

Digger

NOVEMBER 2024

TRANSPORTATION OUTLOOK 2025

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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 is visible, including a flagpole with the American flag and a building with a dome.

THE OREGON ASSOCIATION
OF NURSERIES PRESENTS:

LICENSE TO GROW

2024 OAN CONVENTION

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41

TRANSPORTATION OUTLOOK 2025

How nurseries can get products to market safely and cost-effectively

- 17** **Looking back and forward**
Nurseries have benefitted from favorable freight availability and rates, but will it continue?
- 23** **Packing with care**
Hitt
- 25** **Hitting the road**
Sound planning and communication make the best use of money and time during the shipping process.
- 33** **Dangerous waters**
Be wary of sharks and their double brokering, ID theft and other freight-related scams.

COLUMNS

- 7 President's Message
- 46 Director's Desk

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 Calendar
- 9 Northwest News
- 37 Classifieds
- 41 Growing Knowledge
- 45 Digger Marketplace



Printed in Oregon on domestic recycled paper when available.

On the cover: Nurseries can look forward to a smooth road ahead for 2025 with favorable shipping rates and availability. PHOTO BY AM

On this page: Left: Shipments are organized and staged in order of shipping priority next to the loading dock at Bizon Nursery to make the loading process more efficient. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL Right: Standing water can help spread *Phytophthora* root rot. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY


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Growth means more when it's a team

When you think about growing, what comes to mind? Root structure and branching? Fertility and weed management?



Ben Verhoeven

Perhaps it is personal growth. Greenhouse structures and irrigation design? Or business and community?

For me it is cultural growth — how a group solves problems together, makes small, meaningful improvements, how they interact with the outside world, and how they take care of each other.

Culture is something we spend a lot of effort on at Peoria Gardens, our family farm in Albany, Oregon. An introduction to a defined culture was a pivotal moment on my journey as a second-generation business owner. That journey has not been linear. It was a boomerang.

I attended college at the Rhode Island School of Design, studying how to both give and receive constructive criticism (something my wife Kathryn is quick to point out that I am still learning).

After graduation, I spent a year in Rome, Italy. Then I lived in rural Wisconsin (writing a book about trees); Atlanta, Georgia; and two years as a bike commuter in Portland.

Throughout, I was always grateful for the life I had growing up on our family farm. When my mother became very ill, it was important to be close to her in her last year. Kathryn and I moved back to the valley. This was my chance to give the nursery an honest try.

Fourteen years and three children later, we both appreciate how fortunate we are to work with such a wonderful team of people, to be close to family and able to raise our kids outdoors.

When I purchased the nursery from my father, a successful grower and entrepreneur, I had big shoes to fill. To prove myself, I managed to micromanage my way into more problems than solutions. A mentor barked, “Ben, you are violating the rule of the span of control!”

My way out has been learning about Lean manufacturing and working hard to apply its tools at our farm. Central to Lean is respect for people. Combining the quality and efficiency tools of Lean with a defined culture has been powerful for me and our team.

At a nursery, especially during the spring, we spend a lot of time with each other. Anything we can do to build mutual trust, teamwork, accountability, communication and respect goes a long way.

The OAN and your participation in it is no different. You think deeply about the work you do and the people you work with. You have told me how you consider your coworkers and colleagues, even your competitors, to be friends and family. You didn't get to this place without trust, communication and respect.

As I look forward to the next year as your president, I would like to thank Amanda Staehely for her service. She was and continues to be a clear communicator and has certainly earned all our trust and respect.

I am also thankful for the fellow nursery folks who have encouraged me to participate, especially those on the other side of the political aisle. I treasure those friendships. They continue to show me that we can differ in opinion, even be direct competitors, but together share a common goal to not just sell beautiful plants, but to help people grow healthier and cleaner cities, communities, homes and gardens. ☺



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*.

NOVEMBER 15-16

OAN CONVENTION

Join us at the picturesque Oregon Coast as we celebrate a great year at License to Grow: The 2024 OAN Convention, taking place at Salishan Coastal Lodge in Gleneden Beach, Oregon (near Lincoln City), Friday evening and all day Saturday. 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 is provided. Register at OAN.org/Convention.

NOVEMBER 4-7

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

The Irrigation Show will take place at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center in Long Beach, California. It offers a trade show expo as well as educational sessions and socials. For more details, go to Irrigation.org/2024Show.

NOVEMBER 7

OREGONIANS FOR FOOD & SHELTER ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND FIELDS & FOREST GALA

Join Oregonians for Food & Shelter for a day of networking and seminars at the 2024 Annual Conference and cap it all off with the Fields & Forest Gala. The conference is 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. November 7 at the Salem Convention Center. A reception follows at 5 p.m. and the Fields & Forests Gala begins at 6 p.m. Cost for the conference is \$100, \$125 for the Field & Forest Gala, or \$200 for a combination ticket good for both. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to OFSONline.org/Events.

NOVEMBER 9

YOUNG FARMERS & RANCHERS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The 2024 Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference will take place at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center in Redmond, Oregon. It will offer leadership, safety and training sessions within all sectors of the ag industry. It is open to all, not just YF&R or Farm Bureau members. Participants can network with peers in the ag industry, pick up new ideas at educational sessions, win door prizes and enjoy fun activities. For more information or to register, go to TinyURL.com/YFRLeadership.

NOVEMBER 12

WOODLAND ROAD BASICS

OSU Clackamas County Extension Service will host a workshop on Woodland Road Basics and the New Road Condition Assessment Form from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Hopkins Demonstration Forest, 16750 S. Brockway Road in Oregon City. This workshop will teach participants the basics of woodland roads and how they work through



PHOTO BY HALFPOINT

NOVEMBER 14

FORKLIFT SAFETY TRAINING

Oregon OSHA will be hosting a virtual Forklift Safety training from 1-5 p.m. Participants will learn about the Oregon OSHA rules for powered industrial trucks and developing a forklift training program. This class does not offer forklift operator certification (cards). For more information or to register, go to TinyURL.com/OROSHAForklift.

a combination of classroom and field-based instruction. Instructors will cover standard types of roads, drainage features, and surface types. Participants will learn about effective approaches for monitoring that will help catch problems early and save money. Essentials of the new road condition assessment (RCA) form will be covered as well. The workshop is \$5 per person. For more information or to register, go to TinyURL.com/WoodlandRoads.

NOVEMBER 20

QPR TRAINING — SAVING LIVES IN AGRICULTURE

OSU Extension Service is hosting a free virtual QPR training 10-11:30 a.m. QPR (question, persuade, refer) is an evidence-based suicide prevention program where participants are empowered to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Similar to CPR, QPR provides lifesaving knowledge and skills to help someone in crisis. For more information, or to register, go to TinyURL.com/OSUQPRTraining.

DECEMBER 4

OAN OPEN HOUSE AT AL'S GARDEN & HOME IN SHERWOOD

Mark your calendars on December 4 and get into the Christmas spirit with a visit to Al's Garden & Home in Sherwood, Oregon and learn about what the Oregon Association of Nurseries has in store for 2025. Learn more about OAN's new leadership and professional groups including NexGen, Human Resources Leadership Professionals and the coming Hispanic leadership group and how you can get involved. Learn about terrific member benefits and programs, including Legal Access, health coverage, Guest Worker Services, Trucks to Trade Shows, credit card processing, discounted

Farwest Show booths, and OAN advertising. Beverages and light bites will be served. Non-members are also welcome, and members are encouraged to invite them to attend so they can meet OAN members and learn about membership benefits. The event is 3-5 p.m. December 4 and will be hosted by Al's Garden & Home, 16920 S.W. Roy Rogers Road in Sherwood. Register at OAN.org/Events.

DECEMBER 11

OAN WILLAMETTE CHAPTER WINTER SOCIAL

Join in the holiday cheer at the OAN Willamette Chapter Winter Social from noon – 2 p.m. Wednesday, December 11 at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas, 13009 McKee School Road N.E. in Woodburn, Oregon. The event includes lunch and tours. All members are welcome and cost is \$25. The event is being sponsored by Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas and AgWest Farm Credit. To RSVP, go to OAN.org/Events. For more information or to inquire about sponsorships, contact Cody Plath at 503 348-3706 or Cody.Plath@Target-Specialty.com.

OCTOBER 29-31, 2025

2025 OAN CONVENTION IN HAWAII

Aloha OAN Members! Join your fellow members in paradise for the 2025 OAN Convention October 29-31, 2025 (Wednesday-Friday) at the Wailea Beach Resort — Marriott, Wailea, Maui, Hawaii. Immerse yourself in scenic luxury at this family-friendly resort just steps from the ocean. Members registered for the event will receive access to discounted room rates and the ability to extend your stay up to two days before and one day after the event. Rooms are limited. Event details, registration and room reservations will be available this December. Mahalo! 🌺



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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF USDA APHIS

Pennsylvania issues quarantine after box tree moth discovered in Erie

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) has issued a quarantine to protect nursery, landscaping industries and homeowner investments after the box tree moth was discovered in two cemeteries in Erie County, Pennsylvania, according to a statement issued by the state. It's the first sighting of the invasive insect in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's quarantine requires plant merchants in Erie County to ensure that boxwood sold in the county stays in the county, unless the business has a compliance agreement with the PDA. A compliance agreement requires surveying, treatments, and record-keeping for shipments outside the county.

Boxwoods are the largest-selling evergreen shrub in the United States. The destructive box tree moth spreads primarily through shipping and sales of infested boxwoods. The insect had previously been found in Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Ontario, Canada. Pennsylvania's nursery and landscaping industry generates \$4.1 billion for the state economy annually and is responsible for more than 63,000 jobs. Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of floriculture businesses.



