

OREGON is Nursery Country



The management team at Krueger's Tree Farm includes (from right): Owner Richard "Dick" Krueger, Vice President Matthew Hauth and Assistant Manager David West. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL

FOUNDED
1972

OWNERS
Richard "Dick" Krueger

KNOWN FOR
40,000 containerized trees and an additional 24 greenhouses of premium plant material, Krueger Nursery provides exceptional plant material year-round to some of the most informed buyers.

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KRUEGER'S TREE FARM

BY EMILY HOARD

Among 40,000 potted deciduous shade trees, a 5-year-old named Howie points to one and says, "That is an oak tree." He and his twin sister Maggie are already learning how to identify trees, having grown up around them on the family farm in Cornelius, Oregon, owned by their grandfather, Richard "Dick" Krueger.

Krueger's Tree Farm is known for growing and selling hardy shade trees and shrubs that are shipped all across the U.S. and Canada.

The farm covers 75 acres, bustling with life. "Our farm is around 70% full, with trees and shrubs growing in 22 greenhouses and two propagation houses equipped with hydronic floor heat and ambient temperature controls," Krueger said.

In addition to the 40,000 container-

ized trees, the farm is growing about one million containerized plants. The shrubs, grasses and groundcovers are grown in pots in gravel can yards, while the trees are grown in pots along 9.5 miles of trellises to keep them upright. The current irrigation system includes over 120 irrigation zones which are controlled wirelessly and via their two-wire system.

"The trees are all on individual spray stakes and can be injected with fertilizer or other biologicals as needed," Krueger said, adding they use UpTake Pro/KleenGrow to keep the spray stakes and drip lines free from debris.

Matthew Hauth, Krueger's son-in-law and the father of Howie and Maggie, is the vice president of the business. Krueger's buys the trees in bareroot and



One of the hallmarks of Krueger's Tree Farm is the use of technology to save labor. Here, Dick Krueger drives a heavy-duty forklift from Wurdinger equipped with a special fork that allows for lifting of more pots. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

large liner form and pots the trees up on their potting system before growing them up to desired calipers for their customers.

Hauth said the Willamette Valley is optimal for growing trees and plants. "We harden our trees so they excel even in harsh conditions. That's the beauty of ordering from us," he added.

Recently, Krueger's expanded its product offerings to include shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers, helping customers optimize truck space by shipping both trees and plant materials together — a move that saves both time and money, Hauth said.

Assistant Manager David West is optimistic about the farm's future, noting its recent technological upgrades and preparations for further growth. "We're expanding vertically and investing in new technology that keeps labor costs down while improving product quality and consistency," he said.

The farm's meticulous care for each tree is the work of a skilled three-person team who focus on training and prun- ➤



From left: Maggie, Stacie, Howie and Matthew Hauth, and Debbie and Dick Krueger at Krueger's Tree Farm. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Krueger's Tree Farm

ing, ensuring every tree has a strong, dominant leader.

How it began

Krueger was raised on a farm and was responsible for the family garden as a kid and grew into being responsible for the farm. In 1972, he started his own landscaping business, Krueger's Associated Landscape & Supply. "I grew evergreen trees at my grandparents' property and eventually bought my own land to support my landscaping business," Krueger said.

By 1977, he had moved to a three-acre plot in Beaverton, then in 1980 to a 20-acre shade tree farm in Newberg, growing both a reputation and customer base along the way. His landscaping business grew to 72 employees, tackling commercial work across Oregon.

Through the years, Krueger shifted from field-grown trees to a pot-in-pot operation, eventually securing contracts with high-end clients like the Bellagio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. A particularly memorable project began when Krueger and his wife, Debbie, attended a trade show together, where they first connected with the Bellagio team. Following that introduction, Krueger set out to meet the hotel's unique request for January-blooming trees, using temperature-controlled greenhouses to force blooms and transporting the trees in refrigerated trucks to preserve the blossoms. This notable achievement won Krueger's Tree Farm a multi-year contract with the Bellagio, supplying trees for their renowned conservatory botanical garden.

