough, the day I turned 15, I had a paid job there."

Cady ended up attending Mount Hood Community College and then OSU for a bachelors and master's degree.

"Receiving an ONF scholarship helped me greatly because I worked full time," Cady said. "My folks didn't help with college. I moved out at a young age because I graduated high school early and my parents made too much money for me to qualify for any federal student aid."

"So I had to apply for a ton of scholarships. The scholarships really helped me and minimized my debt burden. It was a lot of work going to college full time and working full time," she said.

While in college, she started working for retailer **Garland Nursery** (Corvallis, Oregon). "I just loved plants and I really loved the people," she said. "That's when I really saw what the industry was about, because the Powells were really involved in the Oregon Association of Nurseries Retail Chapter. That's when it really solidified things for me and showed me this is how it can be in the industry if you get involved."

While in college, she also met and married her husband, who's also in the nursery industry.

"When I finished college, I had more free time so I put that free time and energy into volunteering for the association and seeing where it would take me and my career. And it's just organically led to where I am today."

While she was at Garland and started working on her master's degree, she launched a business of her own, Sunflower



Receiving an ONF scholarship helped Crystal Cady greatly because she worked fulltime to put herself through school. PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHWEST NURSERY BUYERS ASSOCIATION



For Tatum Temple, who worked at nurseries during college, scholarships covered tuition, so all she had to do was pay for books. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL

Acres Farm and Garden, a retail nursery. She grew plants at the nursery but sold at farmers markets and several large plant sales. She ran the nursery for five years and it was starting to show a profit when

she got pregnant with her first child and decided to put her business on hold and focus on raising a family.

She left Garland and started working for the OAN part time on events and

education and the job quickly became full time. It wasn't long until Skagit Gardens noticed her and poached her from the OAN to work as an account rep. It was during her time at Skagit Gardens that she was visiting one of her accounts, who was also involved with the **Northwest Nursery Buyers Association**, and heard that the NNBA was looking for a new CEO. That's how she ended up as the CEO-designate of the association.

It's all about building that network of relationships. "There's no way I'd be here in my career if it wasn't for that."

"That's what leaders do, is they build a network. People will come to me and say, hey, Crystal, I'm looking for this type of information or connection or I'm looking to fill this position and I'll look to my network to help them. It's not just about me moving forward, it's about me moving other people forward too. Having that big network of trusted people that I've built strong relationships which helps all of us move forward and grow a stronger industry."

Tatum Temple
Manager, Ryan Creek Nursery

Clackamas Community College 2014-2016

Tatum Temple grew up in Bend and got the nursery bug when working in high school at **Landsystems Nursery**. She learned about OAN and the ONF scholarships from Gary English, owner of Landsystems. "The people in the industry are what got me into it," Temple said. "I remember walking around Farwest Show with Gary and meeting all these people who were really encouraging."

Temple moved to the Willamette Valley and began studies at Clackamas Community College in the horticulture program and got a part-time job at **Evans Farms** in 2014 while taking classes. She took another part-time job at **Ryan Creek Nursery** in 2015. When she was finished with her studies and got an associate's degree in horticulture, she started working fulltime at Ryan Creek.

"Scholarships helped so much," Temple said. "It helped me get through school with the classes I really needed like plant ID and technical classes. The >>>

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A lasting impact



Jimmy Reyes remembers following his father around at Palmer Creek Nursery when he was 5 years old. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

scholarships paid for tuition so the only thing I had to pay for was books.”

“Working in the nursery industry has been great. I wouldn’t trade it for anything. People in the industry really want to help me grow.”

When she started at Ryan Creek, she did potting and plant inventory and then grew into her role here. She got to learn everything. Now she’s nursery manager, responsible for inventory, entering and processing orders, everything but accounts payable.

While still working at Ryan Creek, she started her own nursery in 2018, Little Leaf Liners. She propagates ornamentals and perennials. “I was always fascinated by propagation, and I saw a market for it and just jumped in. I started it on 60 acres owned by my boyfriend’s parents.”