A cherry orchard worker brings in fruit. Farmers and ag groups are seeking a nationwide injunction against a Department of Labor rule that allows foreign farmworkers to form unions. PHOTO BY VALMEDIA

FARMERS, AG GROUPS SEEK NATIONWIDE INJUNCTION OF NEW H-2A LABOR RULE

Farmers and agricultural organizations are seeking a nationwide injunction against a Department of Labor rule that allows foreign farmworkers to form unions and makes other changes to the H-2A guestworker program, according to *Capital Press*, an agricultural newspaper based in Salem, Oregon.

A federal judge in Georgia has already blocked the rule in 17 states: Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. A new lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for Eastern Kentucky seeks to extend the preliminary injunction to all 50 states.

WAFLA, an H-2A labor contractor based

in Washington state, joined seven Kentucky farmers, the National Council of Agricultural of Employers and three other groups in filing the new lawsuit Sept. 16.

RESEARCHERS PRIORITIZE *P. AUSTROCEDRI* CONTAINMENT STRATEGIES

Federal officials have allocated \$250,000 in horticulture research funds to immediately begin developing and implementing effective strategies to prevent the spread of *Phytophthora austrocedri* and minimize its impact on the horticultural industry.

P. austrocedri is a destructive pathogen threatening valuable ornamental crops including cypress, arborvitae, juniper, and cedar, which could have serious consequences for nurseries, landscapes, and natural ecosystems. It recently was discovered at two nurseries in Oregon. >>>

Northwest News

Infested plants typically exhibit symptoms such as root and collar rot, which can lead to the gradual decline and death of the plant. Early signs include yellowing or browning of foliage, often starting at the top of the tree, and wilting of branches.

The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) pushed for the shift in funding. HRI is the research arm of national nursery and floriculture trade group AmericanHort, which is based in Columbus, Ohio and Washington, D.C.

“HRI’s ability to prioritize this research and our collaboration with industry experts and plant pathologists underscore our commitment to providing the industry with practical solutions safeguarding plants, landscapes, and green industry businesses from emerging threats,” HRI said in a statement.

The funds are provided through USDA Agricultural Research Service’s (ARS) Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative (FNRI). They will be used to study and manage this emerging threat to the horticulture industry. Researchers at USDA and Oregon State University (Corvallis, Oregon) will spearhead the work. They include (from USDA) Dr. Tim Rinehart, Dr. Jerry Weiland, and Dr. Nik Grunwald, as well as, from OSU, Dr. Alan Peper and Dr. Mana Ohkura.

In a related note, the Plant Clinic at Oregon State University also announced that it is offering free testing for *P. austrocedri*. The testing is set to run through April 2025. Samples sent for testing will not be tested for any other pathogens. Those wanting tests may contact the plant clinic (Extpp@Science.OregonState.edu) for sample submission instructions and the number of samples.

“It should be noted that any *P. austrocedri* positive test results will be reported to regulators and the nurseries will be placed under quarantine according to my understanding,” said OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone.

In addition, the USDA ARS Labs in Corvallis and OSU labs also are offering to conduct surveys of individual nurseries for presence of *P. austrocedri*. Any nursery interested in a survey can contact



The Washington Japanese beetle quarantine has been expanded to include Sunnyside, Outlook, Mabton, and additional areas in Benton County. PHOTO COURTESY OF USDA ARS

Weiland (Jerry.Weiland@USDA.gov) to discuss sampling and any concerns about privacy and confidentiality.

“The OAN very actively engaged to protect the interests, reputation, and plant health integrity of the industry,” Stone said. To date, OAN is working actively with the scientific community and regulators. “I’m talking to ODA twice a week and led an OAN delegation to Washington D.C. and met with USDA-APHIS to discuss *Phytophthora austrocedri*.”

OAN member resources on plant pests and disease can be found at [OAN.org/PPD](https://www.oan.org/PPD).

WASHINGTON EXPANDS JAPANESE BEETLE QUARANTINE

The Washington State Department of Agriculture has expanded the Japanese beetle quarantine in the south-central portion of the state, according to the Pacific Northwest Ag Network, an agricultural news website.

The original quarantine in Washington was established in 2022 and included 49 square miles in the Grandview area. But because of additional beetle detections outside of that area, the quarantine has been expanded to include Sunnyside, Outlook, Mabton, and additional areas in Benton County, Washington.

OREGON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM LAUNCHES

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) issued a call for applications for the state’s new Community Green Infrastructure (CGI) Grant Program, which has \$6.5 million available.

The CGI grants will help fund the production of native seeds and plants; create and implement green infrastructure master plans; and carry out community green infrastructure projects that provide direct social, environmental, and economic benefits to communities throughout Oregon. They will prioritize projects that benefit communities that are historically underserved and disproportionately affected by environmental challenges.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) was the main driver behind Oregon House Bill 3409 during the 2023 session, which created this program. The association has long wanted the environmental and societal benefits of plants provided by nurseries taken into account.

“The bill demonstrates the benefits of the nursery industry and its role in reducing the urban heat island effect,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “While not perfect, the program demonstrates the

potential of integrating the green community with the built community.”

Download the grant application at TinyURL.com/CGIGrants.

OAN LAUNCHES REVISED AND FOCUSED PEST AND DISEASE WEB PAGE

The OAN has re-launched its plant pest and disease information page at OAN.org/PPD with new and updated information for its members.

From emerging threats like the box tree moth and *Phytophthora austrocedri* to long-standing concerns like sudden oak death and emerald ash borer, OAN remains at the forefront of advocacy, research coordination, and education to safeguard the future of the industry. The revised and focused pest and disease web page provides updates on key legislative and regulatory developments, including quarantine mea-



asures, compliance guidelines, and the latest research efforts. OAN's goal is to keep growers informed so they are equipped to protect their operations while adhering to current regulations.

Effective management of plant pests and diseases is critical to protecting both

the nursery industry and our natural ecosystems. Regulatory actions, including quarantines and compliance agreements, play a crucial role in mitigating the spread of harmful pests and pathogens that can devastate plant species and disrupt trade. The Oregon Association of Nurseries

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Northwest News



Semiconductor businesses in Hillsboro, Oregon, are surrounded by farmland. Gov. Tina Kotek plans to bring more land into the city limits to make way for a major semiconductor research center. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OREGONIAN

(OAN) works closely with state and federal agencies such as the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to ensure that members have the resources and support they need to navigate so that members can navigate these complex regulations.

FIGHT LOOMS OVER USING FARMLAND FOR OREGON SEMICONDUCTOR RESEARCH CENTER

Battle lines are forming over whether Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek should use special authority to designate rural land near Hillsboro, Oregon for a major semiconductor research center according to a report by *The Oregonian* newspaper (Portland, Oregon).

The center could bring federal investment of \$1 billion and make the region a focus of advanced computer research for generations to come.

The Biden administration is considering siting a major semiconductor research center in Oregon, a hub that could bring federal investment approaching \$1 billion and make the region a focus of advanced computer research for generations to come. Intel and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) issued strongly worded letters to the governor's office in July, insisting that Kotek allocate up to 1,700 acres of rural land for the project. If she refuses, they warned, the research center could go

to another state instead.

Farmers, environmental groups and others say there's no evidence the research hub needs hundreds of rural acres. They demanded that the governor put rural land off-limits for the project and observe the legal protections that have been in place for farmland for five decades.

"At stake is some of the best farmland in the world, located in Washington County including in the rural reserves near Hillsboro," a collection of 18 agricultural and environmental organizations wrote in a letter to the governor. They suggested the federal government could put the project somewhere else that already has land designated for industrial use.

"The OAN issued stern warnings to the governor and legislative leaders about circumvention of the land use laws for this project," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said.

OSU PART OF TEAM RECEIVING \$9.8 MILLION USDA GRANT TO IMPROVE NURSERY INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY

Oregon State University is part of a five-year three-university project led by North Carolina State University and the University of Tennessee that has received a \$9.8 million grant to help develop automation technologies, assessing their socioeconomic impact, and create tools

for adoption strategies to optimize labor efficiency and sustainability in the nursery industry.

The project — called Labor, Efficiency, Automation, and Production: LEAP Nursery Crops Toward Sustainability — has been four years in the planning, said Dr. Lloyd Nackley, plant physiological ecologist at Oregon State University North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, Oregon. “A majority of the research will be conducted in Oregon because of our state’s leadership in nursery production,” Nackley said. “It was the largest USDA-funded specialty crop research initiative this year and one of two awarded to the nursery industry, so this is significant for the Oregon nursery industry.

“It’s important to the Oregon nursery industry because it’s dedicating sustained federal research attention by some of the leading nursery researchers from around the country and they will be able to focus on and work with the Oregon nursery industry on how to take Oregon nursery production to the next level. We’ll be working with engineers and nurseries on how to incorporate automation and robotics in production. From a worker standpoint, it’s also looking at sustaining productivity with an aging work force and what accommodations can be made to make the work more ergonomic, reduce repetitive stress injury, enhancing their work experience and conditions and improve productivity.”

OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone greeted it as a positive.

“This is great news for our partners at OSU and for the Oregon nursery industry. We look forward to this and many collaborations down the road,” he said.

Opportunities to collaborate will be available through field days, *Digger* articles and the yearly Farwest Show, Nackley said. Interested nurseries can also contact him at Lloyd.Nackley@OregonState.edu.

FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS THROUGH OREGON PROGRAM

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Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Oregon is currently accepting applications for Fiscal Year 2025 funding available through the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP). This includes eligible parcels for both Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) for this sign-up period.

ACEP-ALE provides cost-share financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing perpetual Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agricultural production. The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and shrubland. Eligible partners include American

Indian tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that have farmland, rangeland, or grassland protection programs.

While applications for ACEP-ALE and ACEP-WRE are taken on a continuous basis, apply must be received by November 29 to be considered in this phase of funding.

