

Digger

JULY 2025

Taming Buddleja

Sterile varieties
offer alternatives

PAGE 17

Strong brands
pay off

PAGE 25



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Working with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, nurseries develop sterile varieties to satisfy demand.

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Diligence and consistency build a solid reputation that pays big dividends for nurseries who do it right.

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OSU researchers evaluate some natural alternatives for fighting this troublesome greenhouse invader.

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FARWEST

PORTLAND 2025

New Varieties Showcase

Presenting the best and most innovative new plant introductions. **AFTER PAGE 20**

15 More seminars

This year's sessions offer a broader and deeper range of subjects and more presentations in Spanish.



Printed in Oregon on domestic recycled paper when available.

On the cover: Bloomin' Easy® Buddleja Blueberry Pie™ (*Buddleja* 'PODARASNGA 9-15' PPAF, CPBRA) PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE YOUNGPLANTS

On this page: Left: Proven Winners® Buddleja Lo & Behold® 'Pink Micro Chip' (*Buddleja* × PP26547, CP5621) PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

Right: Magnified view of liverwort (*Marchantia polymorpha*) showing its distinctive reproductive structures. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO



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Share and share alike ...



OAN President Ben Verhoeven, left, and Bulmaro Garcia, Blue Heron's operations manager.

PHOTO BY SALAMON BARRERA

It's a clear June afternoon as I pull into Blue Heron's Corvallis farm. Folks are just finishing lunch as Bulmaro Garcia, the operations manager, warmly greets me.

Bulmaro has been at **Blue Heron** since 1989, and it is clear why he is now responsible for leading shipping, spraying, maintenance, irrigation — you name it. He is full of energy as he tells me of all the improvements, large and small, that he and his team have been making.

Some seem simple. Let's use two nails here instead of three. Why not a single rope instead of a double? When you multiply these small improvements by a factor of many thousands, they add up.

Other improvements are larger. Bulmaro tells me the story of an imported \$75,000 root pruner that upon arrival had no capability to adjust. He and his team found a way to out-perform it with a \$650 lawn edger. That's creativity over capital!

What Bulmaro is most passionate about, though, is information and how to share it. Several years ago, he noticed

a disconnect between the office and the field. Information was batched in files, only to be released as a flood of orders. Bulmaro and the team worked to transition to a new software system that lets folks in the field instantly see work quantity on their mobile phones. "Now it is like a game," he tells me. They used to have order fulfillment wait times of days, but now, we're like McDonalds. You order at the window and it's ready."

I ask Bulmaro if everyone was on board. Not at first, he tells me, but "If something doesn't work right away, keep going. There is a learning curve." You also need to know "how to communicate with the field because they are the ones that make the ideas possible. Now everybody is feeling less stressed. There is no more rushing."

Incredible! "What is the secret?" I ask.

Bulmaro smiles. Share knowledge, he tells me. "The information is for all of us." ☺

Editor's note: This column is also printed on the next page in Spanish this month, at the president's request.



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Compartir y compartir por igual..



OAN presidente Ben Verhoeven, a la izquierda, y Bulmaro Garcia, el gerente de operaciones de Blue Heron. FOTOGRAFÍA DE SALAMON BARRERA

Es una tarde despejada de junio. Llego a la granja de Blue Heron en Corvallis. La gente acaba de terminar de almorzar cuando Bulmaro García, el gerente de operaciones, me recibe calurosamente.

Bulmaro lleva en **Blue Heron** desde 1989 y es evidente por qué ahora es responsable de dirigir los envíos, la fumigación, el mantenimiento, el riego... de todo. Está lleno de energía mientras me cuenta todas las mejoras, grandes y pequeñas, que él y su equipo han estado implementando.

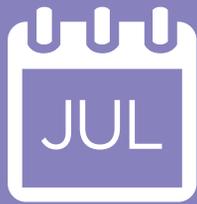
Algunas parecen sencillas: usemos dos clavos en lugar de tres, ¿por qué no una sola cuerda en lugar de dos? Al multiplicar estas pequeñas mejoras por miles, la suma es total.

Otras mejoras son más importantes. Bulmaro me cuenta la historia de una podadora de raíces importada de \$75,000 que, al llegar, no tenía capacidad de ajuste. Él y su equipo encontraron la manera de superarla con una cortabordos de césped de \$650. ¡Eso sí que es creatividad por encima del capital!

Sin embargo, lo que más le apasiona a Bulmaro es la información y cómo compartirla. Hace varios años, notó una desconexión entre la oficina y el campo. La información se agrupaba en archivos, solo para ser publicada como una avalancha de pedidos. Bulmaro y el equipo trabajaron en la transición a un nuevo sistema de software que permite a los empleados del campo ver al instante la cantidad de trabajo en sus teléfonos móviles. “Ahora es como un juego”, me cuenta. Antes tenían tiempos de espera de días para el cumplimiento de pedidos, pero ahora “somos como McDonald’s. Haces el pedido en ventanilla y está listo”.

Le pregunto a Bulmaro si todos estaban de acuerdo. No al principio, me dice, sino: “Si algo no funciona de inmediato, sigue adelante. Hay una curva de aprendizaje”. También es necesario saber “cómo comunicarse con el campo porque son ellos quienes hacen realidad las ideas”.

“Ahora todos se sienten menos estresados. Ya no hay prisas”. ¡Increíble! ¿Cuál es el secreto?, pregunto. Bulmaro sonríe. Compartir el conocimiento, me dice. “La información es para todos”. ©



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*.

JULY 8

OAN OPEN HOUSE AT ESHRAGHI NURSERIES

Join the Oregon Association of Nurseries at **Eshraghi Nurseries** 3:30-5:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 8 for a behind-the-scenes tour and a chance to connect with fellow nursery professionals. What began as a single greenhouse has grown into a thriving 500-acre operation. Eshraghi Nurseries now produces a well-rounded mix of more than 500 varieties of trees and shrubs. Come enjoy a casual afternoon of connection and conversation. To top it all off, you can build-your-own ice cream sundaes in honor of National Ice Cream Sundae Day! Whether you're a longtime OAN member or just starting out, this is a great opportunity to see a successful nursery in action and build your network. Bring a friend! Know someone who isn't an OAN member yet? Invite them along – it's a great introduction to the strength and support of Oregon's nursery community. Please RSVP at OAN.org/Events. Questions? Contact the OAN office at 503-682-5089 or Info@OAN.org.

JULY 10

MT. HOOD CHAPTER PITCH & PUTT GOLF TOURNAMENT

Golfing OAN members are invited to tee up at the Mt. Hood Chapter's Pitch & Putt Golf Tournament, Thursday, July 10 at McMenamins' Edgefield Golf Course, 2126 S.W. Halsey St. in Troutdale, Oregon. Check in starts at 1:30 p.m. and shotgun start is at 2 p.m. Player packages are \$30 and included one ball and one beverage ticket. Registered golfers may bring their own equipment or use the putter and pitching wedge provided with registration. Please join us for a good time at our golf mixer! Questions? Contact Vladimir Lomen at VladimirL@JHNSY.com. Register at TinyURL.com/MtHoodPitchPutt.

JULY 12-15

CULTIVATE'25

General registration is now open for Cultivate'25 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Ohio from July 12-15. Unlock endless opportunities to grow your business in the green industry. Attend any of the more than 150 educational sessions, half- or full-day workshops, or industry production tours to learn new skills and network with your peers so you and your business thrive now and into the future. Take your learning to the next level when you sign up for Saturday workshops at Cultivate. These half or full-day programs provide more in-depth opportunities for hands-on learning and are designed to enrich both you and your business. Cultivate also offers opportunities for exploration and networking with industry colleagues. This



PHOTO COURTESY OF WAILEA BEACH RESORT MARRIOTT

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 (Wednesday-Friday) at the Wailea Beach Resort Marriott, Wailea, Maui, Hawaii. Enjoy social time with old and new friends, talk about the issues that are vital to Oregon nurseries, honor the industry's achievers at the annual President's Awards Banquet and 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 before and after the event. Rooms are limited. Make plans now and register for the convention at OAN.org/Convention.

is your chance to make or renew business connections. For more information or to register go to CultivateEvent.org.