They eventually purchased the property, located in Beaver Creek near Oregon City.

Temple met her longtime boyfriend, Kyle Laminack, while they were at Clackamas Community College. They were studying horticulture together. “He works for an arborist now,” Temple said. “We joke that I grow ‘em, he cuts ‘em down, and we burn ‘em for firewood.”

Temple said her dream is to have her own fully established wholesale nursery.

Jimmy Reyes Sales and inventory manager, Palmer Creek Nursery

Oregon State University, 2022

You could say that the nursery industry is in the blood of Jimmy Reyes. He grew up on the nursery helping his father. “I remember following my dad around at 5 years old and seeing what he was doing,” Reyes said.

In 1995, Reyes’ father, Rufino, started the nursery in the backyard of their suburban house with one small greenhouse and a big dream. Today, **Palmer Creek Nursery** is located on the outskirts of Dayton, Oregon with 16 acres.

“It’s a lot bigger now than it was then, and I have more responsibilities now, a lot more work,” he said. The nursery just purchased an additional 30 acres in Dayton.

At one point, when he was in high school, Reyes thought he wanted to be a pilot and looked into schools. “I actually still have my pilot’s license,” he said. “In my last year of high school, my dad was pushing me to work in sales and I discovered that I like it. I like working with people and I liked more responsibility.”

Reyes decided to attend Oregon State University and study agriculture. “I applied for scholarships and really appre-



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For more information about the ONF, please visit www.OAN.org/ONF.

ciated the ONF scholarships,” he said. “It really made a difference.”

Now, Reyes is primarily focused on customers and inventory, he’s the external face of the nursery. He’s always working the booth at Farwest and MANTS in Baltimore, Maryland.

“My dad will always be here ... be involved. But I think he wants to take a step back and let me run it when the time is right,” Reyes said.

“In five years I want to be growing 75–100 acres of nursery stock and take over the business,” he said.

Xavier Tacker Fungal genetics intern, Oak Ridge National Laboratory National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and GEM Consortium Graduate Research Fellowship, University of Florida

Oregon State University 2024

Xavier Tacker is a first-generation college student. He comes from a single parent household, crediting the adversity of his youth and resilience of his fam-



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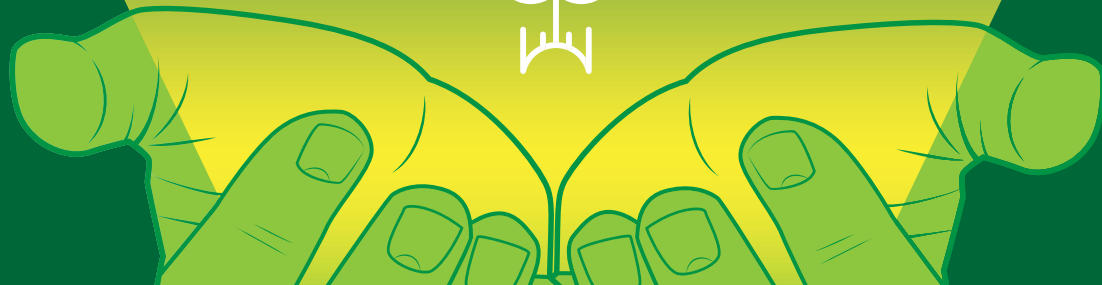
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A lasting impact



The scholarships he received allowed Xavier Tacker to focus his time on research in the laboratory. PHOTO COURTESY OF XAVIER TACKER

ily for his determination to succeed as a student and scientist.

“I was afforded my first formal research experience entering my senior year in high school, through Portland-based “Apprenticeships in Science and Engineering (ASE)” investigating conifer seed germination techniques under the Bureau of Land Management,” Tacker said. “I was hooked!”

Tacker completed his degree from Oregon State University this year after studying the genetics of poplar and eucalyptus trees.

Now he is spending the summer as a research fellow at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the institution made famous by the Manhattan Project, a top-secret atomic weapons program. Now the institution is famous for its biotechnology research.