OREGON WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION PASSES RULE CHANGES

Groundwater rights in Oregon just got even more valuable after the Oregon Water Resources Commission unanimously voted for groundwater rule changes recently, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The action means that future applications for groundwater rights are likely to be denied. Also, state regulators have

been charged since 1955 with protecting “reasonably stable” groundwater levels. Now, regulators say they will define “reasonably stable” using scientific data, and require would-be water users to prove the water is available before Oregon issues permits for wells. The rules are intended to apply to new water rights and won’t cut off any existing ones. The rules also don’t apply to domestic well owners.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries has been a vocal critic of the new rules. “The OAN was part of the rulemaking committee and adamantly opposed the rules due to its likely impact of shutting down all future groundwater right applications from enactment forward,” Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “The association will advocate for sensible water policy during the 2025 Oregon legislative session.”

SHRINKING GARDENS OF CONSUMERS MOVING THE GROWING INDUSTRY

Gardens of vast lawns and hedges are no longer the norm. With shrinking lot sizes and rise in multi-family housing, postage-stamp size spaces are now the norm, according to *Greenhouse Magazine*. But is the industry adapting adequately?

“The percentage of housing that is now multi-family has risen to 30% from about 20% in 1960, and the average lot size has decreased from about a quarter of an acre to about a fifth of an acre,” explains Jim Feinson, strategic adviser and former CEO of Gardener’s Supply Company.

But it’s not just the size of the gardens that the industry needs to adequately adjust to; it’s also the gardeners who are cultivating them. “The Baby Boomers, 65 and up, are still gardening. They’re still engaged, but they’re downsizing. It’s not a financial problem; they just don’t want a big house with a big yard anymore,” says National Gardening Association Executive Director Dave Whiting. “The younger generation wants to garden but can’t garden because they don’t have the space. It’s an overall



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headwind for the industry at large, but there's a lot of opportunity there.”

EPA REMOVES TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT FROM VULNERABLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

The EPA has removed the Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly from the Vulnerable Species Action Plan, removing more than 800,000 acres of Oregon agricultural and forestry land in the Willamette Valley from “avoidance areas” where pesticides would be banned, according to Oregonians for Food & Shelter, a non-profit that advocates for science-based policy, innovation and stewardship to ensure food and fiber security in Oregon.

“Since pesticide exposure is comprehensively managed, at present, in the entirety of the species habitat and range,

EPA has concluded the species does not currently need the additional protections afforded by inclusion in the VSAP,” according to the action plan.

Some farmers within the proposed pesticide exclusion area, which would have encompassed portions of Oregon's Willamette Valley and land around Washington's Puget Sound, thought about selling their properties when inclusion of the butterfly in the plan was first disclosed.

INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROPAGATORS' SOCIETY PROPOSES NAME CHANGE

The International Plant Propagators' Society International Board is proposing a name change. The group said the goal is to increase membership and foster a richer exchange of experiences, knowledge and

ideas among members as well as boost sponsorships, which helps keep conference and membership dues lower.

The group proposes to change its name to International Plant Production Society to better reflect IPPS's growth and diversity. “Replacing ‘Propagators’ with ‘Production’ in our name would position IPPS as the leading worldwide association addressing all aspects of plant propagation, production processes, industry-wide issues, and employment concerns,” the group said on its website.

The rebranding is solely for marketing purposes and does not require legal adjustments to regional or international documents, IPPS said.

Paid members can vote for or against the name change until 9 p.m. on December 31, 2024 (Pacific) at [Bit.ly/IPPSVote](https://bit.ly/IPPSVote). ➤

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Announcements

BAILEY HIRES NEW CFO AND CHIEF HR OFFICER

Bailey Nurseries (St. Paul, Minn.) appointed Tim Jacobson as chief human resources officer and Katie Huth as chief financial officer. The company said both will play key roles in steering the strategic direction of the company and driving growth.

Jacobson most recently served as vice president of people and culture at a leading non-profit organization.

Huth joins Bailey as fourth-generation leader John Bailey transitions into a strategic leadership role as Secretary-Treasurer, focusing on legacy and long-term planning. Huth brings a wealth of experience from her previous role in financial leadership at a large multi-national ag-tech and horticultural breeding company.

In memorium

DOUGLAS 'DOUG' WILSON

Douglas "Doug" Wilson, 80, passed away suddenly on September 30, 2024 at Salem Hospital. He is survived by his wife of 32 years Margaret Wilson, son Ben Wilson, step-daughters Tracie Bibler and Kellie Phillips, grandchildren Oskar and Deacon Wilson, Bethany and Justin Bibler, Kaylie Guderian, and Aaron Phillips. He was preceded in death by his son Wiley Wilson.

Wilson began volunteering at The Oregon Garden in 2003 and became a member of the American Conifer Society in 2005. The Oregon Garden said that he was "one of

the garden's most committed volunteers, regularly winning awards for 'Most Hours Served.' His knowledge and passion for The Oregon Garden's Conifer Garden was beyond compare. Under his careful nurturing, the Conifer Garden became and is still one of the best in the country."



Douglas Wilson

Doug made his career as an aircraft mechanic and retired in 2001 from United Airlines. As a member of the U.S. Air Force, he was stationed in both Germany and Japan in the 1960s.

The family is planning a small memorial to be conducted in December. ☺

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Looking back and forward

Will nurseries continue to enjoy favorable freight rates and availability?

Trucks line the dock at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas in Woodburn, Oregon, as plant material is being loaded. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL

BY CURT KIPP

There's a simple truth about nursery products — they don't make money until they leave the nursery. That's why growers pay close attention to the cost and availability of trucks to take plants to market.

"My livelihood and that of others around me revolves around these trucks," said Todd Nelson, an owner of wholesaler **Bountiful Farms & Nursery Inc.** (Woodburn, Oregon). "We're pretty much valueless without them."

Fortunately, of late, freight market conditions have been highly favorable to growers, and that should continue to some degree.

"Because there's such an overage of trucks, pricing is good," Nelson said. "We are seeing lower ship rates across the United States, but that always brings up a concern because it indicates there's not enough demand out there." Meaning that with low demand for freight, some carriers

may exit the market.

For now, there exists a whole universe full of freight operators and brokers ready to take product to market, with several catering to the needs of ornamental plant growers and their customers because they offer consistent business.

"Dealing with nursery stock is a lot of responsibility because it's not a clothing/retail item, it's a time-sensitive, live product," said Matt Frederick, a freight broker with **K&M Distributors Inc.**, based in Rogue River, Oregon. "It's very important to be able to knock down the shipments in a timely fashion and also meet the receiver's needs."

Hauling nursery freight has its downsides, but Gary "Bert" Bertelson, a freight broker with **Integrity Logistics** (Wilsonville, Oregon) said carriers by now are used to dealing with those.

"Trucks are fairly easy to book despite the nursery industry downfalls

with the long load time, the long unload times and the dirty trailer," he said. "Carriers have gotten past that, that it's just something they need to do. Previously, they didn't want to put dirty stuff in their trailers that was not palletized. Now, there are fewer complaints from the carriers about hauling nursery as opposed to hauling palletized freight. All in all, it's becoming a more acceptable commodity because of its availability."

Freight costs and what's next

Brokers interviewed for this story all agreed that freight loads have been easy to assign and send this past season. What happens next? That may be fairly predictable.

The freight industry consistently goes through economic cycles of high and low pricing, which are driven by supply and demand as well as the general economy.

When industry capacity is high, prices go down, typically prompting some

Shipping advantage



A truck arrives as another is being loaded at Bizon Nursery in Hubbard, Oregon. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

operators to leave the market. This constricts availability, driving prices back up and prompting more operators to enter the industry again. The cycle then repeats.

Currently, freight is in a period of higher availability and lower cost.

According to Your Market Metrics, a firm that compiles market information for the nursery and greenhouse industry, freight in 2024 costs very close what it did in 2019, or slightly more than it did in 2020, when the pandemic hit. This has happened in spite of general overall inflation. It's a significant decline from when freight costs peaked in 2022.

YMM compiles various indices to measure input costs over time, and gets its data from participating nurseries that purchase its service; all of these must share their data, which is then aggregated to create various cost indices.

The baseline year they use is 2007. Subsequent years are assigned an index number relative to 2007. For freight, the index hit 130.5 in 2019, meaning costs were 30.5% higher than 2007. For 2024, the index at midyear was 130.9, down from 151.1 in 2022 and 136.1 in 2023.

YMM's forecast anticipates that freight costs will rise slightly for 2025. Some have suggested there's little room for costs to decline. Carriers must cover their costs, like fuel, labor, insurance and equipment, and must reckon with the concept of opportunity cost — the idea they could make more money doing something else.

Local brokers were observing tight freight availability a few years ago as things opened back up following the pandemic. "People got in during the pandemic because it was something you could do, and goods needed to move," Bertelson said.

Jim Meil is an analyst and principal with ACT research, a firm based in Columbus, Indiana, that covers the commercial freight industry. He recently was quoted in *Fleet Owner* magazine.

"The situation was terrific for small fleet entry into the marketplace in 2021," Meil stated in the article. "The rebound from COVID was a surprise [that] opened up that big opportunity — then all of a sudden, it seemed to close as fast as it opened. Now it's really the survival of the fittest."

Availability shot past demand and costs fell — just as one would expect

given the classic cycle of freight supply and demand.

And now? Joel Mandel, a freight broker with **Northland Express Transport** (based in Grand Haven, Michigan, with a West Coast base in Troutdale, Oregon), said he is already seeing signs of carriers leaving, as predicted. "That definitely will put pressure on the capacity that's there, therefore increasing prices," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if we see rates go up."

Riding the seasonal cycles

In addition to the yearly cycles affecting the freight industry, nurseries must also deal with the year-to-year cycles of nursery demand.