AUGUST 8

NEW PRODUCTS SHOWCASE TIER 3 DEADLINE

Do you have a new product to unveil? Help your target audience find your product at the New Products Showcase at the Farwest Show! Space is limited and the deadline for Tier 3 submissions is August 8. Go to FarwestShow.com/New-Products-Showcase-Submissions. Questions? Contact Jamie Moore at JMoore@OAN.org.

AUGUST 5-7

NURSERY/LANDSCAPE EXPO 2025

Get the knowledge necessary to thrive in your respective green industry segment at the 2025 Nursery/Landscape Expo in San Antonio, Texas. Stay up to date on the latest trends, explore new products, and learn to effectively manage issues, and connect with the best minds and experts the industry has to offer. For more information or to register, go to NurseryLandscapeExpo.org.

AUGUST 20-22

FARWEST SHOW

Meet the experts, discover innovative ideas, products, and services to grow your business, and see the industry's most stunning plants at the Farwest Show, August 20-22 at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 N.E. MLK

Jr. Blvd., Portland, Oregon. With nearly 350 exhibitors, Farwest is your ticket to the nursery and retail garden center industry. Whether you're a grower, retailer, wholesale buyer, supplier, or landscape professional, you'll find that Farwest offers you the complete trade show experience. Show hours are noon-5 p.m. Wednesday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday, and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday. The tours – three of them! – are on Tuesday, August 19. Register now at FarwestShow.com.

VARIOUS DATES

FIRST AID/CPR CLASSES AT OAN

Need a first aid and CPR certification renewal for yourself or one of your employees? For the first time, the Oregon Association of Nurseries is proud to offer first aid/CPR training to members at no charge through OAN's partnership with the State Accident & Insurance Fund (SAIF). The certification is valid for two years, and participants receive hands-on first aid and CPR training in small class sizes. The classes are offered in English and Spanish from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The sessions in English are offered July 16, September 17, October 15, November 19, December 17. Sessions in Spanish will be July 17, September 18, October 16, November 20 and December 18. Classes are held at the OAN office, 29751 S.W. Town Center Loop West, Wilsonville, Oregon. Register at OAN.org/Page/CPRclass. Download the English and Spanish First Aid/CPR breakroom flyer at OAN.org/2025CPRFlyer. ©



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.

AmericanHort launches AI-powered assistant

Sage, a new AI-powered assistant, is designed to streamline how users access information on AmericanHort's websites. This intelligent tool delivers quick, accurate answers by drawing from AmericanHort's extensive library of resources, eliminating the need for manual searching, according to a press release from AmericanHort.

Sage can assist with a wide range of topics including business solutions, best practices, events, education, advocacy, membership and research.



"This is a powerful tool created to help our members, and the industry quickly find the resources they need," said Mary Beth Cowardin, vice president marketing & member engagement for AmericanHort. "While it is not meant to replace human interaction, Sage saves time and makes it easier to find valuable information." Unlike ChatGPT, Gemini, or other AI platforms, Sage operates within a secure environment and does not pull from public sources. This means users can confidently use this tool for tasks like writing a job description, catalog copy, or social media content, according to AmericanHort.

Try using Sage today at AmericanHort.org/Sage. For more information, contact Sage@AmericanHort.org, or call 614-487-1117.



Longtime employee Octavio Martinez is the new owner of Heritage Seedlings and Liners. OAN FILE PHOTO

LONGTIME EMPLOYEE IS NEW OWNER OF HERITAGE SEEDLINGS AND LINERS

Mark Krautmann has sold **Heritage Seedlings and Liners** to longtime employee Octavio Martinez. The sale was concluded June 1.

The wholesale nursery is based in Salem, Oregon, and was founded by Mark and his late wife, Jolly, who passed away in 2024. Mark and Jolly were inducted into the Oregon Nurseries Hall of Fame in 2019.

"A true American success story, Octavio began his nursery career with us when he was a teen in the summer of 2003," Krautmann said. "Jolly spotted Octavio in the greenhouse one day and came to me with that determined look in her eyes: 'We need to get that young fellow, Octavio, up here in the office.' It soon became evident that I had an understudy who was my equal, only better, because he's completely bi-cultural.

"I made it my priority to nurture his talents and help him understand elements of reasonable risk and business decision-making," Krautmann said.

"I'm honored and humbled to have been give this opportunity," Martinez said. "I'm excited to continue Heritage and aim to run it with the same culture and values as Mark and Jolly did. I feel privileged to continue their legacy."

The terms of the sale allow for a smooth transition and a unique way of financing the transaction.

"We jointly agreed to a purchase price that allows Octavio to pay for all the stock of the company out of projected annual profit," Krautmann said. "We also signed a long-term farm lease. I provide the full initial operating line of credit as Octavio establishes his independent creditworthiness. As he pays off the company purchase over the coming 10–12 years, we'll craft a land sale contract for his purchase of the farm and greenhouse facilities."

Krautmann will remain involved to offer advice. "I sold the nursery, but I'm stepping sideways more than back," Krautmann said. Octavio has asked me to stick around for my "wisdom factor." We talk daily, and he and I will meet at least twice monthly to systematically review budget and sales, especially in these early transition years. Suppliers, clients and >>

Northwest News

other employees must know that both Octavio and I are fully vested in his success and the ongoing financial stability and production capacity of our company. He's got this, as anyone who has worked with him will verify. It's time for me to let go, to let him sign the front of paychecks instead of the back."

Krautmann appealed to other OAN members and nursery owners who are considering ownership transition options to look at their top Hispanic managers as owner candidates. "Our trusted, skilled, majority-Hispanic workforce is the engine that drives the nursery business," Krautmann said. Have we been too slow to put our arms around them, to mentor them toward ownership? In planning for your own succession, what steps might you take to encourage a more inclusive pool of owner candidates?" Krautman said he's happy to discuss his experience in more detail. He can be reached by mobile phone at 503-932-3920.

DUFFERS CLASSIC RAISES MORE THAN \$30,000

The annual Duffers Classic, the big fundraiser for the Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee, raised just over \$30,000 on June 5 at Stone Creek Golf Club in Oregon City, Oregon. A sold-out field of 144 industry supporters took part. "The weather was overcast and cool for most of the morning but there was lots of action on the fairway," OAN Events and Education Coordinator Jamie Moore said. "No matter the weather, Duffers is always a chance for members to have fun together and strengthen their relationships all while supporting a cause that's essential to the industry."

"I cannot emphasize enough, being politically involved is important for the success of the nursery industry," said ONPAC Chairman Tyler Meskers (**Oregon Flowers**). "I appreciate you all being involved and supporting ONPAC by being a part of Duffers Classic."

Award winners:

Ladies' Long Drive — Elizabeth Brentano (**Brentano's Tree Farm LLC**)



From left: Vladimir Lomen (John Holmlund Nursery), Francisco (Paco) Bautista (Don Marjama Nursery), Carlos Alvarez (John Holmlund Nursery), and Steve Ekstrom (Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery). PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

Men's Long Drive — Danny Dooney (**Leonard Adams Insurance Inc.**)

Ladies' Closest to the Pin — Tiffany Baker (**Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**)

Men's Closest to the Pin — Wayne Staehely (**Columbia Nursery**)

2025 Duffers Classic winner — The team from **Portland Nursery**

Second place — Tom Harbolt (**Providence Nursery LLC dba Fisher Farms**), Danny Dooney, Tristan Clark (L.A.B. Golf), Stewart Soto (Providence Health Plan)

Many thanks to the sponsors and those who purchased string, mulligans and the variety of score-altering reduction methods.

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Check out the photo galleries of the day's fun at Duffers on Facebook at **Facebook.com/hashtag/duffers25**.

THREE OREGON GREENHOUSE GROWERS MAKE TOP 100 LIST

Greenhouse Grower's 2025 Top 100 Growers list is a continuation of the trend from 2024, according to *Greenhouse Grower* magazine, with a handful of nurseries like Everde Growers, Bela Flor Nurseries, Rambo Nursery and Welby Gardens making plans to close or filing for bankruptcy with hopes to recover, the magazine said.

The good news is that a number of growers are in expansion mode, with more than 25% of the top 25 on the list



Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas moved from No. 9 in 2024 to No. 10 in Greenhouse Grower's 2025 Top 100 list, with a total of 5,052,960 square feet of greenhouse space. PHOTO COURTESY OF WOODBURN NURSERY & AZALEAS

increasing in size from 2024.