“I’m working on a project to improve plant yield and eradicate disease,” Tacker said.

The project focuses on the fungus *Sphaerulina musiva*, which attacks poplar trees. “I’m working to mutate a gene which we believe will reduce the ability of the fungus to attack trees,” Tacker said. “Now I’m working on the fungus that infects poplar instead of the poplar tree itself, which is exciting,” he said.

After he completes his research fellowship at Oak Ridge, he’ll be heading to the University of Florida as a dual Ph.D. fellow supported by the National Science Foundation and GEM Consortium. There, he will be working in the Institute of Food and Ag Sciences (IFAS).

“I’ll be using modern genomic tools to improve flavor quality in strawberries,” he said.

He hopes to develop a robust tool kit through his Ph.D. preparing him to tackle the climate crisis in his professional career focusing on plant improvement.

Tacker is thankful for the scholarships he received while at OSU, which allowed him to focus on research instead of working a job to pay for tuition.

“I’ve looked at it as hours that I don’t need to work at a minimum wage job to pay for school. It is an opportunity to continue being in the lab, learning skills that are directly related to the science I came to OSU pursuing,” he said.

“Without scholarships from ONF there would have been hundreds of hours that I would have worked. I had the blessing to put my heart and soul into research instead. I could focus on why I went to school to — gain skills.”



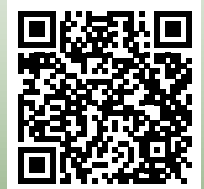
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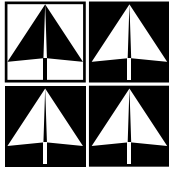
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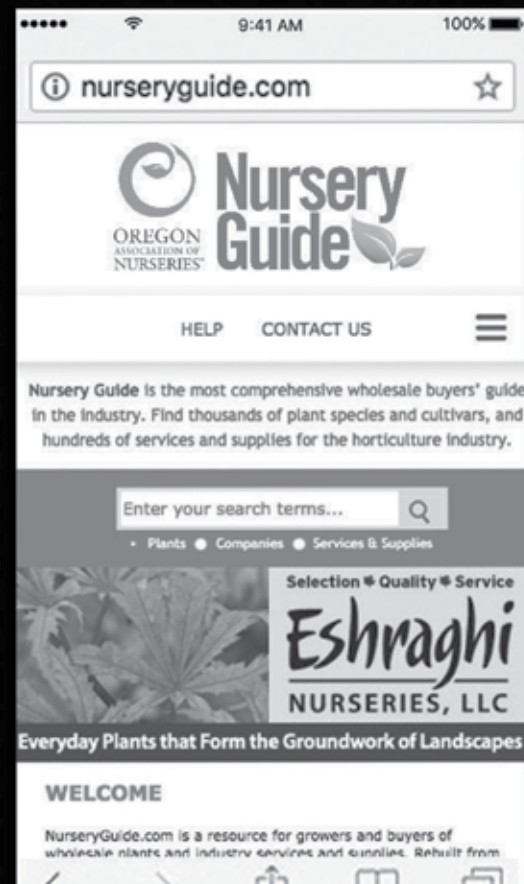
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GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Series content is coordinated by Dr. Lloyd Nackley, associate professor of nursery production and greenhouse management 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



Navigating the future

Growth, challenges, and the road ahead for the nursery industry

Minorva Cisneros checks tags on an order of plants being prepared for shipping at Bountiful Farms. Nurseries are having a harder time finding labor and costs are rising, according to nursery science researchers. OAN FILE PHOTO.

BY LLOYD NACKLEY, JEB FIELDS, AND RYAN CONTRERAS

In a recent article published in *HortTechnology*, titled “How Natural Resources, Consumer Perceptions, and Labor Are Transforming the U.S. Nursery Industry,” nursery science researchers from across the United States examined the current state and future of the nursery industry.

