

Digger

NOVEMBER 2025

Transportation outlook **2026**

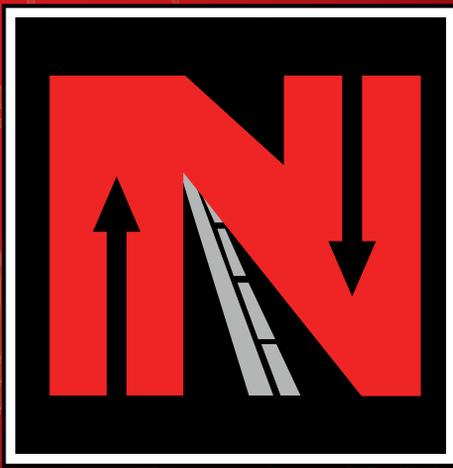
- Preparing for an uncertain road ahead
- Planning for smoother deliveries



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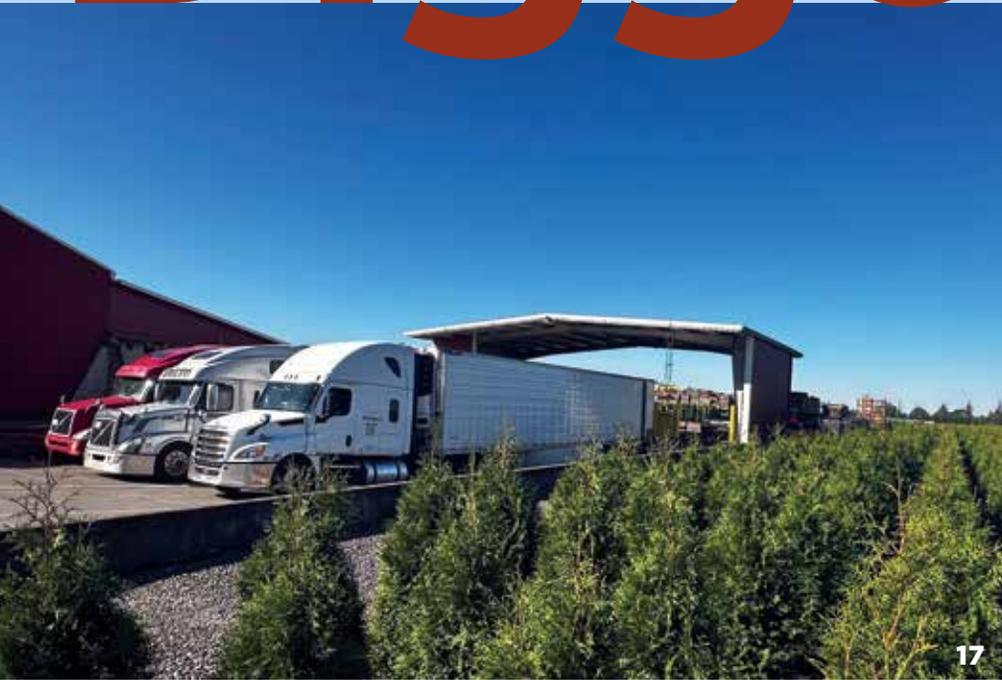
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Transportation outlook 2026

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On the cover: Trucks line the dock at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas waiting to be loaded. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

On this page: Left: Availability of trucks has kept prices low but there may be trouble on the horizon. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL Right: Patrick Peterson serves on the OAN Board of Directors. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL



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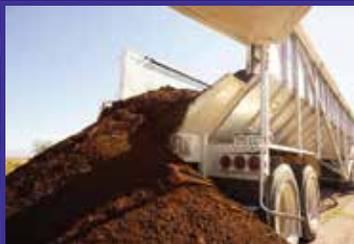
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A non-traditional path to the nursery business

My name is Patrick Newton, and my path into agriculture was anything but traditional.

I did not grow up in a farming family. My father, Mike, worked as a fleet and lease manager, while my mother, JoEllen, created and sold handmade jewelry. Alongside my two brothers, I learned the value of hard work and personal responsibility through their example.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled in community college while trying to determine the right direction for my future. During that time, I explored a variety of jobs — working in restaurants, spending time at an HVAC company, and even selling cars, among other roles. While each of these experiences taught me valuable lessons, none felt like the right long-term fit.