The three Oregon growers:

Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas

(Woodburn, Oregon) moved from No. 9 in 2024 to No. 10 in 2025, with a total of 5,052,960 square feet of greenhouse space.

Smith Gardens (Aurora, Oregon)

moved from No. 16 in 2024 to No. 11 in 2025, with a total of 3,752,000 square feet (including Washington). Smith Gardens purchased Skagit Horticulture's Riverbend facility in Mount Vernon, Washington, in spring of 2024 when Skagit announced it was closing. Riverbend includes 24 acres of greenhouses and 20 acres of outdoor production space.

Fessler Nursery (Woodburn, Oregon)

moved from No. 71 in 2024 to be tied in 65th place in 2025, with 850,000 square feet.

View the complete list at

TinyURL.com/Top100Growers.



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ANALYSIS FINDS STRONG CONSUMER GARDEN PURCHASES DESPITE ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Even though nurseries are concerned about tariffs and their potential economic impact, garden center customers don't seem to be, at least when it comes to their gardening, reports Ball Publishing. Garden Media Group's Garden Pulse: Spring 2025 Analysis is out and reveals some strong numbers.

Frontline sales at independent garden centers are nearly identical to those of 2024 and are up 27% from 2020, with strong demand for edibles and ornamentals.

As of March 2025, garden centers using Square have seen an 8.6% increase in processing gross profit and a 9.3% increase in transaction volume compared to 2024.

2025 early spring garden sales are just 3.9% behind 2024 sales, despite the dismal weather in many parts of the country so far this spring.

Download the complete analysis at TinyURL.com/GardenPulse2025.

FOUR-LEGGED INVESTIGATORS SNIFF OUT SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

A new weapon is being deployed by researchers in the fight against the spotted lanternfly, a leaf-hopping invasive pest first detected in the U.S. a decade ago, according to The Associated Press. The spotted lanternfly has steadily spread across the East Coast and into the Midwest with nothing slowing it down.

Now, four specially trained dogs with the ability to sniff out the winged insect's eggs before they hatch are sniffing parks in the Cleveland, Ohio, area in search of egg masses hidden around trees, shrubs, park benches, landscape rocks and bridge pillars. Each egg mass can produce 30–50 flies. So far, the dogs have found more than 4,000 of the masses, which means the eradication of as many as 200,000 of the sap-sucking bugs that damage grapes, fruit trees, hops and hardwoods. The dogs

were trained through a research project led by a group at Virginia Tech University, which is setting out to slow the spread of the insects that are native to eastern Asia.

Read more at TinyURL.com/DogsLanternfly.

INVASIVE THRIPS FOUND IN DELAWARE

Thrips parvispinus, an invasive pest originating in Southeast Asia that causes damage to vegetable, ornamental and fruit crops, was detected during a retail nursery inspection in New Castle County, Delaware on May 1, according to the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA).

A U.S. Department of Agriculture identifier confirmed the specimen positive for *Thrips parvispinus*. The DDA considers this a dangerously injurious pest and has issued Control Orders for this pest to the Delaware nurseries. "Delaware is forwarding these detections on to the National Plant Board states [including Oregon] to assist them with their inspection priorities," said Jeff Brothers, Plant Industries Section environmental program administrator for DDA. "I would like to note that *Thrips parvispinus* has been updated to non-quarantine status."

DDA reported a second confirmation of *Thrips parvispinus* in Sussex County and suspected *Thrips parvispinus* at a third retail nursery on *Mandevilla*, *Diplandenia* and *Hibiscus*. "To date all nurseries provided the source of the plant material as Florida nurseries," Brothers said.

In Florida, *Thrips parvispinus* was first found in 2020 and has caused significant damage to the *Gardenia* and *Mandevilla* production in South Florida, according to the University of Florida.

VIRGINIA TECH, OSU RESEARCH OFFERS HOPE ON BOXWOOD BLIGHT

New research from a team of plant pathologists led by Chuanxue Hong at Virginia Tech's Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension

Center and Jay Pscheidt at Oregon State University suggests that the solution to combatting boxwood blight may lie in a new fungicide treatment method known as "drenching," according to a statement from Virginia Tech.

This approach not only drastically reduces the time and cost of treatment for boxwood farmers but also heals infected plants from the inside out. Drenching involves pouring a solution of fungicide mixed with water onto the soil and around the base of the plant. The traditional method of spraying fungicide directly onto the leaves keeps boxwood blight at bay, but it needs to be applied every couple of weeks, costing farmers valuable time and resources.

"The drench allows the chemistry to be taken up by the roots and transported throughout the plant's vascular system," Hong said. "This helps overcome the issue of poor fungicide coverage in boxwoods' dense canopies. Plus, because the fungicide is internalized, it's far less likely to be washed away by rain or irrigation."

The project resulted from research Pscheidt was working on that used AI spraying technology to detect plant canopy density.

Read more at TinyURL.com/BoxwoodDrench.

Announcements

NEW DIRECTOR NAMED FOR NORTH WILLAMETTE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER

Steve Young, Ph.D., has been named the new director of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center, according to Oregon State University. He started work June 16.

Young brings a strong track record of strategic leadership and program



Steve Young

development across research, extension, and federal service. He most recently served as a national program leader with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, where he guided national initiatives to strengthen agricultural research and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Prior to that, he was the director of the Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center at Cornell University, leading regional efforts to support sustainable agriculture through science-based pest management solutions.

Young earned his Ph.D. in soils and biogeochemistry from the University of California, Davis, a master's degree in plant science from the University of Idaho, and a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Washington State University.

HARRELL'S ADDS TERRITORY MANAGER FOR WASHINGTON STATE

Brooke Jerie de Manriquez has joined

Harrell's Pacific

Norwest horticulture team as territory manager, primarily serving Washington state customers, according to a press release from Harrell's. Her role will be the latest addition



Brooke Jerie de Manriquez

to the existing presence in Oregon with Territory Manager Scott Renfro.

Jerie de Manriquez has more than 9 years of experience in the horticulture industry, mainly in nursery operations. She was most recently the lead horticulturist for **Iseli Nursery** in Boring, Oregon.

WSU APPOINTS NEW DEAN OF AG SCHOOL

Raj Khosla, a globally recognized researcher on precision agriculture, was named dean of Washington State University's College of Agricultural, >>

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Northwest News

Human and Natural Resource Sciences on May 14, reports *Capital Press*, an agricultural newspaper in Salem, Oregon. He starts in his new role on September 1. Khosla currently leads the department of agronomy at Kansas State University. "I look forward to building partnerships and initiating collaborations throughout the WSU system to develop programs with impact across the state of Washington," Khosla said.



Mossify announced its partnership with Van Belle on Facebook. PHOTO COURTESY OF MOSSIFY

Mossify received a Retailer's Choice Award at the Farwest Show in 2022 for its Bendable Moss Pole™.

MOSSIFY AND VAN BELLE FINISHED PLANTS TEAM UP

Canadian nursery **Van Belle Finished Plants** and Canadian company **Mossify** (both OAN members) are teaming up. Mossify's Bendable Moss Pole™ THIN are being used in Van Belle's 5–10 inch pots for *Pothos*, *Philodendron* and *Monstera*, according to Mossify's Facebook post. The first products ship to stores in August.

Correction

In the cover crops story in the June issue of *Digger* magazine, a quote and some information were mistakenly attributed to

Anne Marie Boyd of Motz & Son Nursery when they should have been attributed to Esteban Herrera at Bailey Nurseries Inc.

"We use sudan because we can use it in conjunction with pre-emergent. The cover crop grows through the re-emergent. It's easy," Herrera said. If we leave a field fallow it will just be weeds, and I have to send in workers and herbicide. We use the pre-emergent in spring and fall. Other than that, we're not having to use herbicide."

At Bailey, Herrera said they grow cover crops in rows between trees for erosion control in winter. They use oats or wheat or some other kind of grain and let it grow until January. Then they spray it and it creates a nice mat for people to work on. Because they want to disturb the soil as little as possible, pre-emergents are their choice of herbicide. The oats or wheat creates a layer that helps keep the pre-emergent off the workers' shoes, so less is wasted. ☺

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This year's Farwest Show offers a greater variety of topics for seminars as well as more seminars in Spanish. OAN FILE PHOTO

A broader range of seminars

The new climate summit adds an important and timely focus for industry attendees

BY VIC PANICHKUL

This year's Farwest Show attendees will find a broader and deeper range of topics covered in seminars. "We've beefed up our offerings and we've added an important focus this year, a Nursery Industry Climate Summit," Oregon Association of Nurseries Events Coordinator Jamie Moore said. "There are more seminars offered this year and more offered in Spanish as well."