The paper, available free online ([TinyURL.com/IndustryPaper](https://www.tinyurl.com/IndustryPaper)), highlights the substantial economic impact of the nursery industry, which generates \$13.8 billion annually through the sale of live plants, including \$4.55 billion from woody ornamentals.

Despite this robust revenue, the industry faces significant changes and challenges. The experts identified three

primary areas that continue to shape the industry’s future: labor, natural resources and consumer trends.

In this review, we’ll focus on what the national researchers found and how that’s relevant to Oregon and West Coast production.

Labor supply, labor demand, and mechanization

As every nursery operator in Oregon knows, labor is crucial for the sustainability of production and operations.

The research highlighted major labor challenges. Some 42% of respondents reported insufficient availability of qualified labor. From sales reps, to skilled laborers in production, to shipping and

spraying, it’s difficult to find qualified people for all positions. The researchers documented some of the causes.

Over the past 20 years, there’s been a decrease in family labor and an increased need for hired workers in agriculture. This shortage is a significant problem in many agriculture industries, including the nursery industry. Several factors affect the availability of workers. These include the aging domestic workforce, lack of interest from local workers, and stricter immigration and guest worker regulations.

The shortage of labor is also connected to increasing costs. According to the research, 22% of nurseries cited increased wages as a limiting factor for new

Growing Knowledge



Many nurseries like Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas have incorporated semi-automatic pruning machines to support labor. OAN FILE PHOTO.

hires.

Since 1999, labor costs for the nursery and greenhouse industry have steadily increased. Labor costs rose from less than 30% of total gross cash farm income in 1999 to about 35% in 2020. Though a 5% change over two decades might seem small, these costs are now at a 20-year high. Studies estimate that labor accounts for up to 40% of production costs in the nursery industry, especially as more operations adopt soilless production practices.

Compensation has also increased, either due to higher minimum wages or as a way to attract and retain employees. Despite the sales growth in the green industry, all operations are looking for ways to reduce labor costs and secure reliable labor. Many nursery operators are looking to automation and mechanization to save on labor costs and address labor shortages. Autonomous greenhouses and robotics are some of the high-tech investments being pursued by ornamental horticulture businesses. How these technologies

are used will depend on the specific production methods and the size of the operation.

Every year, the Farwest tours offer opportunities for growers to visit nursery operations that are embracing tech innovations. In years past, we've seen how **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**, **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.**, and **Brentano Tree Farm LLC**, among others, have incorporated semi-automatic pruning machines to support labor.

Meanwhile, large greenhouse nurseries like **Smith Gardens Inc.** and **Fessler Nursery Co.** are incorporating planting and sticking machines to increase propagation. Likewise, pot-filling machines and conveyor belt systems, which would have been less common a generation ago, are now ubiquitous in high-volume production operations.

Artificial intelligence (AI) can also play a role by helping to streamline and monitor production, as well as manage risks like pesticide damage and irriga-

tion issues. Of course, AI is on the cultural consciousness inside and outside of agriculture.

Within nurseries, research is looking at how AI can automate decision-making processes. For example, Oregon State University teams have been showcasing how to incorporate sensor-based irrigation into nurseries for years. A common impediment is how to integrate the information from the sensors into practices. AI is seen as a potential avenue to interpret sensor and weather data to adjust irrigation schedules.

Another technology that has roots in Oregon nurseries is the Intelligent Sprayer System, designed by the USDA, with trials conducted by Oregon State University and Oregon growers like **Hans Nelson & Sons**, **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.**, and **Bailey Nurseries Inc.** This LiDAR-based retrofit system helps shade tree nurseries reduce spray volumes by only spraying the trees and not the gaps between them.

Natural resources: water,

fertilizer, substrate

Natural resources are the foundation of nursery production. The research team considered key resources that nursery growers rely on, their potential future limitations, and new approaches to ensure long-term sustainability.

Historic extreme weather events are becoming more common and are directly straining nursery operations. For example, ice storms this past winter knocked out power in three Oregon counties — Yamhill, Washington and Clackamas — leaving many growers scrambling to preserve their greenhouses. Similarly, can yards were stressed by low temperatures. Some growers shared reports of higher-than-usual losses from cold stress.

