

## 2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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# Linkage and flow

It is always good to get off the farm. Every time I visit a nursery, I come back with new ideas and fresh energy. I'd like to use this column to share some of those ideas and introduce you to the people who inspired them.

It's a blustery morning today in western Oregon. The driving wind brings me to the doorstep of **Garland Nursery** in Corvallis, where I receive a warm welcome from Justin Read, the new owner, and Mitch Goodlove-Pyles, who I've come to meet.

Mitch is a native of Corvallis and has been with Garland for nearly four years as their tree and shrub team lead. As we walk to the improvement he is excited to show me, he tells me about his growing up at Garland and how he would be dropped off at their nursery playground while his mother shopped for flowers. It's clear that he is enthusiastic about passing on his love of gardening to the next generation, including his toddler son.

We walk past off-season benches, cleared and waiting for plants. They'll hold a riot of color and possibility for gardeners next spring. For now, they sit silent, biding their time. We arrive at a handsome wooden gate to what used to be a far corner of the retail nursery.

Mitch explains that this corner would hold some trees and a few shrubs, but it was seldom visited by customers still browsing all the color at the heart of the nursery. It is now home to many of their production greenhouses, which Mitch and his coworker Travis personally moved. Mitch tells me that condensing some of their retail footprint has made for a more creative and approachable space for their customers.

Bringing the production closer to the heart of the garden center has also meant they can respond much more quickly to customer demand. Now, when a shopper asks for a second beautiful hellebore in a matching color, someone doesn't have to



Mitch Goodlove-Pyles and his team's improvements at Garland Nursery have allowed them to bring off-season production tasks closer to the nursery. PHOTO BY EVE MEYERS

travel 15 minutes round-trip to fetch it. When you leave a customer, "You can lose someone mid-list," informs Mitch, "which is no good" — they might decide against a purchase and move on.

Now, Garland's excellent staff can continue to help customers. Production staff are also closer to their teammates. "This is amazing! It's all going to be right here?!" exclaimed Josefa, Garland's production manager.

Mitch and his team's improvements have also allowed them to bring off-season production tasks closer. Now, when they flock Christmas trees for the holiday season, they are able to make them in smaller batches, flocking fresh trees rather than sitting on excess inventory after Christmas. Now that's a Happy New Year!

After a wonderful visit, I'm left thinking about how bringing tasks closer together isn't just about efficiency. Mitch and his coworkers have clearly found that it also benefits their customers and builds stronger teams. Sounds like a worthwhile New Year's resolution to me. ☺