"Industry experts will help equip attendees with the knowledge and skills to run their businesses more effectively, meet increasing challenges, strengthen their relationship with customers, utilize new technologies and manage plant pest and diseases more effectively," she said.

Highlights

The Nursery Industry Climate Summit is a vital new initiative that will bring together industry leaders, innova-



tors, law makers and environmental experts to discuss the growing importance of sustainability in the green industry. The summit spans two days, August 20–21, from 1:30–3:30 p.m. each day.

Day one will focus on research-driven discovery, highlighting scientific quantification — particularly the lifecycle and carbon sequestration impact of trees and plants. Day two will feature a policy roundtable, bringing together policymakers and growers for a collaborative discussion on the industry's role in shaping climate policy.

Here's a sample of a few of the offerings this year:

"How Climate Change is Affecting Our Use and Application of Native Plants"

is presented 8:30–9:30 a.m. Wednesday, August 20. Steven Paulsen, CEO and owner of **Native Roots LLC**,



Steven Paulsen

will cover changes in native plant habitats across the western United States, and how those changes could impact our applications. The presentation is intended to be interactive and participation from the audience is encouraged.

"Attracting the Next Generation to the Green Industry," from 2–3 p.m. Wednesday, August 20, will feature a panel discussion by Broch Martindale, national nursery and greenhouse account manager at **Corteva Agriscience**, Jazmin Albarran executive director of Seed Your Future, and Rachel Popp, science teacher at Lake Oswego High School. While labor continues to be one of the largest challenges to the green industry, the panel will attempt to answer the question: What >>

Broader range of seminars

EN ESPAÑOL
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seminars schedule



are we doing to connect with the next generation? The industry is changing and so are the employees entering the workforce. Find out what students are looking for and how you can connect with them.

“Creating Your Internet Marketing

Plan 2025–2026” is

2:45–3:45

p.m.

Wednesday,
August 20.

Ron McCabe,
president of

Everbearing

Services, will

discuss how digital marketing shapes how customers find and choose services. This session presents proven strategies to strengthen your online presence, connect with the right audience, and turn website visits into business growth.

In “How A

Quick Sketch Can

Double Your

Sale,” 8:30–

9:30 a.m.

Thursday,

August 21,

Ryan Watkins,

founder of

HortMentor,

will discuss

how to boost sales by providing clients with a basic, hand-drawn visual of their space. This simple, yet effective tool can be utilized by sales associates to illustrate recommendations and assist clients with understanding how to accomplish their landscape goals.

“Native Plants,

Cultivars, and

Sustainability:

Selecting the

Genes that

Fit Your

Design” will

be presented by

Benjamin Hoover,

associate profes-

sor of sustainable

nursery production, Cal Poly (San Luis



Ron McCabe



Ryan Watkins



Benjamin Hoover

Obispo) from 8:30–9:30 a.m. Thursday, August 21. In this session, Hoover will talk about cultivars and plant species. The conversation involves genetic outliers and mutations, grafted plants, plant adaptations to stresses, and how they might affect landscape performance.

In “Can Technology and Automation Help Ease Labor

Concerns?,”

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Thursday,

August 21,

Connie

Lindsay, sales

and marketing

manager for

GK Machine Inc.,

will explore how advancements in technology and automation can address labor challenges in agriculture. This session will highlight cutting-edge solutions that are transforming the industry.

“Best Management Practices for

Effective Applications in

Nurseries,” from

11 a.m.–noon

Thursday,

August 21,

will be present-

ed in Spanish

and translated

into English.

Carlos E. Bográn,

Ph.D., director of

technical services

at **Bioworks Inc.**, will cover key applica-

tion concepts that are critical for effective

pesticide applications focusing on insecti-

cides, miticides and fungicides.

“Getting the Most from Your

Beneficials:

Handling,

Quality

Assessment

and

Application”

is presented

by Suzanne

Wainwright-

Evans of Buglady

Consulting from



Connie Lindsay



Carlos E. Bográn



Suzanne
Wainwright-Evans

8:30–10:30 a.m. Thursday, August 21 and will be translated into Spanish. Although the cost of beneficial insects, predatory mites, and nematodes has decreased over the decades, purchasing them remains an investment. Growers need to ensure these biological controls arrive alive and ready to perform. In this session, Suzanne will cover best practices for receiving beneficial shipments and how to store them if necessary.

“The 5-Star Customer Experience:

Winning the Hearts of the Next

Generation” is 8:30–9:30 a.m. Friday,

August 22. Jeff O’Brien and Jon Morrison,

co-founders of Brands in Blooms, will

discuss how delivering a 5-star customer

experience begins with cultivating a 5-star

employee experience. The session will

provide the ultimate playbook to captivate

Millennials and Gen Z, turning visitors

into loyal, lifelong gardeners. Discover the

power of storytelling to simplify your mes-

sage, overcome barriers like limited time,

space, and knowledge, and deeply connect

with customers. Participants will gain

practical strategies for fostering a culture

of excellence through effective training,

leadership, and team engagement.

“AI for the Green Industry” is

9:45–10:45 a.m. Friday, August 22. Ashley

Wright, co-founder & CEO of **Plantista**,

will teach

attendees how

to overcome

labor short-

tages, grow

revenue, and

optimize

inventory by

leveraging AI.

She will cover

tactical tools

and insights — relevant to all green indus-

try owners and operators. ☺



Ashley Wright

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

Taming *Buddleja*

Working with the ODA, nurseries develop sterile varieties to satisfy demand from gardeners for the popular pollinator plant

BY EMILY HOARD

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja*) is in high demand and popular with gardeners because it's easy to grow and it's a magnet for hummingbirds and butterflies, said Josh Zielinski, manager and co-owner at **Alpha Nursery** (Salem, Oregon).

"Buddleja is kind of like a summer blooming lilac," Zielinski said.

"It smells like honey on a warm summer day," said Ryan Contreras, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Horticulture at Oregon State University. He said Buddleja doesn't require much irrigation and the flowers last a long time.

"I had one flowering with snow on it this past year," Contreras said.

Before David West became the assistant manager at **Krueger's Nursery and Tree Farm** in Cornelius, he worked for 30 years as a landscaper.

"In the beginning stages, we planted a lot of Buddleja and found it would self seed rapidly and spread all over the place," West said of the landscaping industry at the start of his career. "Left unchecked it would become invasive."

Soon, *Buddleja davidii* spread out of cultivation.

"The species produces many thousands of seeds per plant and spreads around, especially in riparian areas," Contreras said. >>

Bloomin' Easy® Buddleja Birthday Cake™ (*Buddleja* 'PODARASNGA 3-3' PPAF, CPBRAJ) PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE YOUNGPLANTS





Clockwise from bottom left: Proven Winners® Buddleja 'Miss Molly' (*Buddleja* × 'Miss Molly' PP23425, CP4446), Proven Winners® Buddleja Lo & Behold® 'Pink Micro Chip' (*Buddleja* × 'Pink Micro Chip' PP26547, CP5621), Bloomin' Easy® Buddleja Birthday Cake™ (*Buddleja* 'PODARASNGA 3-3' PPAF, CPBRAJ) PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY AND VAN BELLE YOUNGPLANTS

Invasive declaration

That invasive tendency led the Oregon Department of Agriculture to declare *Buddleja davidii* to be a B listed Noxious Weed in 2004, with an updated declaration in 2016.

Zielinski said it was challenging when it was determined to be invasive.

"It's not the only one but it was a popular garden center plant so that one stung a bit more than other ones," Zielinski said.

Response

Plant breeders, branding companies, and nurseries responded by developing sterile varieties. Some do and some do not produce seeds, Contreras said. "Some produce very few seeds, but the seeds may be viable."

The ODA sought input from various entities and scientific advisors, including Contreras.

Contreras said he noted some improvements to the guidelines for testing of different cultivars and offered advice to the ODA.

"Cultivars that we know exhibit

low fertility tend to be complex hybrids of multiple species," Contreras said, but not all hybrids are seedless. Since then, Contreras' lab has switched gears to focus on breeding sterile varieties.