These cold events also widely damaged suburban landscapes, increasing the demand for new plants.

In addition to extreme temperatures, water resource management has been identified as a key natural resource challenge. Nursery producers face several challenges, particularly with water availability, contaminants, and human health.

Water for crops will be affected by droughts, flooding, and competition for quality water. Global temperatures have risen by 1 C from 1895 to 2016 and are expected to rise another 1.4 C from 2021 to 2050.

Precipitation patterns are also changing, influenced by El Niño (wetter) and La Niña (drier) cycles. These changes will affect irrigation methods, plant choices, and water storage practices. Growers across the country are considering designing or upgrading retention reservoirs to capture more surface water during storms.

Contaminants in irrigation water, such as plant pathogens, salts, and sediments, can harm plant health. If contaminated water leaves the nursery, it can impact environmental health and community perception. Sediment is particularly problematic because it carries other contaminants during irrigation or storm events. Improving sediment management is essential for on-farm water management.

Pesticide use and its effects will also face more scrutiny, pushing growers to be



Water resource management has been a key issue for nurseries. PHOTO BY ARTURSFOTO

more proactive in managing contaminants. This is crucial for maintaining community trust in the safety of their water and ecosystem health.

Regarding human health, climate change (e.g., higher temperatures earlier in the season) and nutrient-rich water on farms may increase harmful algal blooms, affecting production practices. The use of plastics in nurseries (e.g., shade cloth, containers) also has researchers' attention, with environmental toxicologists investigating how microplastic particles can carry pesticides and other contaminants.

Some nurseries are already considering alternatives to plastic. For example, in Oregon, the EarthPot, from **OBC Northwest Inc.**, is soil media in a cellulose wrap to reduce a dependence on plastic while still producing healthy plants.

Benefits over features, market demands and consumer perception

Consumer perception and preferences drive the nursery industry as much as any other agricultural businesses. Understanding consumer behavior and industry practices is therefore vital to

navigating the dynamic landscape of the nursery industry.

Researchers tend to group consumers into a few categories to help describe purchasing behavior. Those categories include *plant-*, *price-*, or *production-*focused people, with *plant-*focused consumers making up the largest share — two thirds of consumers.

These consumers prefer shrubs, trees, and indoor flowering potted plants. They prefer to shop at independent garden centers and are more likely to have a yard that they maintain. This consumer group is of great importance to the nursery industry because of the number of new homes being built and new homeowners entering the market. In 2021, 43% of older Millennials (31-40 years) purchased a home for the first time. This creates a possible opportunity for the nursery industry as these new homeowners often wish to decorate, remodel, and arrange their landscape to fit their needs.

Across the U.S., yards are becoming smaller, houseplants are on the rise, and marketing attention often highlights “ecosystem services.” When consum- ➤

ers make purchasing decisions, they often opt for benefits, such as *pollinator-plants* or *water-wise* plants, rather than features, such as flower or foliage color. It is important to communicate with consumers about what the product can do for them. Plants provide emotional, physical, social, environmental, and economic benefits (e.g., energy savings).

Consumers are also focused on production practices, and research has shown that wording is very important in the decision-making process. For example, the words local, compostable pots, recycled pots, and bio-pots, were rated highly. We've seen this expansion in compostable pots with new additions by companies like *RootMaker*, and *Ellepot*.

This interest in biodegradable pots is also promising for scientists such as Jooyeoun Jung, a food science and technology professor at Oregon State University. He has been developing pots made from recycled plant material, like apple pulp and hemp hurd.

On the other hand, more generic words like organic and sustainable did not correlate as clearly with consumer purchasing decisions because these principles they have multiple definitions and are broader in their interpretation.

In the future, the nursery industry needs to be specific about environmental activities in which the nursery industry is participating and assist consumers with properly identifying what is important. To meet evolving consumer expectations, the nursery industry must prioritize environmental stewardship and assist consumers in making informed choices.