In 2024, demand for nursery products was down slightly from 2023, according to horticultural economist Dr. Charlie Hall with Texas A&M University. Nursery revenue was down 5.7%, transactions were down 5.2% and the average sale was down 0.5%, Hall said during his keynote address at the Cultivate'24 trade show, produced by AmericanHort and held in July in Columbus, Ohio.

Of course, demand for nursery



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Shipping advantage



A worker loads one of the trucks at the dock at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

products changes from month to month, not just year to year. It reaches its full bloom in the spring months, as the sun calls gardeners back outside.

To feed this seasonal demand, the nursery industry traditionally had a relatively short shipping season of about February through May. But now, for a variety of reasons, the nursery shipping season now lasts well into the summer.

“When I started it was seasonal,” Bertelson said. “It was in my first contract that we could not take vacations in the spring, so don’t even think of asking. Everything has changed, and I have trouble getting a week away, even now. It’s more spread out. It’s year-round freight.

“It’s just been progressively, over the years, more and more movement in the summer months, and I have no explanation for that. There never used to be anything in the summer.”

Industry veteran Dale Parra, a freight broker with **Truck Transportation Services** in Wilsonville, Oregon has noticed that shipping has become more year-round in the last six to eight years.

Part of it is that gardening has experienced a renaissance in recent years.

The COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020 drove higher demand for plant material as people stayed at home. Many focused on improving their yards with new plants and shrubs. Interest in edible gar-

dening also climbed. This lengthened the typical nursery industry cycle of orders and reorders. In 2020 and for a few years after, growers reported getting reorders later in the season than they did previously.

For 2024, the record was mixed. Some reported a long season.

“We’re still shipping and this should normally be a dead time,” Bertelson said in August.

Others said the season had tapered off after Mother’s Day.

“February, March and April were great this year,” Parra said. “May was good. June [stunk]. But it has been an incredible ride since the pandemic.”





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Shipping advantage

Managing costs and overtime

Even with the move to a year-round shipping cycle, the nursery shipping season still has a springtime peak. This places a strain on growers, shippers, carriers and third-party logistics providers (aka 3PLs). To combat this, some freight providers have taken to providing incentives to get the shipper to ship, and the receiver to take delivery, earlier in the season. The buyers of nursery products get the benefits of these discounts. They pay less in landed value (product plus freight) and have the product on hand early.

“People have incentive to take product earlier, November or February, for lower rates,” Parra said.

Does it make sense to do this? That depends on each region, and the climate it has for any given time of year.

“Each region has its own timing, just naturally,” Frederick said. “Each region

has a time when it can accept product and when it’s best to stage out.”

Oregon can ship product earlier than some other growing regions. Oregon winters are cold enough to offer the winter dormancy that woody plants need, but those winters are also mild enough to enable earlier shipping.

Labor overtime costs are an emerging factor for Oregon growers. Getting plants ready for shipment and loading trucks during spring shipping season is a significant driver of overtime work.

The Oregon Legislature passed an agricultural overtime law in 2022, mandating that farms pay overtime to workers exceeding 55 hours in a workweek. The threshold drops to 48 hours on January 1, 2025. It is scheduled to hit 40 hours in 2027, although the OAN has been lobbying for a change to this. Repealing agricultural overtime is off the table, but a bill is being

introduced to amend it to allow for peak periods on farms, including nurseries.

In the meantime, the rising overtime costs driven by these changes give growers ample incentive to balance workloads throughout the calendar year.

It all points to potential savings if growers and their receivers can find ways to load and ship at off-peak times. They could save on shipping costs as well as overtime. This is useful for initial orders but, obviously, doesn’t apply to reorders that depend on how hot the material is selling come springtime. ☺

Curt Kipp is director of communications and publications at the Oregon Association of Nurseries and the editor of Digger. Contact him at 503-582-2008 or CKipp@OAN.org.



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Packing with care

Though almost inevitable, damage claims can be minimized with the right moves

Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas workers layer aborborvitae in a truck and add wooden bracing between each layer, tilting the plants slightly forward so they won't shift during transportation. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

BY JON BELL

For many Oregon growers of woody material, it's not uncommon for plants to take six, eight or even 12 years to grow before they're ready to ship out. That's years of watering, fertilizing, pruning and general care.

But all that can be for naught if the plants aren't loaded into trucks carefully, kept at the proper temperature and treated gingerly as they make their way out of Oregon and across the country to their final destination.

"We grow some plants upwards of 12 years, and the last thing you want to see happen is for something to go wrong in just a few days of the plant leaving the nursery," said Todd Nelson, co-owner of **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**

(Woodburn, Oregon), a grower of grafted conifers and ornamentals, espaliered fruit trees, plant art forms and topiaries. "You can have taken care of a plant for years, but the most fragile time of its life is the transportation. With poor loading or poor unloading practices, you can have a plant become a complete loss in a matter of days or even minutes."

Indeed, a refer truck that's blowing freezing air directly onto a plant, a load of potted plants that's not been secured or a careless worker who lifts a tree off a truck by its branches can be all it takes to destroy a plant — and lead to a damage claim from a customer.

Such claims can be costly to nurseries who, like Bountiful Farms, spend years and countless resources raising plants to

sell and ship to customers all over the U.S. And costly not just in dollars and cents, but in the valuable reputation nurseries spend years building up as a go-to source for top-notch nursery materials.

As a result, it pays for nurseries to go the extra mile to ensure that the plants they've invested so much in make it to customers healthy, in great shape and not likely to result in a damage claim.

"Oregon growers spend so much time in R and D and committing space and land and time growing product," said Joel Mandel, operations manager, West Coast, for **Northland Express Transport**, a nursery-focused shipping company with offices in Oregon and Michigan. "You don't want to cut corners on the final piece, which is transportation." »

Packing with care



Workers add load separators and bracing to a shipment at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas to keep the plant material from shifting during transit.

PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Cause behind the claim

Circumstances that can lead to a customer — like a garden center, home improvement store or retail nursery — filing a damage claim can vary, but there are some common issues that come up more than others.

One of the major ones: too much direct cold air inside a refrigerated truck. It's one of the biggest issues in part because so much of Oregon's nursery crop gets shipped out of the state and needs to be kept in certain temperature ranges for optimal health.

K&M Distribution Inc., a transportation broker headquartered in Rogue River, Oregon, has about 90% of its business in nursery products. Most of those need to be shipped in refer trucks.

"Dealing with nursery stock is a lot of responsibility because it's not a clothing or retail item, it's a time sensitive, live product," said Matthew Frederick, logistics coordinator at K&M.

Mandel said a malfunctioning refer could end up blowing air that is too cold directly onto plants.

"It could be something as unfortunate as a torn chute, which is in the equipment itself," he said. "Instead of having more controlled air, it's more like frozen air that comes in and causes frost damage."

Temperature can also come into play as truckloads of nursery products make their way out of Oregon's climate into other regions of the country. Dale Parra, sales manager for **Truck Transportation Services** (Wilsonville, Oregon), which specializes in shipping nursery stock, said not adjusting the temperature inside a refer truck before entering a new climate zone can cause significant damage.

"You don't want the refer temperature to be more than 30 [F] different than the outside temperature," he said. "If it's 95 [F] in the summer where you're delivering

them, you need to make sure you are running at 65 [F] about 12 hours before you get there. You can't have a big difference in temperature or you'll kill [the plants]."

Improper loading of nursery goods onto a truck can also lead to damage — and claims. Crews loading and unloading plants can break limbs, causing irreparable harm. Loads that aren't secured properly can shift as a truck starts and stops, and heavier items stacked on top of more fragile ones is a recipe for disaster, as is a truck that's been overloaded.

"You also have to make sure the nurseries, when they're loading, they don't block the air flow," Parra said. "You have to have air circulating."

Taking — and giving — credit

When an end customer does file a claim because plants have arrived either damaged or dead, Nelson said Bountiful Farms will usually ask for photographs as evidence and

to determine if it's a plant health issue or one related to loading or unloading.

"We'll evaluate and decide if a credit is due," he said, "but if there is damage, we are quick to issue a credit."

But Nelson said Bountiful Farms also takes lots of steps to prevent damage in the first place. Doing so has given the nursery a damage percentage of just .02% of everything that gets shipped out.

"We take a lot of pride in that," he said.

Nelson said there's a big training focus on quality control and on loading trucks as full and secure as possible. That's especially important at Bountiful Farms, as many of their plants are fragile. The nursery actually has six loading crews, who have been packing containers for years.

"It's truly an art to load a truck," Nelson said. "Every load is different. Each one is literally a jigsaw puzzle. We have a special group of individuals who really know how to do it, how to physically and mentally look at it. Some people don't have the knack or know-how. I don't load trucks, and there's a reason I don't do it — because I'm not good at it."

Loading a container properly also means securing loads with straps or, in some cases, building walls out of wood to keep things from shifting or knocking into other customers' loads. Nelson said Bountiful Farms also invests a significant amount of money in packaging material to ensure plants arrive undamaged.

Keeping track

Another way to help avoid damage claims comes in the form of technology. In recent years, high-tech tracking devices have been developed that can be inserted into a refer truck to monitor everything from location to temperature. Some of the sensors provide real-time data and alerts should the temperature inside a refer decrease or increase. If that happens, drivers can make adjustments to keep the temperature where it needs to be.

Trackers are also good because they can provide downloadable histories across the entire journey of a refer. If plants arrive at the other end damaged, that >>

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history can show if there was a period of heat or cold caused by an incorrect temperature setting.

“If a load goes to the East Coast and you don’t put in a tracking device, you never know what may have happened,” Nelson said. “You have to spend a little money, but it’s a huge insurance policy to be able to know where there could have been an issue.”