Valerie Sikkema, who manages government compliance at **Van Belle Youngplants** in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, said the nursery has been growing *Buddleja* for many years. When she started in 2006, Van Belle only grew the old invasive varieties, but the nursery has slowly changed over to seedless or interspecific varieties.

"We still grow some that are potentially invasive, but they are shipped to states and provinces where they are less hardy and much less likely to be an invasive species," Sikkema said. "Any new *Buddleja* that we would add to our Bloomin' Easy line will be interspecific hybrids."

Sikkema said plant breeders develop non-invasive cultivars of aggressive genera like *Buddleja* by producing triploids or interspecific crosses.

Kevin Bailey, manager of the



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Taming *Buddleja*

Nursery & Christmas Tree Programs at the Oregon Department of Agriculture, works with out-of-state vendors to control the shipment and importation of non-approved *Buddleja* into Oregon.

“If we receive notice that a shipment has been sent, the nursery inspectors will contact the receiver and issue a rejection for the shipment,” Bailey said. “In the office, we will contact the vendor to make them aware of the quarantine against the non-approved varieties and highlighting the approved or sterile varieties.”

Troy Abercrombie is the program manager for Noxious Weed Control and Native Plant Conservation at Oregon Department of Agriculture’s Plant Protection and Conservation Program. He enforces quarantine of invasive *Buddleja* and helps educate the public about it.

Abercrombie said sterile varieties of a species like *Buddleja* that don’t also repro-

Continued on Page 21



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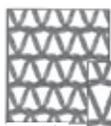
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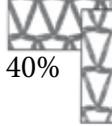
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Previous page and this page: Bloomin' Easy® Buddleja Blueberry Pie™ (Buddleja 'PODARASNGA 9-15' PPAF, CPBRAf)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VAN BELLE YOUNGPLANTS

duce vegetatively would greatly reduce the risk of invasion and displacement of native species.

Approving cultivars

ODA's Nursery Program also facilitates a *Buddleja* committee of industry and academic partners. The committee members work together to come up with the best ways to determine a cultivar's sterility and to make changes to the current list of 14 approved cultivars.

Bailey said the program doesn't advocate during these meetings but provides an opportunity for the industry to work with researchers to refine and define what qualifies as a sterile *Buddleja*. With this information, they can approach the Oregon State Weed Board with proposed additions and subtractions to the approved cultivar list.

Bailey said he is not aware of any truly seedless cultivars of *Buddleja*. ➤

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Taming *Buddleja*

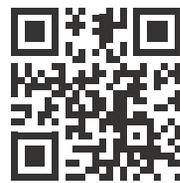


Proven Winners® Lo & Behold® 'Blue Chip Jr.' (*Buddleja* 'Blue Chip Jr.' PP26581, CP5620) PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

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“While the administrative rule indicates the approval of seedless cultivars, it is the 2% sterility that is the threshold,” Bailey said. “It is important to keep in mind that the ‘seedless’ cultivars do produce seed and even at 2% sterility, they can produce a significant number of viable seeds.”

He added there are hybrid varieties being produced that are not regulated and are actually quite fertile.

Bailey said researchers continue to develop sterile cultivars with the sterility rate of 2% or less.

Importance

West said it’s important to offer sterile varieties because there’s such a high demand for the long-lasting, impressive showstopper blooms that *Buddleja* produces.

“But because it blooms so well, it also produces seeds so well and people don’t want to give up the huge blooms of purples and pinks in their landscape creation. And the things you want to attract to the garden really love this bush,” West said. “The right thing to do is try and use varieties that will not be invasive.”

Sikkema said although *Buddleja* is non-native, it is still a beautiful plant in

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Proven Winners® Buddleja 'Miss Ruby' (*Buddleja* × 'Miss Ruby' PP19950, CP3603) PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

the landscape and can provide joy for homeowners with their beautiful flowers and lovely scents. As the name Butterfly Bush suggests, they also are able to provide food and habitat for pollinators, including bees and butterflies.

"Many of the sterile cultivars are great pollinator attractions and they're really easy to produce quickly, so growers like to grow them and they're really popular among gardeners," Contreras said.

Popular varieties

Now there's a smaller selection that nurseries are available to offer and they are more expensive than other options.

"That's kind of counter to what it used to be for *Buddleja*," Zielinski said. "It used to be a more affordable colorful item than a special patented selection that someone has to pay more for."

"We dabbled with a few varieties early on and we found them to be lackluster," Zielinski said. "The foliage wasn't good and the overwintering wasn't great. For some of them, the flowers weren't exciting or just blah."

However, Zielinski found the Proven Winners® series to be much better. These include *Buddleja* 'Miss Violet,'

Buddleja 'Miss Ruby' and *Buddleja* 'Miss Molly'. "They grow well and overwinter better than a lot of other varieties," Zielinski said.

Van Belle also grows those same three Proven Winners varieties. In addition, they sell two Bloomin' Easy varieties that are interspecific hybrids so they are not regulated and are allowed. These are *Buddleja* Blueberry Pie™ (*Buddleja* 'PODARASNGA 9-15' PPAF, CPBRAJ) and *Buddleja* Birthday Cake™ (*Buddleja* 'PODARASNGA 3-3' PPAF, CPBRAJ).

Krueger's also grows and sells 'Miss Molly', which is known to be low and compact, and is growing a Proven Winners dwarf variety called Lo & Behold® 'Blue Chip Jr.' (*Buddleja* 'Blue Chip Jr.' PP26581, CP5620).

Contreras said Lo & Behold® 'Pink Micro Chip' (*Buddleja* 'Pink Micro Chip') is also popular.

Future considerations

West said Krueger's Tree Farm is still considering sterile *Buddleja* varieties to be in the trial stage to see how they perform long term.

"We're seeing what customers say about how they behave and what they >>



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Taming *Buddleja*



Proven Winners® Buddleja 'Miss Violet' (*Buddleja* × 'Miss Violet' PP28448, CP5950) PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

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do,” West said. “It depends on the variety, but for us at Krueger’s we’re still experimenting with what we have.”

West said the *Buddleja* needs to grow for a few more years to make sure it doesn’t eventually revert back to becoming fertile. So far, the customers have said ‘Miss Molly’ has worked well.

Zielinski said he’d be interested in having a dialogue about the possibility to grow fertile varieties to export before blooming to retailers in places where they aren’t declared invasive. He wants to be able to grow Proven Winners’ Pugster® Blue Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja* ‘SMNBDBT’ PP 28794, CP6486) because his customers continually ask for it, but he’s not able to carry it.

“I’m grateful that we have the ability to grow something at all,” Zielinski said. “I don’t know what it would do for my bottom line if we didn’t.” ☺

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 Hoard123@Gmail.com.



The power of branding

Building a solid reputation pays big dividends for nurseries who do it right

Little Prince of Oregon and its logo are one of the strongest brands in the industry. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

BY JON BELL

The way Mark Leichty tells it, there's a little bit of lore behind the naming of the **Little Prince of Oregon Nursery** in Aurora, where he serves as director of operations.

As a child growing up, nursery cofounder Keith "Ketch" de Kanter would listen as his parents read him the well-known novella, "The Little Prince." Eventually, de Kanter's parents began calling him the Little Prince of Oregon. Years later, in 1997, when de Kanter started up the Aurora nursery, he pulled the name back out.

To accompany the name, de Kanter had a friend draw a logo, which turned out to be a frog wearing a golden crown.

Almost 30 years later, Little Prince of Oregon and its logo are emblems of one of the strongest brands in the industry.

"I think we have one of the most recognizable brands in all of horticulture," Leichty said. "Today in garden centers,

that logo is on the top of every single tag on our plants, it's embossed in our pots. It's become a symbol of great plants, and people look for it. I think in retrospect, that logo and name have been one of the great parts of our success."

A good logo and name can go far in helping a nursery carve out a name for itself. But there's more to a solid brand than that. Some of it can be tangible, like one-of-a-kind plants developed by a nursery itself or specialty soil mixes that a certain nursery comes to be known for. Other pieces are less concrete — think a years-long reputation for trust and good service, an unspoken commitment to customer success or an image that evokes craftsmanship and care developed over years of practice (and maybe boosted by the right marketing and social media).

There's no textbook recipe for what makes a strong brand. But nurseries who've nailed it will tell you it's a key part

of their success.