Role of plant breeding

The landscape of ornamental plant purchases and marketing is dynamic. However, the prolonged breeding cycles of woody plants pose challenges in anticipating future demands.

As we contemplate future limitations, several key goals emerge. Foremost among these are addressing issues of water scarcity, labor efficiency, and heightened pressures from insect pests, diseases, and temperature fluctuations.



A resurgence in interest in native plants is driving native plant sales. Oregon State University introduced *Ribes sanguineum* 'Oregon Snowflake', an Oregon native plant. PHOTO COURTESY OF OSU.

Along with the trends has been a resurgence in interest in native plants. Research shows that the number of native plant nurseries and sales of native plants have increased nationwide, as growers try to capitalize on consumer demand. There is even new legislation driving native plant sales. For example, New Jersey S-83 Law, Delaware Bill 22, and Illinois HS5450 all encourage native plant sales or distribution at the state level.

On the national level, Congress passed Senate Bill 557, the Native Plant Species Pilot Program Act, in October 2022. This bill establishes a pilot program for native plant species and a study on the cost-effectiveness of using native plant materials to carry out land management activities on federal lands.

The Department of the Interior is currently coordinating activities with the National Seed Strategy of the Bureau of Land Management, the Plant Conservation Alliance, and the Plant Materials Centers of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to carry out the pilot program. Examples of newly released selected native varieties include *Vaccinium ovatum* 'Cascade Jewel', a popular evergreen huckleberry; or *Ribes sanguineum* 'Oregon Snowflake'.

Oregon State University introduced both plants. They were evaluated by commercial nurseries and chosen for their improved growth habit, vigor, and performance in production.

Another example is the huge growth in demand for milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.). This genus of plants with many species native to North America received little attention outside of restoration and specialist collectors. However, the plant is widely marketed now, because it is essential to creating a habitat for the Monarch butterfly.

While trends may evolve, certain plants endure as timeless classics. The need for resilient plants in landscapes is undeniable. That's particularly true in regions facing the impacts of climate change, such as dwindling water resources and more extreme temperature fluctuations.

However, there exists a paradoxical trend exemplified by the widespread introduction of bigleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) cultivars, notorious for their high water demands. In some regions, climate change will reduce available water, increase temperature extremes, and place landscape plants under more stress. Nevertheless, demand remains high.

One reason for this demand, aside from the innate beauty of bigleaf hydran-

gea in flower, is marketing. The rise of plant brands and their marketing power has had a marked impact on what consumers purchase. Despite concerns about sustainability, effective marketing strategies continue to drive consumer demand.

The future of the U.S. nursery industry hinges on its ability to adapt to evolving challenges and opportunities. Understanding labor dynamics, natural resource management, consumer preferences, and breeding innovations are crucial for sustained growth and resilience.

Oregon and the West Coast, with their unique climates and production practices, offer a microcosm of these national trends. By leveraging technological advancements, embracing sustainable practices, and aligning with consumer demands, the nursery industry can navigate the complexities of the market and continue to thrive.

As the industry faces these multifaceted challenges, it remains vital for growers, researchers, and policymakers to collaborate and innovate, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for ornamental horticulture. ©

Dr. Lloyd Nackley is a plant physiological ecologist at the Oregon State University North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) in Aurora, Oregon. He can be reached at Lloyd.Nackley@OregonState.edu. Dr. Jeb Fields is assistant professor and extension specialist at Louisiana State University in Hammond, Louisiana. He can be reached at JSFields@AgCenter.LSU.edu. Dr. Ryan Contreras is associate professor and leads the ornamental breeding program at Oregon State University. He can be reached at Ryan.Contreras@OregonState.edu.



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The sprint to November begins right now

Every four years, we hear from the political pundits that “this election is the most important one in our lifetime” or “our nation and its survival is at stake.”

Alternatively, we might get a pervasive feeling of dread that our vote won't matter in the end.