Working with a qualified broker who knows reputable carriers is also a wise move when trying to limit damage claims. Mandel said Northland Express Transport has been in the business long enough to know who they can rely on. They always turn to carriers with high standards for safety and shipping, who have up-to-date equipment, insurance in good standing and more.

“We use the tried and true who know the industry,” he said. “It’s important to make sure you’re working with companies

that screen for good carriers, with good safety scores, good equipment and safe drivers.”

On top of that, Mandel said it’s helpful to gather and record as much information as possible about a shipment, from the bill of lading to the driver’s name and trailer number. Training receivers, such as garden centers and wholesalers, to jot down or photograph anything that looks amiss is also a good step.

“The more information you have, the easier it will be to work your way through the process if a claim does come up,” he said.

And finally, Nelson said that creating a culture where a nursery’s team feels like they are invested in the process from start to finish makes people want to do a good job, to be careful when moving and loading plants, to do everything they can to make sure the plant they’ve been taking care of for years arrives and brings a smile to the customer’s face.

“I think it’s really creating a culture of caring, where you act as if you were the customer on the other end and you want to be happy with this tree when it arrives,” he said. “We spend a lot of time here creating that culture and going through and pointing out how much everyone’s done for this one plant. We sit down and include names. It makes it more real, and everyone truly cares the more you let them know they are part of the process. They treat the plant as if it was theirs.” ☺

Jon Bell is an Oregon freelance journalist who writes about everything from Mt. Hood and craft beer to real estate and the great outdoors. His website is JBellInk.com.

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Getting the load on the road

Sound planning and strong communication helps complex loading processes run more smoothly

Farm Manager Kevin Borts checks loads organized and lined up for shipping at Bizon Nursery in Hubbard, Oregon. Each row of plants is a shipment and shipments are marked with a tag to identify it (below). PHOTOS BY VIC PANICKUL

BY MITCH LIES

With the variety of sizes, shapes and load configurations involved in nursery shipping, and with the fact that shippers are moving living plant across great distances, coordinating shipping in nursery is fraught with logistical challenges.

Careful planning, good communication and loading efficiency are critical steps to getting a truck in and out of a nursery and back on the road as quickly as possible, and this efficiency starts well in advance of a truck pulling into a yard.

Todd Nelson, co-owner of **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.** (Woodburn, Oregon), a wholesale grower of pot-in-pot and B&B grafted ornamentals, topiary plant material, sculptured art forms and unique plant material, said he likes to have a load on the dock, counted, walked twice and tagged at least three days in advance of shipping.

“We ask that our customers give us the ship date upon order and so we know what our customers want, and we are prepared for that months in advance,” Nelson said.

Even in summer months, when temperatures are not conducive to leaving plants on a dock for long stretches, the nursery has loads staged one day in advance, he said.

Veteran nursery freight broker Joel Mandel of **Northland Express Transport** in Troutdale, Oregon, said most nurseries operate in a similar fashion, having material staged and ready to load when a truck arrives. But, he said, there are times when a weather event or other occurrence can throw a wrench in the timing.

“Every so often, the driver is there waiting to get loaded and product isn’t ready,” Mandel said. “Maybe it is a wet week, and the crew needs additional >>



Getting the load on the road



Forklift driver Antonio Moreno lifts a tree into a waiting truck while another worker steadies it at Bizon Nursery. Shipments are organized near the dock and staged for loading in the order of shipping to make loading trucks more efficient. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHRUL

time out in the field, but in the meantime, the driver is just sitting there.”

When that happens, Mandel said, the best step for a nursery is to be honest with the driver and let them know that the loading is going to take longer than expected. This transparency will help maintain a good relationship with the driver and the freight broker.

It's also helpful to contact the broker so the broker can adjust the receiver's schedule as needed.

Matthew Frederick, logistics coordinator for **K&M Distribution Inc.** in Rogue River, Oregon, said it is important for a broker to tell drivers beforehand how long they can expect to be at a dock, particularly given that the loading time for a nursery shipment can change dramatically depending on the type and size of the plants being loaded.

“We typically communicate with our shippers and the receivers to let them

know exactly what is being loaded on the trucks,” Frederick said. “We don't say, ‘Oh, it's nursery plants and so it will take four to six hours’ when we know it's going to take eight hours, because that will just cause more problems with us, with the truck and with the shippers.”

Also, Frederick noted, with some drivers, English is their second language, so explaining on site that a load is going to take several hours longer than anticipated can be difficult. “When that happens, sometimes it can get testy between the shippers and the trucks and the receivers and the trucks,” Frederick said.

Dale Parra, a freight broker with **Truck Transportation Services** (Wilsonville, Oregon), said he likes nurseries to overshoot when estimating the length of a loading process.

“Even if you know you're going to get him out of there in an hour-and-a-half, I would advise nurseries to tell the driver

it is going to be two hours,” Parra said. “That way if you get them out earlier, they're like, ‘Oh my gosh, that's great. They told me two hours and they got me out in an hour and a half.’”

In general, Parra said, the communication between nurseries and brokers has improved considerably in recent years, particularly as texting has become a more common. Parra said he has mobile numbers for shipping foremen, shipping coordinators and others at different nurseries and regularly texts them to keep them abreast of arrivals.

“I can just text the foreman, for example, and let him know such and such a truck is leaving St. Paul and will be at your place in an hour and ten minutes,” Parra said. “That gives them time to get their crew ready and it helps with their scheduling.”

Minimizing load times

Another key to ensuring effi-



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Getting the load on the road



When B&B plants are palletized for shipment, sometimes the wiring securing the burlap comes loose. Albelardo Hernandez tightens the wiring around a root ball at Bizon Nursery in preparation for shipping. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

ciency in shipping is to keep load times at a minimum, and for that, there is no replacement for an experienced crew, particularly given the variables involved in loading and shipping nursery product.

“It’s not like Costco or somebody like that where each pallet weighs the exact same,” Frederick said. “With nursery loads, all plants vary in weight and size, and it is not a ‘for-sure’ science as far as getting it out the door and loaded in a couple of hours.”

“Although many people attempt to handle nursery, it’s kind of a beast all of its own,” Mandel said. “You’re going to see long loading times. You’re going to see floor-loaded freight. It’s not palletized or on racks. It’s actually loaded piece-by-piece, and it’s loaded very carefully, which is very time consuming.

“Working with folks who know what they’re doing goes a long way,” Mandel added. “And a lot of that comes down to

training and experience.”

Nelson said Bountiful Farms has several crews dedicated to loading semis, and most have years of experience.

“We load pot-and-pot, containers from three gallons up to a 45 gallon and we load a lot of boxes, so we do a lot of collections. And so, it’s a definite jigsaw puzzle, and our crews are magicians when it comes to loading the truck,” Nelson said.

“We have seven bays and can load seven trucks at a time, and get them in and out in a timely manner,” Nelson added. “We know that these drivers aren’t making any money unless they’re driving, and we are very respectful of their money and their time.”

Keeping the same crew on a loading operation throughout the operation also can help a nursery avoid problems, Frederick said. And having an experienced shipping coordinator on the payroll is a big plus. “The shipping coordinators

for the nurseries are a big-time asset,” Frederick said. “They have a good understanding of what needs to get put on a truck. They know exactly how many plants they can get on during each time of year to make it scale.”

Respectful treatment

Another important facet of maintaining efficiency in nursery shipping, and one that is often overlooked, according to sources, is treating drivers with respect. Doing so can go a long way toward improving the experience for nurseries and shippers and can compel drivers to return to a nursery again and again.

From his days as a trucker, Gary “Bert” Bertelson of Integrity Logistics in Wilsonville, Oregon, still remembers the nurseries that treated him well, that greeted him with a smile, maybe brought out a bottle of water and gave him access to a breakroom. It’s those little things, he said,

that kept him coming back.

"I'd go back to them, and I'd bite my tongue, give them an extra hour or two before I said anything if they were running late," Bertelson said.

Nelson of Bountiful Farms said the relationship the nursery has with its drivers is an important part of his business model. "Ninety-nine percent of what we grow leaves our state, so having great relationships with the (freight) brokers and with the drivers themselves is critical to our business," Nelson said.

At Bountiful, drivers are welcome to relax in the break room, use vending machines, the microwave oven and to spend the night on site if they so desire, Nelson said.

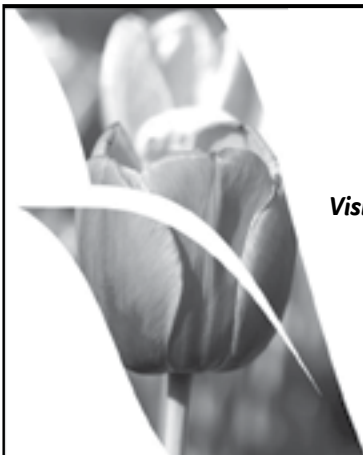
"They are welcome to just come and park and stay overnight instead of having to go stay at a truck stop," Nelson said. "That way they can start fresh in the morning with the logbooks, and we'll have them up and loaded within a couple of hours."

Mandel said drivers notice and appreciate nurseries like Bountiful. "Having facilities for them to use, access to a break room or vending machines or microwaves can definitely make life easier for a driver," he said.

"And also having overnight parking is definitely one thing that is a huge help to the drivers," Mandel added. "Nationwide, there is a parking shortage for trucks, so when drivers can park overnight at a facility, that makes their lives easier."

"The more accommodations for drivers the better," Frederick said. "A lot of these nurseries are pretty remote. They don't have a Safeway across the street or a food cart."

Nelson added that Bountiful also recognizes that the driver who leaves his nursery with a load will be interacting with his customer on the other end. "If they have a pleasant experience at my nursery, it hopefully will be a little more enjoyable for them on the other end when they're backing into these small garden centers. We hope that if we start them off right, then it will end well also." >>



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Getting the load on the road

Trouble free

For the most part, despite the complexities built into shipping nursery product, the vast majority of shipments go off without a hitch. The ones that are troublesome, however, tend to be the most memorable in an industry that is all about getting product out the door and on the road as efficiently as possible.