"Through effort, goodwill and a good image, the work you've done to cultivate a positive image eventually pays off," said Chuck Pavlich, director of new product development for the Canby, Oregon-based **Terra Nova® Nurseries, Inc.**, "and sometimes when you need it the most."

Building on history

Like Little Prince of Oregon, **Monrovia Nursery** has a telltale symbol of its brand, but it's not necessarily its logo. Instead, it's a distinctive green pot that's become synonymous with Monrovia over at least the past three decades.

"We went to that pot in the '90s, and ever since then there's been a strong affiliation of the pot as our brand," said Katie Tamony, chief marketing officer for Monrovia, which has the largest of its four nurseries in Dayton, Oregon.

Of course, there's much more to »



Bailey Nurseries, Inc. launched its first consumer brand, a hydrangea lineup called Endless Summer®, 20 years ago. PHOTO COURTESY OF BAILEY NURSERIES

the Monrovia brand that a plastic pot. For starters, the nursery has a long history. Founded in California in 1926, Monrovia has had nearly 100 years to develop its brand. Tamony said Monrovia has been committed to the idea of craftsmanship from its early days, a key component that runs through the nursery still. Part of that image comes from Monrovia's long-standing commitment to and investment in advancing plant science.

"We believe there is a science and art to growing plants, and we invest a lot of time and resources into how we grow plants," she said. "Monrovia has been known for decades for the research we started doing in the '40s and '50s about what plants need to grow in pots out in the field."

That research led directly to another ingredient in Monrovia's brand — custom soil mixes.

"That is something that we are known for as well," Tamony said.

The science and soil elements together

have helped Monrovia grow robust, healthy plants for long enough that people have come to associate the name with plants that are going to flourish.

"For people who garden a lot, they know when they see that green pot, they know that's a plant that's going to work out," Tamony said. "They know they're going to get consistent shape and form, which is part of our brand as well, that premium look and feel. Our brand is very elevated and elegant."

Longevity has also been a big part of the success of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas**, which was founded in Woodburn, Oregon in 1968. Though it's not a consumer-facing company, the nursery nevertheless has built a brand that revolves around high-quality plants and bringing value to its wholesale customers.

"What we've really focused on over the life of the company has been growing good-quality products and being able to provide them to our customers consistently,

year over year," said Kyle Fessler, co-owner and production manager at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas. "If you got it last year, you can expect the same this year."

Building trusted relationships has also been important to the Woodburn brand, according to Noah Fessler, who's in sales at the nursery. Customer service makes a big impression, and doing the right thing has helped the nursery earn many long-time and repeat customers, he said.

"If there ever is an issue, we make our best effort to satisfy the customer so we can all move forward into the future."

Reputation for innovation

Terra Nova has built its brand in large part around tissue culture propagation. When the nursery started more than 30 years ago, Pavlich said tissue culture propagation wasn't new, but tissue culture of new plants hadn't been widely encountered. Over time, Terra Nova made big gains in that field and became known for



Over the years, Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas has built a brand that revolves around high-quality plants and bringing value to its wholesale customers, says Kyle Fessler, co-owner and production manager.

introducing new varieties of *Heuchera* and selections of plants like *Coleus*, *Tiarella*, *Nepeta* and *Leucantherum*. It didn't happen overnight though.

"At that time [the early '90s], it was still traditional propagation methods, and the build-up for product introduction took years," Pavlich said.

The nursery hasn't invested in pricey marketing campaigns or advertising to spread its brand. Instead, Pavlich said Terra Nova has made a name for itself by sticking to innovative, thoughtful breeding that's unique in the market.

"The popularity of Terra Nova plants around the world is humbling," he said.

Offshoot brands

Another way some nurseries have solidified their brands is by launching their own unique plants, which often are brands of their own that are unaffiliated, at least >>



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A brand above

on the surface level, with the nursery itself.

One of the leaders in the industry to do this is **Bailey Nurseries, Inc.** (St. Paul, Minnesota), which launched its first consumer brand, a hydrangea lineup called Endless Summer®, 20 years ago last year. Today, according to Bailey, Endless Summer is the best-selling brand of re-blooming hydrangeas in the world. Bailey operates three farms in Oregon: Dayton, Sauvie Island and Yamhill.

“I think it really paved the way for not only Bailey, but other brands, to see what could be done with well-marketed programs,” said Alec Charais, chief marketing and product development officer for Bailey.

The innovation-focused nursery, which has a breeding facility in Georgia to develop new plants, has since launched other successful consumer brands like First Editions® and Easy Elegance®. Charais said there is much thoughtfulness and strategy that goes into Bailey’s brands.

“Great brands have to be an innovative concept and be something that provides intrinsic value to the marketplace,” he said. “We are very strict about the criteria of what we are going to select for any of our brands. It has to be a top-performing plant, and there has to be some clear reason why it exists, like it has fantastic garden performance or production performance, heat tolerance or cold tolerance or disease resistance.”

While brands like First Editions and Endless Summer may not have a visible connection to Bailey, at least to consumers, the link is clear to the nursery’s wholesale customers, which in turn strengthens the overall Bailey brand.

“We don’t market Bailey directly in the consumer messaging,” Charais said, “but Bailey and our brands are definitely known in the supply chain.”

Little Prince of Oregon’s brand has been strengthened by its own plant brands as well, each one demarcated with a unique and color-coded tag that draws customers in. Their succulents go by the name Water Misers®, for example, while rare and unusual perennials are called Fit for a King®. The giveaway that they are from Little Prince of Oregon? The



Through effort, goodwill and a good image, the work you’ve done to cultivate a positive image eventually pays off, says Chuck Pavlich, director of new product development for Terra Nova® Nurseries, Inc. PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRA NOVA

crowned, green frog on every tag.

“Our product mix is very carefully thought out,” Leichty said. “We do things that make people stop and look at us.”

Committed to the core

The thing about having a strong, well-respected brand is that it takes diligence and consistency and work to protect it. Making wild moves as a

company can ding a brand big-time — anyone remember New Coke? — but there’s also risk in stagnating.

“The best way to move forward and



“The best way to move forward and stay fresh is to evolve.”

— **Katie Tamony**
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

stay fresh is to evolve,” Tamony said. “You don’t need to be disruptive, but you want to keep moving and not be stale or irrelevant.”

It can be a tricky walk, and there will be missteps along the way.

At Little Prince of Oregon, for example, Leichty said the nursery shifted from its wholesale-only approach before COVID and dabbled with selling directly to consumers for about five years. The move initially helped increase brand visibility, but it also proved to be expensive and made it hard to manage inventory between online customers and garden center customers.

In the end, Little Prince shuttered the consumer sales and recommitted to its core business.

“We realized this is not who Little Prince is,” Leichty said. “We are a wholesale supplier of high-quality plants with a highly recognizable brand. That has to be our undeniable focus.” ☺

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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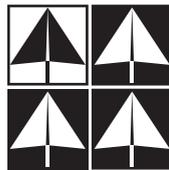
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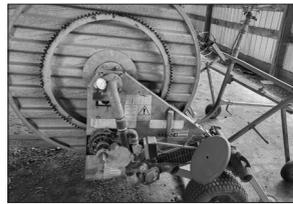


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Tackling liverwort

Researchers evaluate two natural alternatives to fighting this pesky greenhouse invader

Fig. 1 Magnified view of liverwort (*Marchantia polymorpha*) showing its distinctive reproductive structures. The small, palm tree-like stalks are gametophores, which produce spores that enable the weed to spread rapidly in moist greenhouse environments. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO

BY LLOYD NACKLEY, RYAN HILL AND MARCELO MORETTI

Weed management in greenhouse propagation is more than a cosmetic concern.

Weeds, especially liverwort (*Marchantia polymorpha*), compete with crops for light and nutrients, harbor pests and diseases, and complicate irrigation and fertilization. Yet few herbicides are labeled for greenhouse use, and labor-intensive hand weeding strains budgets.

As a result, growers are increasingly interested in natural alternatives — but how well do they really work?

A recent greenhouse study from

Oregon evaluated two such options: mustard seed meal (MSM), a byproduct of mustard oil production with natural herbicidal properties, and two types of natural mulch: hazelnut shells and a biodegradable paper-based liquid mulch. The goal? To identify weed control strategies that are both effective and safe for young ornamentals during propagation.