Well, this election is very important. The direction (not survival) of our country is at stake, and your vote is incredibly important.

Labor Day is the true starting gun of the general election campaign. Normally, we are already sick and tired of the toxic political discourse, moving rapidly toward the notion that everyone who is running is undeserving.

Whether it is a local school board race, a legislative or statewide contest or the high stakes campaigns for president and Congress, the point is not if a candidate is meritorious for your vote. Rather, the true value to America is the very nature of your right to vote. It is you that sets the importance and the direction of our great country.

Campaign engagement matters

Our election process is contentious, fractured, at times flawed. I would contend that it is beautiful all the same. No other country can have fundamental disagreements about core values, impactful issues and how we perceive ourselves and our place in the world.

The Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee (ONPAC) completed its evaluation of candidates from the local, state and federal arena. Our volunteer leaders are focused on the North Star of building trust, relationships and policy engagement at every level of governmental decision-making. I am proud that this industry is solution oriented, willing to take on the most difficult issues of our time. We put ego aside and choose to work alongside candidates from all walks of life.

Our 2024 was blind to partisanship.

We are laser focused on policy objectives and driving our needs and priorities through the endorsement process. We have several core issues.

We want a fix for agricultural overtime that will help both growers and allow flexibility for workers to work. We're pushing for a green good exemption for Oregon's regressive commercial activities tax. We're promoting a transportation system that delivers on promises made almost a decade ago and finding a funding solution that does not burden our industry. And, we want government accountability through legislative oversight on agencies that are contorting hard-fought legislation to suit the views of those who implement the laws.

Regulations have a cumulative impact. While some rules are well meaning, there are consequences when they are stacked on top of each other. It affects the ability to do business in the state.

On the federal level, we need decency, bipartisanship and the guts to stop kicking the can down the road on important issues. Such issues include immigrant worker visas, investments in transportation and farm programs, and keeping our industry clear of emerging pests and diseases.

It is up to us to “build bridges, not walls”

Bill Perry is our association's new contract lobbyist. I have worked alongside him for almost 20 years. He is respected by both sides of the aisle for his measured, strategic and commanding presence in the state capitol.

When Bill was at the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, he and I worked side by side to craft and pass the 2013 driver's card bill for undocumented Oregonians. It was two large associations working across the aisle to pass a bill that nobody thought could be done.

Bill coined a phrase that I have shamelessly stolen: “We build bridges, not walls.” This fits the modern day political ethos of the OAN. In an era of hyper-partisanship, it is up to us to find middle ground, not see opponents as enemies. We must embody a higher standard of con-



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

duct and influence on the political process.

Yes, I get about as mad as one can get when we have lost a vote on a policy that was critical to the industry. I hate to lose. Being an old baseball pitcher, I remember very few of my accomplishments on the mound, but can recall the count, pitch and the hit that cost my team a win.

Get an elected's shoes dirty

With so many new legislators entering public service, we cannot hold on to past behaviors as a guide for the future. We must go where an elected official is in their career and educate them.

Legislators can impact your business with the stroke of a pen. The OAN is extremely effective in bringing them out to see nursery, greenhouse or retail operations. It is a true home turf advantage. The recipe is very simple: 1. Show them what you do; 2. Talk about the family operation and how important it is to you; 3. Respectfully tell the elected official what keeps you up at night related to the challenges you face every day.

You, the member, are the best ambassador the industry has. Build bridges. Not walls.

Block out the noise, encourage using the right to vote

Polls mean nothing before Labor Day. I would suggest they mean very little until the ultimate poll is taken on Election Day. You have a say on what happens in our community, our state and our nation. Tune out the noise. Trust your instincts. Encourage your family and neighbors to use their God-given right in the United States that is precious and rare — the right to vote. ☺

A man in a dark blue tuxedo with a white shirt and black bow tie is smiling and holding a single red rose. He is standing in front of a large, stylized black and white graphic of a tree or plant. In the background, a cityscape with a flagpole and a building is visible.

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