“It’s not the ones that are smooth that I remember as the much as the ones that we’ve got to bring back and scale,” Frederick said in reference to reloading trucks that are found to be overweight on one of their axels. And, he said, sometimes a carrier leaves a nursery after truck weigh stations have closed for the night and will get well out of town before discovering a problem.

“Sometimes they can get down the road all the way to The Dalles or sometimes into Eastern Oregon before they have to get pulled back,” Frederick said.



Inside Sales Manager Noah Fessler checks a shipment at one of the loading docks at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKHUL

“And it’s a big-time hassle when you’ve got to bring a truck back from Eastern Oregon and get recalibrated. And there is the crew too that has to take time out of their day to get that truck reloaded.”

“It can cost thousands of dollars,” he said. Fortunately, in a testament to the

efficiencies of Oregon nursery shippers, Frederick said that probably 90 percent of K&M’s nursery loads are trouble-free. ©

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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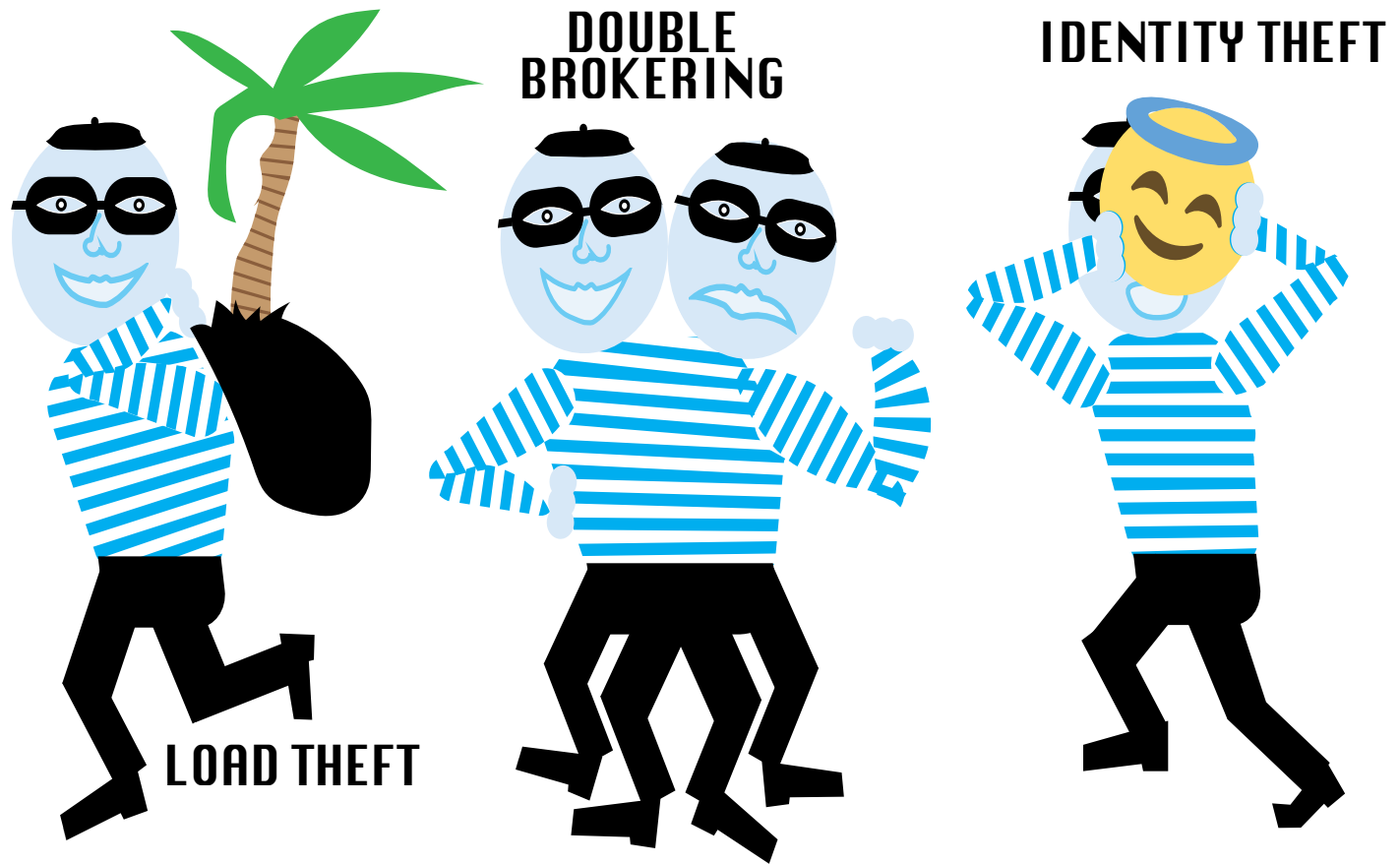
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Freight fraud

It's prudent to stay wise to double brokering, ID theft and other freight-related scams

BY CURT KIPP

The freight industry is an ocean filled with many fish. Operators of all sizes stand ready to move products to market — including trees and plants. Just one problem.

The ocean also has sharks.

These unethical predators work a variety of angles, threatening to victimize the shipper who sends product, the buyer who receives it, the carrier who moves the load, or the broker who makes the arrangements. When a fraud is successfully executed, somehow someone will end up paying the price.

Freight fraud exists in many forms. There's the classic but ever-more-prevalent double brokering scam. There are identity thieves. There are the occasional carriers that hold the load hostage, demanding more payment. And there are even crooks who acquire the online logins for legitimate companies, change their contact

information, and intercept the business that is meant for someone else.

According to Cory Kinnaman, owner of third-party logistics (3PL) provider **Truck Transport Services** (Wilsonville, Oregon), working with known and proven companies is the best protection against these threats. After all, things have only gotten worse now that people are increasingly doing business online.

“Knowing who you're dealing with, having a relationship with whoever you're hiring to do your transportation for you, is paramount,” he said. “Email and text are great — they save time — but there are certain situations where you still need to have a face to face and a phone call with your customers, and a relationship.”

According to Joel Mandel, a freight broker with **Northland Express Transport** (based in Grand Haven, Michigan, with a West Coast base in Troutdale, Oregon), it's always best to stick with brokers and

3PLs that have strong anti-fraud protocols in place.

“It's amazing how many brokers are out there who don't screen and they're OK with just putting anyone on the road,” he said.

Brokers and shippers are particularly vulnerable in a time crunch or in a tight market, where diligence can take a back seat. “A lot of these best practices end up getting missed, because they're just concerned about getting the volume,” Kinnaman said.

Double brokering

The way that brokers or 3PLs work, you hire them and they then find a carrier to move your load at a price you can agree to. The carrier delivers your load, and the broker takes a cut of the payment for finding them. All is well and good.

When the supposed carrier then brokers the load to yet another com-



Freight fraud

pany, unbeknownst to the customer, that's where double brokering has occurred. There can be any number of layers — triple brokering, quadruple brokering, and so on. While this can be legitimate when disclosed, it is illegal when not disclosed — and risky.

Some of the companies involved in double brokering pocket the money and never pay the carrier actually delivering the load. Many of these companies only exist on paper. They vanish, only to reappear under new names to perpetuate the same scam again.

When the actual carrier isn't paid, they will often go back to the 3PL that booked the load, or the owner of the shipped goods, and demand payment. If they haven't been paid, that is their right.

Kinnaman has had situations where he paid twice. Once to the carrier he contracted, and once to the carrier who moved the goods. This preserves his relationship to the shipper because otherwise, the shipper or his end customer would be paying.

Identity theft

Like pickpockets in Paris, identity theft and phishing of all kinds are rampant all across the internet. However, there are particular grifts targeting the freight industry — some targeting the shipper, others the carrier or broker.

For example, they might send fake emails posing as someone you know or already do business with — and some of the fakes can be convincing. “[It can be] just a one letter difference on the email address,” Mandel from Northland Express said. “Everything else can be lifted. A company logo, a phone number, everything can be lifted.”

The fraudulent email might want payment. “[They’re] looking for financial info from the get-go,” Mandel said. “Emails that

say they changed their banking info and could you send us your routing and account.”

Related is the idea of impostor carriers. Carriers and shippers often make use of online freight boards. Carriers can find loads there, and shippers can find carriers.

The arrangement can be convenient, especially when someone has an urgent need to fill. However, problems ensue when companies aren't who they say they are.

The company may only exist on paper, or they have somehow acquired someone else's login and taken over the account.

Some of the companies you see on freight boards are, of course, straight-up fly-by-nights. “Anybody can sign up as a user on a load board, see legit loads, and then act as a man-in-the-middle or fake documents,” said one Reddit user on a freight industry board.

One way to confirm the legitimacy of a carrier

is to check their motor carrier authority number, or MC number. These are granted the U.S. Motor Carrier Safety Administration (MCSA) and show that the company is authorized to carry loads. Every carrier you do business with should have one.

But be careful. Bad actors have been known to acquire existing MC numbers, through theft or other means, and give themselves the appearance of a track record they don't legitimately possess.

Kinnaman has seen it happen. “Someone offered to buy our 67-year-old driver's MC from him for thousands of dollars,” he said. “They figured he was about to retire. It would look clean. It would look fantastic, because he's been in business for so many years.”

Load thefts

In addition to double brokering,

impersonation and other forms of fraud, occasionally shippers will encounter straight-up theft. Someone will catch wind of a load ahead of time and be gone with it before the intended carrier even shows up.

Mandel used to ship high-value electronics before he shifted to handling primarily nursery goods. Electronics truckloads could easily be worth more than \$1 million, so he had to guard against possible theft.