Why liverwort is so hard to manage

Liverwort is a persistent and increasingly common greenhouse invader. Unlike most vascular weeds, liverwort spreads through spores and vegetative fragments (gemmae), thrives in high humidity and low light, and quickly colonizes moist

container surfaces.

Its low, dense mats block irrigation and outcompete seedlings. Worse, liverwort tolerates many conventional weed control measures, making it particularly troublesome during propagation and liner production.

Liverwort infestations can be especially severe in greenhouses using overhead irrigation and organic-based substrates — exactly the conditions common in nursery production. This makes it an ideal target for sustainable control strategies like mulching and bioherbicides.

Experimental approach

To mimic commercial propagation >>



Fig. 2 Completely randomized design with replicated mulch treatments distributed across the irrigation bench. Tender boxwood cuttings had just been transplanted, leaving exposed substrate vulnerable to liverwort. All pots were equally inoculated with liverwort spores using a blended slurry. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

conditions, researchers conducted a series of greenhouse trials using containerized boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) and gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*) seedlings. All plants were grown in a standard soil-less mix of bark, peat, and perlite, and were irrigated with overhead spray nozzles on a high-frequency schedule to maintain surface moisture and promote liverwort colonization.

Each experiment used a randomized complete block design with multiple replicates per treatment. Treatments included:

- MSM alone at five rates (ranging from 125 to 1,600 g/m²),
- Hazelnut shell mulch (HM) alone,
- Liquid mulch (LM) alone,
- Combinations of MSM with

either HM or LM.

MSM was applied by broadcasting dry powder evenly across the container surface using calibrated measuring spoons. Hazelnut shells were applied to a 1.25 cm depth and lightly pressed into place. Liquid mulch was diluted at a 2:1 ratio with water and poured evenly using graduated cylinders.

To simulate natural infestation, actively growing liverwort flats were placed between treatment containers and rotated weekly to ensure even spore distribution. Crop response, weed coverage, and liverwort development were monitored over 90 days. Standard slow-release fertilizer (16-16-16) was incorporated at transplanting to reflect typical greenhouse fertility practices.

Hazelnut mulch shows strong, consistent results

Hazelnut shell mulch significantly reduced liverwort and broadleaf weed emergence in every trial. In some cases, liverwort coverage was reduced by more than 80%. This mulch appeared to physically block spore germination and reduce light at the surface, both of which suppress liverwort establishment.

Importantly, hazelnut mulch caused no adverse effects on either crop species. Its coarse texture also supported good airflow and did not hold excessive moisture, a critical factor in greenhouse conditions.

Given its efficacy, low cost, and availability in Oregon, hazelnut shell mulch appears to be one of the most practical natural weed control tools for greenhouse growers.

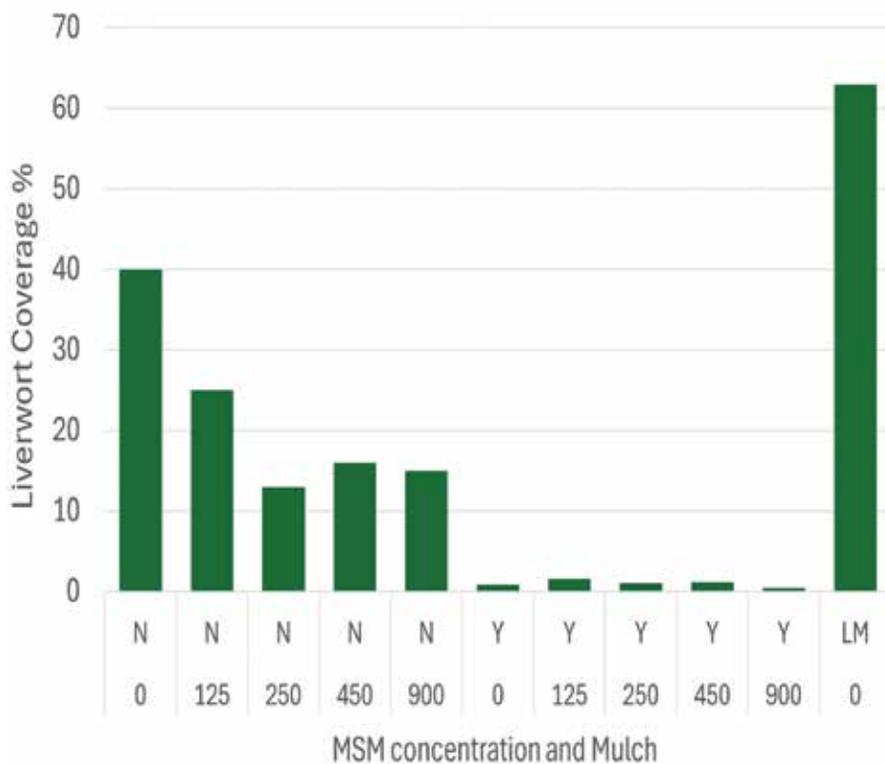


Figure 3. Percent coverage of liverwort in response to mustard seed meal (MSM) application rates (0–900 g/m²) under three mulch treatments: no hazelnut shells (N), with hazelnut shells (Y), and with liquid mulch (LM). While increasing MSM rates reduced liverwort coverage in the absence of hazelnut shells, the presence of hazelnut shells alone provided the most effective suppression across all MSM concentrations. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

MSM suppresses weeds — but can injure crops

MSM alone reduced weed and liverwort coverage significantly — often by 50–90% — but the results came with caveats. Boxwood seedlings were highly sensitive to MSM, even at moderate application rates. At the highest rates (1,600 g/m²), MSM caused complete crop death. Interestingly, even lower MSM rates (250–500 g/m²) often suppressed weeds without improving plant growth. This suggests that the phytotoxic effects of MSM may outweigh its minor fertilizing benefits, especially for young or shallow-rooted crops.

These results align with prior field research showing MSM can release bioactive compounds — notably isothiocyanates — when exposed to moisture. In wet greenhouse environments, this release may be both rapid and intense, increasing the

risk of crop injury.

Liquid mulch adds complexity

The biodegradable liquid mulch had mixed results. On its own, LM sometimes reduced liverwort growth, but it also appeared to trap moisture at the surface — occasionally enhancing weed growth under certain conditions.

When LM was combined with MSM, weed suppression improved — but so did phytotoxicity. The thick mulch layer may have trapped MSM’s breakdown products, extending the exposure time for sensitive roots. In several cases, combining LM and MSM increased plant injury beyond what was seen with MSM alone.

This interaction highlights the importance of understanding how mulches modify the behavior of bioherbicides — and how substrate moisture can shift a treatment from helpful to harmful.

Why control liverwort early?

Liverwort may look harmless, but its impacts are far from superficial.

- **Once established**, liverwort mats create a water-impermeable layer that disrupts irrigation and fertilization.
- **It spreads easily** through greenhouses via tools, containers, and hands — and its rapid growth can smother young seedlings.
- **Controlling liverwort early**, especially during propagation, helps prevent longer-term losses and labor costs down the line.

Practical recommendations

So what do these findings mean for growers looking to implement natural weed control in greenhouses?

Hazelnut shell mulch is a good bet: It consistently reduced liverwort and weed growth and posed no risk to young plants. It’s a simple, regionally available material that could reduce reliance on hand weeding during propagation.

Use MSM cautiously: While it can suppress weeds, MSM has a narrow margin of safety in greenhouses. Rates above 125 g/m² can cause injury, especially in sensitive crops like boxwood. It should be trialed in small batches before full-scale use.

Be careful combining MSM with liquid mulch: The LM and MSM combo may improve weed control — but it also increases the risk of crop injury due to prolonged exposure to active compounds. This combination is not recommended without crop-specific testing.

Moisture matters: High surface moisture levels (common with overhead irrigation) appear to increase the breakdown of MSM into its bioactive form. Adjusting irrigation practices, or switching to sub-irrigation, may make MSM use safer.