In 2020, Krueger purchased a 75-acre, gravel-covered site on Cornelius Schefflin Road. Choosing an above-ground pot system, he installed a new irrigation system, trellis infrastructure, and a Wurdinger soil mixing line to support the potting of bare-root stock. The site has since expanded to include shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers.

While Krueger was growing the nursery, Hauth started dating his daughter, Stacie, in 2002 and began working with Krueger on designing and building his website in 2003 and collaborated with



Matthew Hauth observes as Miriam Barnabe (left) and Juana Cid as they prepare to propagate *Vinca minor* into air-pruning Pioneer Pots (below). PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

him on different projects over the years. During their wedding, Dick humorously recalled the first time he met Hauth, saying, "Man, this guy's hands are soft; he doesn't seem to work very hard."

But over time, Hauth has proven himself to Krueger. In 2022, Krueger asked Hauth to join the nursery team. With his background in technology and manufacturing, Hauth has introduced innovations and efficiencies that continue to propel the farm forward.

The nursery hired West as the assistant manager in the winter of 2023. With nearly three decades of experience in the landscaping industry, West stepped back from the daily operations of his own landscaping company, ultimately transitioning to helping manage the nursery.

"At Krueger's we have been inventing and creating new systems, implementing new planting techniques, and planning for the up and coming products in the green industry," West said.

Hauth called 2024 a year of firsts, marked by significant changes including adding a new irrigation controller for the now 120-plus zones on the property, changing bark, pots, fertilizer, and chemical suppliers, implementing a new inventory and sales order system, and adding new equipment including a potting machine and soil mixer.



Planning for the future

The team has some upcoming projects they're looking forward to, including adding more automation machinery: the Ellepot H102 and the Ellepot H302, which create biodegradable pots of varying sizes and fills them with growing material. They're planning a solar array installation in 2025 and are constantly working with the USDA on water conservation practices.

"Dick has invested in high-quality equipment and is open to new ideas that drive innovation" Hauth said. "We're not aiming to cut labor; we're reallocating it for higher productivity and a better product."

West said the addition of a new potting machine has allowed them to complete a potting work order in one day instead of four, and the soil mixing machinery allows the crew to custom-make the right mixes for the specifications of each plant.

Krueger's is looking toward the future when the emerald ash borer is expected to wipe out ash trees. The farm is in the beginning phases of developing production of nine to 13 types of trees that can replace ash trees.

Climate resilience is a top priority. The farm has started cultivating cold-tolerant crepe myrtles in response to the region's hotter summers, ensuring they can offer heat- and drought-resistant trees to their customers. By 2027, Krueger's Tree Farm plans to have hundreds of specimen crepe myrtles ready for the landscape market.

West reflected on the rewards of

growing trees, saying, "There are trees I planted in my twenties that are now 100 feet tall, and it's so cool to see something you've done with your own hands is still there today and will outlive you."

In 2019, Matthew and Stacie Hawth had their twins Howie and Maggie. Matthew said he thinks that changed Krueger and his approach. "With Howie and Maggie here, you can tell, he wants to build a legacy that they can be proud of."

Hauth said Howie is already expressing interest in the farm at five years old.

"Howie loves everything about being outdoors, working with tools, or riding on a tractor," Hauth said. "He'll walk through the farm or forest, asking questions about different tree species. Or, as we drive to Astoria, he'll point out, 'look at all those evergreen trees,' which is pretty hilarious coming from a five-year-old."

At 70 years old, Krueger said he's still

working at the farm every day starting at 6 a.m. and he's looking forward to stepping back.

"My goal is to hand off the farm eventually to Matt, Stacie and my grandchildren and have them involved in the farm significantly so it would enable me to step back a little bit," Krueger said. "I try to think of it as a generational opportunity for my family should they choose and it gives them a great opportunity to hopefully enhance their lifestyle as well."

As Krueger's Tree Farm continues to grow, the legacy of hard work, family, and innovation takes root for generations to come. ☺

Emily Hoard is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master's degree in multimedia journalism. You can reach her at hoarde123@gmail.com



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