Kinnaman knows of a case where someone combined identity theft with load theft. They began by impersonating a carrier on a freight board. “They logged in to someone's account, changed his W9 info, his [MC] authority info, his contact info, everything,” he said.

They then ripped off the carrier's customers by accepting loads and vanishing with them.

“It turned out there had been 15 loads booked in his name and all were stolen,” he said.

Nursery truckloads are less prone to this type of load theft, because it's less lucrative. It's rare that a nursery load is worth more than \$100,000.

Confirm, confirm, confirm

Fraudsters in transportation invariably take advantage of the fungibility of freight services and the anonymity of the arrangements, particularly in this digital age.

A legitimate carrier will have the following things, all of which can be checked:

Motor Carrier Authority, or MC number. This number is required under federal law. According to DAT Freight & Analytics (Beaverton, Oregon), it “means that a trucking company has legal authorization from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to get paid for transporting goods across state lines via their own trucking company and own vehicle.”

Insurance. They need a cargo policy, not just a liability policy. It's not a bad idea to call in to the insurance company listed to confirm it. Make sure the policy covers the at least the full value of the load. Some carriers try to get away with



“Knowing who you're dealing with, having a relationship with whoever you're hiring to do your transportation for you, is paramount.”

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It doesn't hurt, either, to confirm that the right truck arrived. Mandel has gone as far as to obtain the vehicle identification numbers (or VIN numbers) of arriving trucks. "I'm not going to sign up a carrier until they give me their VIN number," he said.

He provides that info to the shipper so they can confirm arriving trucks.

If concerned about the whereabouts of your load, one option is to use disposable GPS/temperature load monitors, such as Sensitech TempTale GEO Eagle Monitors. These cost under \$50 each. They track the load's location, route trail and temperature, and provided alerts. Considering the value of the load, it can be a worthwhile expense.

According to Kinnaman, the good news is that the nursery industry is safer than most when it comes to freight fraud. This is because nurseries, carriers and 3PLs work together consistently. They know and trust each other.

"Nurseries are one of the last industries, where it's still about relationships," he said. ☺

Curt Kipp is director of communications and publications at the Oregon Association of Nurseries and the editor of Digger. Contact him at 503-582-2008 or CKipp@OAN.org.



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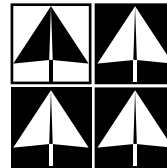
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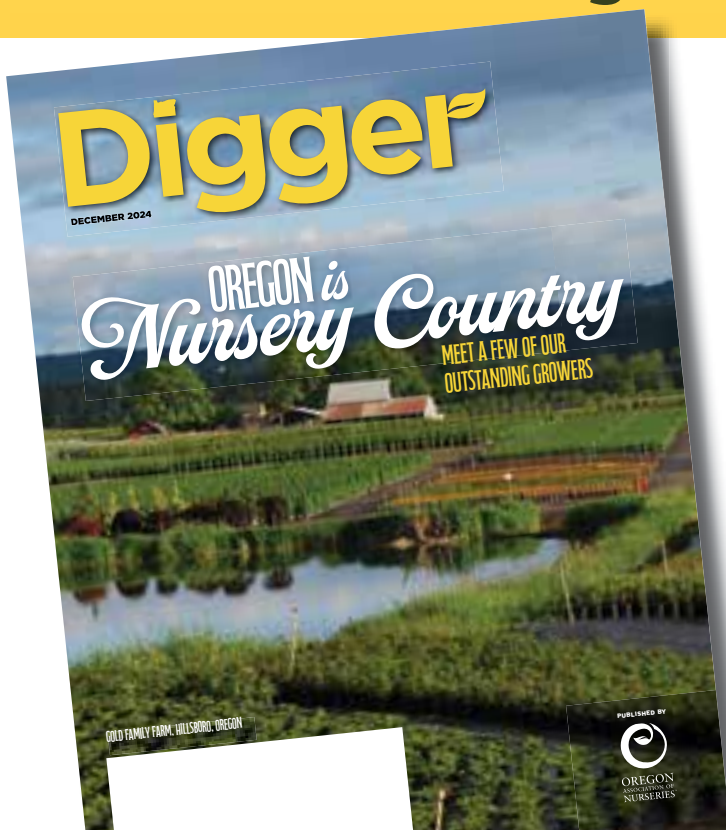


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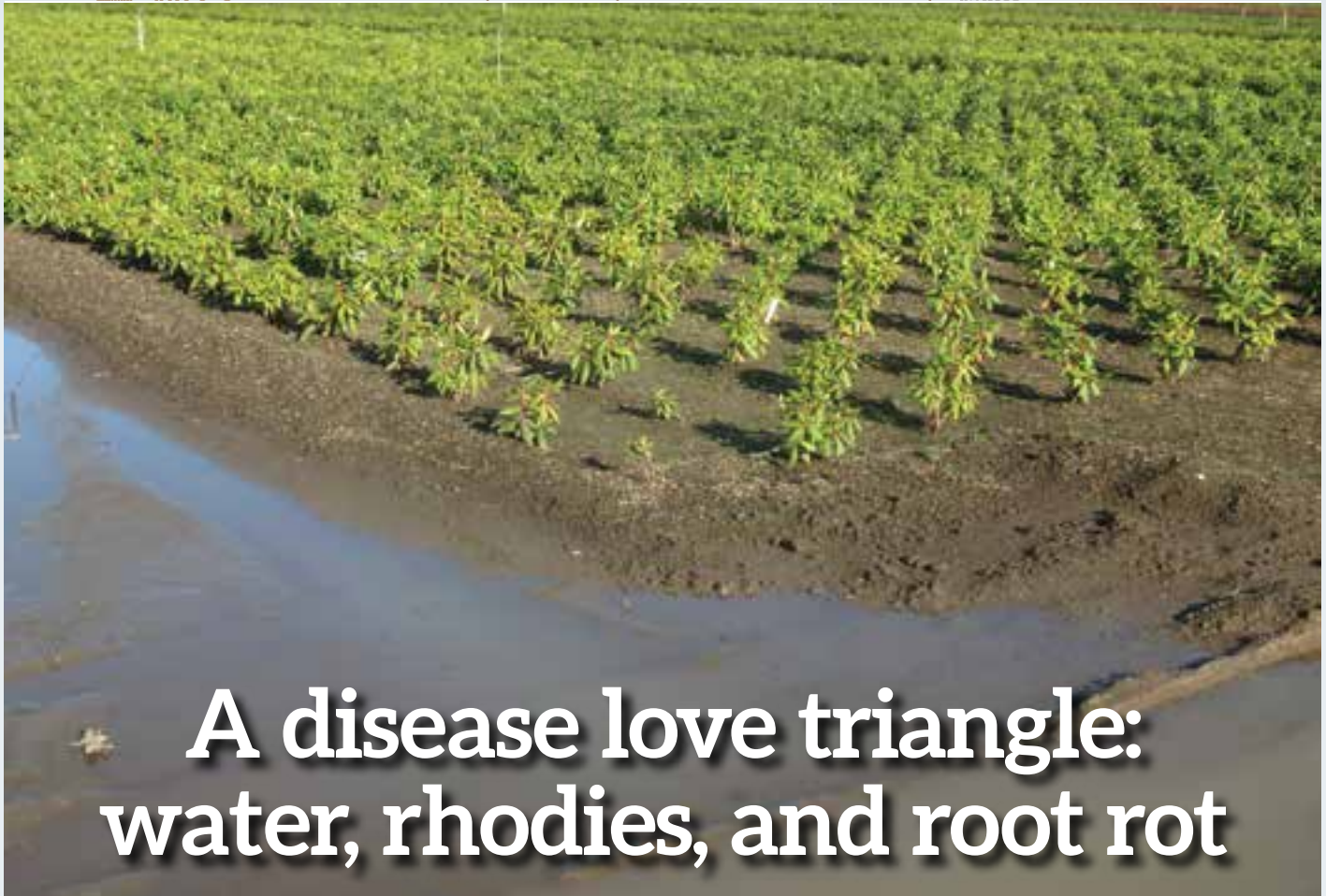
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A disease love triangle: water, rhodies, and root rot

Plants located close to permanent puddles of water will often become stunted and chlorotic due to *Phytophthora* root rot. PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY WEILAND

USDA—ARS experiment attempts to define way to manage *Phytophthora* root rot through irrigation controls

BY JERRY WEILAND, CAROLYN SCAGEL, NIKALUS GRUNWALD, ANNE DAVIS, BRYAN BECK AND JESSE MITCHELL

Oregon is a major player in the nursery industry, recently ranking third in the U.S. for nursery stock production. However, only 26% of this stock stays in-state, with 69% going

to other states and 5% sold internationally. Rhododendrons are a key crop in the Pacific Northwest nursery industry, valued at over \$11.6 million annually (USDA 2020). Unfortunately, rhododendron production is often severely impacted by *Phytophthora* root rot, which can wipe out entire crops (Weiland et al. 2020).

Several species of *Phytophthora* can cause root rot, including *P. cinnamomi* and *P. plurivora*, which were identified as the most common in Oregon nurseries affecting rhododendrons (Weiland et al. 2020). While most research has focused on *P. cinnamomi*, recent work highlights the potential threat posed by *P. plurivora*,

a species that was only described about 15 years ago. This pathogen has been shown to aggressively attack important native tree species in North America and Europe. It also has the ability to infect leaves and stems where it causes leaf spots and cankers, as well as roots where it causes root rot. This has led it to become more common on rhododendron than *P. cinnamomi*, which only infects roots

Phytophthora thrives in moist conditions, as the pathogen's spores rely on water to spread and infect plant roots. Therefore, root rot tends to be worse when soil moisture is high. Reducing soil moisture can lessen infection but



Phytophthora root rot killed these arborvitae that were left in standing water for several weeks. PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY WEILAND

also risks stressing plants, which may make them more vulnerable to the disease (Scagel et al. 2011, 2014). Additionally, alternating periods of wet and dry conditions can increase the severity of root rot, as stressed plants become more susceptible to infection.