Final thoughts

Natural weed control strategies like MSM and organic mulch have exciting ➤

Growing Knowledge

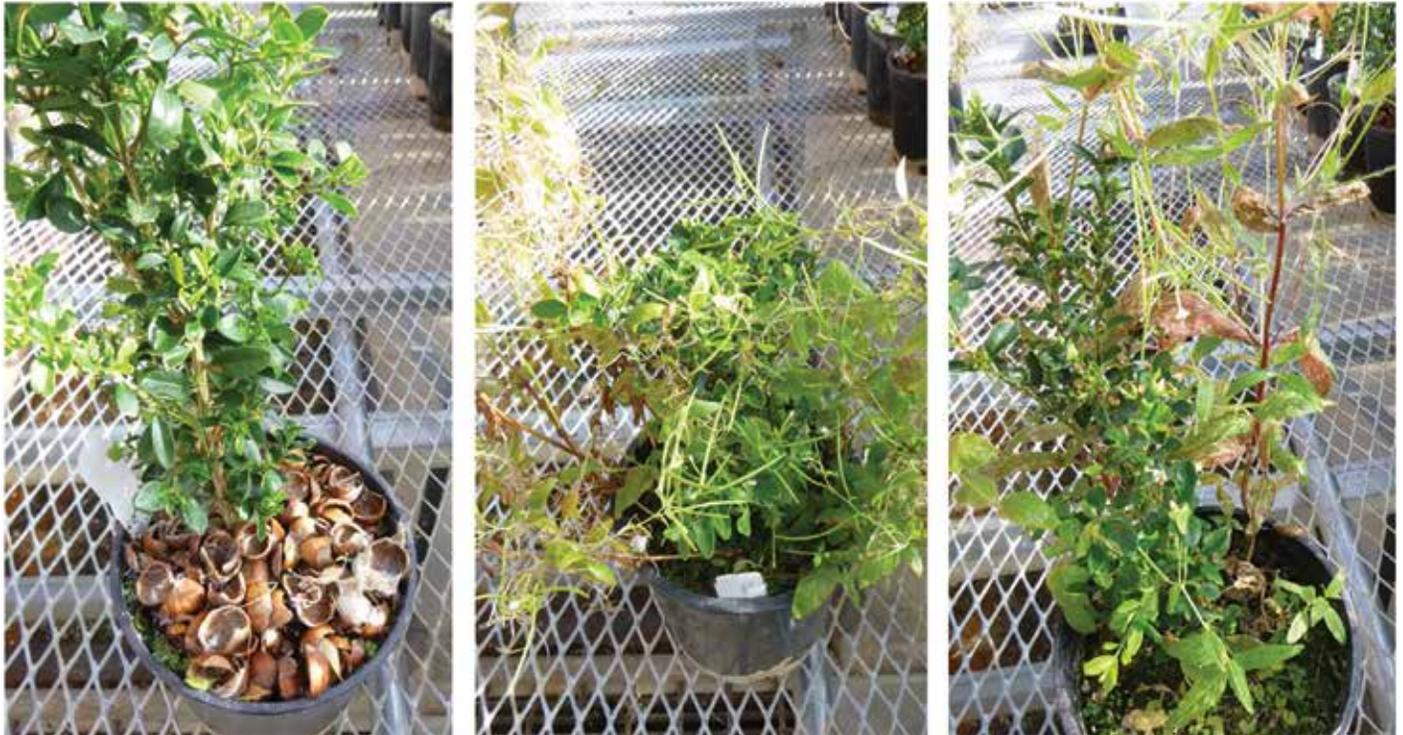


Fig. 4 Three-panel comparison of willowherb (*Epilobium* spp.) growth in treated pots. Left: hazelnut shell mulch combined with mustard seed meal (MSM) effectively suppressed seedling emergence. Center: liquid paper mulch provided moderate control. Right: untreated control pot showing dense willowherb growth. The MSM and hazelnut shell combination delivered the most consistent suppression. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



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potential, especially in propagation systems where synthetic herbicide options are limited. However, their effectiveness and safety depend on careful integration with existing practices.

Hazelnut mulch, in particular, stands out as a low-risk, high-reward option for liverwort control in greenhouse containers. MSM, on the other hand, requires much more nuance — and may be better suited to field or outdoor nursery applications where moisture can be more easily managed. While previous reports have shown promising weed suppression from liquid mulch in outdoor container yards, our greenhouse trials did not replicate those results — suggesting that liquid mulch performance may vary depending on environmental conditions. ☺

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Resources

For more detail please see the free, downloadable full research featured in the Journal of Environmental Horticulture. *Journal of Environmental Horticulture* (2025) 43 (1): 41–48, go to TinyURL.com/MSMRsearch.

This study marks one of the first to evaluate these materials under true greenhouse conditions with high liverwort pressure. Future work will focus on refining application rates, exploring additional mulch materials, and testing across a wider range of crops.

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We need to fight for our brand



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It seems like every year, there are challenges that provoke a survival instinct or define how our industry is seen.

We are finding that the family farm is under assault. It is not just shifting political winds, but a systemic disconnection from agriculture as a society.

I did not grow up on a farm. Rather, I was a city boy from Eugene, Oregon where forestry was king. Growing up in a middle-class household, I was shaped by the university a scant 10 minutes away from my neighborhood, but I grew up recognizing brands. Nike was becoming a force, large timber companies like Pope and Talbot as well as Gonyea Timber were giants.

But as we found with the timber industry, dominance and brands can be eroded over time. I am here to challenge our industry to take back our brand. Ag is in trouble.

A brand built over decades

There is a lot to be proud of in our industry. We are the top sector in agriculture, and that did not happen overnight. We've earned a reputation as elite, quality growers of green goods — a collection of families who are good neighbors and good people.

In terms of politics, we have cultivated a reputation for consensus and political moderation, while always keeping our industry vibrant and strong. I have been at OAN for almost 20 years now. I can attest that our strong brand as growers reaches from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and so does our influence on the political front. Generations of growers have brought us to this point through hard work and sweat.

A strong brand signals professionalism, quality, and reliability. In industries such as ours, **trust is everything**. Many see us as a leading voice in the market and the political arena. I wish that were enough, but I must admit it is not.

Our brand is under assault

Home-grown denigration of our

own Farwest Show is eroding our brand. Being your executive director, I ask for and receive a lot of feedback from the membership. Our trade show is one of the most mentioned topics.

First of all, it is a great trade show. It is the biggest in the West, and it is green. That befits the fertile Willamette Valley and the close concentration of the best quality plant material in the country grown by the best nursery innovators.

Is Farwest what it was during our epic growth as an industry over two decades following the 1980s? No. But neither is the industry, nor the market.

Eras have a way of defining any industry. Ours is a mature industry. We are a national brand, not just a growing region riding a show that everyone was traveling to see in person. Despite the mounting pressure of labor shortages and regulation, we grow more material than we have in our history. Our brand remains excellent — come to the Farwest Show on August 20–22 and see it for yourself.

If anything can serve as exhibit A on how the agricultural and nursery brands are under assault, the recently concluded Oregon State Legislative Assembly would be it. Over the past year, common-sense agricultural overtime reform legislation has been pulled at the behest of the unions. If that wasn't enough, the unions this session attempted to create an Agricultural Workforce Standards Board in Oregon law — a first move toward de facto unionization of all farmworkers statewide.

Meanwhile, the environmental community has attempted to pass onerous regulations that would place irreparable harm on the industry's ability to transfer water on the property. This is happening due to the slow erosion of respect toward the agricultural community.

The Legislature likes the idea of “family farms,” but too many members choose policies that would harm, not help, our Oregon growers. In an era of brazen political theater, the narrative by farmworker advocates has become appall-

ing. They refer to “modern slave owners” and tell abstract horror stories of worker abuse as if they were fact. It's now commonplace to stain reputations of farm operations at our state capitol, and too many elected officials remain silent.

Agriculture wants to work across political divides and solve problems. Our association has taken that approach over the past two decades. When we disagree, it's with respect. At the end of the day, we are able to work amicably, create good policy and not simply tear things down.

But our brand is working against us, and I have been struggling to understand why, until a recent nursery tour.

One of our past presidents told me the reason is that ag is not a big player in the state anymore is its economic decline relative to tech. Timber is but a fraction of its former self due to environmental regulations. Even ag's top sector, nurseries, with \$1.3 billion in sales, is a mere fraction of the tech industry. The other factor is that the unions will outspend agriculture 50-to-1 in election cycles. This creates a chasm that we cannot resolve. Money does talk.

A brand revitalized

We must recommit ourselves to being the standard bearer on pest-free plant material, fighting complacency in the public arena, and telling our story in a way that resonates with a new generation of decision-makers, influencers in the media, and within the marketplace. Our best chapter is yet to be written. As your executive director, you have my full measure of effort to make the Oregon nursery industry the best it possibly can be. ©

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