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From left: Rivaldo Dias, Benjamin Mendoza, Patrick Newton, Ben Verhoeven and Felipe Martinez.

PHOTO BY PASCUAL PEREZ

Many thanks

Thank you, reader, for coming along with me to visit so many nurseries and meet so many wonderful folks over the past 12 months.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) presidency is a privilege that lasts for one year. As I step down, I am grateful to all the people I have met. It's been a true joy to make new friends from different parts of the state, from both sides of the political aisle, all improving their workplaces in different ways and growing such an astounding variety of plants.

One of those friends is Patrick Newton, your next OAN president, whose farm I have come to visit today. It's a bright morning as I park in the shade at **Powell's Nursery** in Gaston, Oregon. I walk through the handsome new shipping warehouse and break area to the office, where Patrick is working on ironing out some logistics.

Patrick is one of the nicest folks in the nursery industry and that's saying a lot. I compliment his new warehouse, and he tells me it's more than just a warehouse. It started as a way to give his crew a nicer place to take breaks. It's now expanded to include the office, propagation, potting and of course an expansive break room that doubles as a wedding and quinceañera hall for employees, all under one roof. Quite a space!

Patrick tells me that prior to building it everything, "was spread out and necessitated

traveling through the mud. Now I'm closer to the action. It's a good working environment."

For Patrick, "It's all about relationships: from vendor, to coworker, to customer. I don't want to be the boss, I'd rather be a coworker." You can sense this in the jovial attitudes of the crew he introduces me to.

Patrick's warmth extends to his customers as well. He has the unique opportunity to be on his customers' farms weekly, collecting scion wood. This frequent interaction gives him insights into their needs and helps build lasting connections. "The relationships in this association, in this industry, are what keeps me going," Patrick tells me.

As I bring my visit with Patrick and my presidency at the OAN to a close, I know we are in good hands. I'm grateful to all the folks that I have met over the past year. I'm thankful to all of you who opened your doors and shared with me the improvements you have made.

Our team at **Peoria Gardens** thrived in my absence. I could fill countless *Digger* volumes with their improvements. I am indebted to my wife Kathryn and our kids Thea, John and Sam for giving me the time to travel and visit nurseries. Lastly, I am proud to have been your president this past year, and to continue to be a part of an industry that is open, friendly, and working together to grow plants for healthier cities, communities and homes.

Many thanks. ©