Many rhododendron growers inadvertently create cycles of stress by waiting until plants show signs of water stress, such as wilting, and then watering heavily to recover. This cycle can exacerbate root rot. Finding irrigation methods that maintain growth while minimizing excessive moisture could be a key strategy for managing *Phytophthora* root rot.

Recent studies have shown differences in how *P. cinnamomi* and *P. plurivora* respond to irrigation practices and fungicide treatments. By understanding how these pathogens react to different water levels, we can develop better management practices for rhododendron growers that

incorporate both biological insights and practical disease control methods.

The goal of this experiment was to find out whether reducing the amount and frequency of watering could impact the occurrence and severity of *Phytophthora* root rot in container-grown rhododendron plants. We tested two types of *Phytophthora*—*P. cinnamomi* and *P. plurivora*—at both low and high levels of infection.

The experiment was set up using a randomized design with 10 groups of plants, each group containing one plant from every treatment. We used five different pathogen treatments: a non-inoculated control group and plants inoculated with *P. cinnamomi* or *P. plurivora* at low and high levels. We then irrigated according to three different watering schedules (normal watering, half the normal amount, and a “boom/bust” cycle where plants are alternately watered and allowed to dry out).

We performed the inoculations in three separate trials during the summer. The different watering schedules started two days after inoculation. The trials lasted for around six months each.

Effects of *Phytophthora* on plant health

In general, non-inoculated plants stayed healthy and green while those inoculated with either *P. cinnamomi* or *P. plurivora* developed root rot symptoms including stunting, chlorosis, wilting, rotted roots, and plant death. At higher levels of *Phytophthora* exposure, the disease was more severe and progressed more quickly. But even plants exposed to low levels of *Phytophthora* showed more symptoms and took up fewer nutrients than the control plants. This meant that they were generally smaller and more yellowish-green (less chlorophyll) than the healthy control plants even when they didn't show overt

symptoms of wilting and death.

There were slight differences between the two species of *Phytophthora*, with plants infected by *P. cinnamomi* sometimes showing more severe symptoms than those infected by *P. plurivora*. However, in the third trial, *P. cinnamomi* caused little disease, which was likely due to issues with the inoculation process and extreme soil temperatures during that trial. Some of the other studies we have conducted have also shown that *P. plurivora* can cause less disease and infect more slowly than *P. cinnamomi*.

Effects of irrigation on disease

Different watering treatments didn't have much impact on the development of disease for either type of *Phytophthora*, although there was a slight indication that one of the watering methods (alternating between dry and wet conditions) could

encourage disease caused by *P. plurivora* more than the other methods. Overall, the number of plants that developed disease was similar across the different watering schedules, regardless of how much or how little water they received.

Once the plants became infected, their ability to take up water was quickly compromised, which led to higher moisture levels in the soil. This created favorable conditions for more root rot to develop. As a result, the amount of water provided through different irrigation schedules made little difference in stopping the disease.

Previous studies have shown that reducing soil moisture can help prevent infection if done before the disease starts, but once plants are infected, reducing moisture is less effective. Additionally, keeping the soil too dry could harm plant growth. In this study, the plants were able

to grow reasonably well under all three irrigation treatments, although in one trial, plants under the driest treatment showed signs of water stress when temperatures were higher.

Conclusion

Reducing watering frequency and volume didn't seem to have much effect on controlling root rot after the plants were already infected. Instead, the focus should be on preventing the initial infection by avoiding overwatering and ensuring that the soil has good drainage so plants don't sit in water for long periods. While this is easier to control in container production systems, it can be more challenging in outdoor field settings where heavy rain can cause soil saturation. In those situations, avoiding low-lying areas and improving drainage with techniques like installing drain tiles could help reduce the risk of disease. >>>

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Phytophthora root rot killed this boxwood 'Suffruticosa' in an overwatered portion of this container yard. PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY WEILAND

Grower takeaways and tips

Phytophthora species cause root rot, which damages plants and leads to significant economic losses for the nursery industry. Rhododendron production, in particular, is often impacted by this disease, and there are limited ways to prevent or manage it. In recent years, *P. plurivora* has been identified as a common issue for rhododendrons in nurseries across the Pacific Northwest. However, little is known about how this pathogen compares to the more studied *P. cinnamomi*, especially in different growing conditions.

While we know that *Phytophthora* thrives in wet soil, it has been unclear whether changing watering practices can help reduce root rot in container-grown rhododendrons. Our study provides key insights:

1. Low levels of either pathogen cause mild disease, but higher levels result in more severe damage.

2. *P. plurivora* can be just as damaging to rhododendrons as *P. cinnamomi*.

3. Even plants that don't show obvious symptoms can harbor *Phytophthora*,



Overirrigation can also lead to safety hazards with slippery mud and algae, not to mention pest pressure from snails and slugs. PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY WEILAND

making it easier for the pathogen to spread and affect plant health.

4. Rhododendrons grown in *Phytophthora*-free soil can handle different watering schedules better than plants already infected with the pathogen.

5. Reducing watering after plants are infected is not an effective way to control the spread of root rot.

These findings provide new information on how water management may (or may not) help control *Phytophthora* infections in container nurseries, offering insights for nursery growers to better manage plant health. For more information, please see the detailed study titled "Irrigation Frequency and Volume has Little Influence on Phytophthora Root Rot in Container-grown Rhododendron," accessible for free online at the Journal of Environmental Horticulture (J. Environ. Hort.) 40(2):67-78, June 2022. ©

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A gathering of community



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our nursery industry community is special. This will be my 19th year celebrating our annual gathering at License to Grow: The 2024 OAN Convention.

Mark Krautmann and Kathy LeCompte were easy choices to serve as honorary co-chairs on November 15–16 at Salishan Coastal Lodge in Gleneden Beach.

Changing of the guard

At convention we celebrate the year that was, and peek of what is ahead for your association. We take care of some association business, and we recognize a plethora of individuals who have distinguished themselves in service to our industry.

It is bittersweet to bid adieu to board members exiting the stage, while welcoming a new cohort of servant leadership that will take us into 2025 and beyond. The members voted and I am excited to welcome Sam Pohlschneider, Jason Burns, Vladimir Lomen, and Noah Fessler to the OAN Board of Directors.

A farewell for their service

Joe Dula, Jay Sanders and Todd Nelson are concluding their service to the board. I must say this board has been visionary. It challenged old assumptions of what the industry is and what it should be, and helped guide the association through the COVID pandemic.

Not all heroes wear capes, but Joe and Jay have a servant leadership that is humble and impactful. Thank you. There is not enough ink to talk about my dear friend Todd. He is a strong leader who made everyone around him better — most of all me.

Charting the future

We are blessed to have a talented and dynamic board that puts industry before their own company self-interest. Our returning lineup of board members, each representing an industry segment, includes: Patrick Peterson, Dave Daniel, Blake Nelson, Sam Barkley, Andrea Avila Aragon, and the curtain call for Gary English.

Your leadership is a strong group: President Ben Verhoeven, President Elect Patrick Newton, Vice President Darcy Ruef, Treasurer Jesse Nelson, Secretary Chris Robinson, and Past President Amanda Staehely. Tyler Meskers is moving up to the Executive Committee as the Member-at-Large.

Ben Verhoeven will be an excellent president. He is inclusive and makes sure everyone's voice is heard. I am excited to see his gifts bloom during his term.

When I think of Amanda Staehely and her time as president, I admit I mist up. Nobody has carried the mantle of leadership, business challenges and family commitment like her.

The industry and the OAN are strong

Convention is a place where the family talks about family/industry business. The state of the association is strong — financially, programmatically, politically and looking to engage a greater portion of our membership to enhance the many benefits of our industry partnerships.

This year's convention meeting agenda includes the conclusion of a two-year member discussion, survey outreach, and board preferences on the recommendation of the Revenue Restructuring Task Force, chaired by Todd Nelson. Two issues have made it through the decision-making process involving category expansions for both growers and associated members.

The rapid pace of regulatory changes in the employment and policy arenas require a plain-spoken breakdown of what these changes will mean to members in 2025. We have the perfect expert in Pete Hicks, attorney with Jordan Ramis P.C.. 2025 is an enormous challenge and opportunity for OAN's legislative agenda.

We are going on offense in 2025 during the Oregon Legislative Session. The OAN's top priority, fixing the agricultural overtime law, was filed by State Rep. Ricki Ruiz (D-Gresham), a member of the House BIPOC caucus. State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane) has put in the association's policy on making water transfers more accessible to the industry. Lastly, the OAN wishes to exempt all green goods from the commercial activities tax (CAT). This bill was filed by State Rep. E. Werner

Reschke (R-Klamath Falls). The OAN's final priority item, providing adequate funding for the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Japanese Beetle Program, will be done through the budget process.

We have leaders that have risen in the ranks at the state and national level, and I could not be prouder of the commitment to our industry. Leigh Geschwill (is the chair of the Horticultural Research Institute and is bringing our state and the West's perspective to funding priorities for research needs of the industry.

Josh Zielinski is completing his first term on the Oregon Department of Agriculture Board of Directors. Having a nursery voice on this board is critical and the OAN is seeking that Josh be reappointed for his second and final term.

And after a long drought, the OAN once again has a member on the AmericanHort Board of Directors. Past president and industry titan Tom Fessler is serving his first year on the national board. We will hear from these leaders as they share their experiences.

Raise a toast and celebrate

The association has a lot of positives to report this November, and we are excited to share them with you. But with the good, there are the challenges, and I will be urging us to talk about the substantial challenges barreling down on the industry. Together, we will work together and succeed. See you at Salishan. ☺

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