That changed when I began working for a landscape company. It was there that I discovered how much I enjoyed being outdoors, working with my hands, and seeing the tangible results of a day's effort.

For the first time, work felt intuitive and rewarding. That realization set me on a path toward horticulture and, ultimately, a fulfilling career in the nursery industry.

In 2001, I joined **Powell's Nursery**, a wholesale operation specializing in grafted woody ornamentals for ball-and-burlap and container growers. Although I had no prior experience in the field, I embraced the challenge. Grafting demands patience, precision, and attention to detail—qualities I quickly came to value. More importantly, I found great satisfaction in knowing the plants we cultivated would one day enhance landscapes across the country.

Over the years, Powell's Nursery became more than just a job. I immersed myself in all aspects of the operation — from the grafting bench and potting shed to learning the business and management side. It became a place of growth not only for the plants we produce, but also for me personally and professionally.

In 2017, after many years of dedication, I was given the opportunity to



Patrick Newton

purchase Powell's Nursery. While it was a significant decision, it felt like the natural next step. Today, I am proud to own and lead the company.

I didn't inherit a family business, nor did I follow a straight path into agriculture. My journey included trial and error, exploration, and persistence. That nontraditional path has given me a deeper appreciation for the work I now do and the industry I am proud to be part of. Building something lasting, contributing to Oregon's nursery community, and leading a team with a shared commitment to excellence has been both fulfilling and inspiring.

In 2010, I became more involved in the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN), attending chapter meetings and holiday events to connect with fellow growers. Around 2012, I joined the Farwest Show Committee and have proudly served on it ever since, including four years as committee chair. In 2021, I was honored to join the OAN Executive Committee, and today, I serve as your OAN President.

As president, I look forward to touring member nurseries alongside our executive director, Jeff Stone, to better understand your challenges and priorities. I am committed to enhancing transparency within the organization and taking a thoughtful look at the future of the Farwest Show. I'm excited to serve you and our industry in the year ahead. ☺



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 11-13

CORE PESTICIDE TRAINING

Need more CORE pesticide credits to renew your license before the end of the year? Oregonians for Food and Shelter is hosting classes during the Willamette Valley Ag Expo Tuesday–Thursday, November 11–13, at the Linn County Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road E., Albany, Oregon. These classes are designed to provide essential education and certification for pesticide application, ensuring best practices and safety in agricultural operations. Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your knowledge, ensure compliance, and promote safe and effective pesticide use. Courses are complimentary with paid expo admission. Expo admission is \$5 at the door, and parking is free.

NOVEMBER 13-14

2025 GREEN INDUSTRY SHOW & CONFERENCE

The 2025 Green Industry Show & Conference is set to take place November 13–14, at Westerner Park in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. This year's theme, Ready.Set.Grow, encapsulates the spirit of innovation and growth within the landscape industry. Attracting over 1,200 visitors and featuring more than 100 exhibitors from various sectors of the landscape industry, this event is a must-attend for industry professionals looking to expand their network. Oregon Association of Nurseries members receive complimentary registration to the show. Members should use discount code OANVIP at checkout. For more information and to register, go to GreenIndustryShow.com.

DECEMBER 2

OAN OPEN HOUSE

Save the date and join the Oregon Association of Nurseries for an open house December 2 from 3–5 p.m., hosted by Bauman's Farm & Garden, 12989 Howell Prairie Road N.E. in Gervais, Oregon. Learn more about OAN's programs, do some networking and meet new members. More details to come.

DECEMBER 5

NEXGEN HOLIDAY PARTY

Save the date and don't miss NexGen's Third Annual Holiday Party on Friday, December 5 from 6–9 p.m. at KG Farms Inc., 18995 Arbor Grove Road N.E., Woodburn, Oregon. More details will be forthcoming.

DECEMBER 8-11

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

The Irrigation Show brings the brightest minds and the latest innovations in irrigation to one place. As an attendee, you will be making an investment in your business and your career while spending an exciting, jam-packed week



PHOTO BY TAMMI MILD

NOVEMBER 8

NEXGEN POINSETTIA TOUR

Don't miss out on an amazing opportunity to tour the poinsettia production at the NexGen event at Smith Gardens, 23200 Hubbard Cutoff Road N.E. in Aurora, from 10 a.m.–1 p.m. Saturday, November 8. RSVP now at TinyURL.com/NexGenPoinsettia.

with your peers. The show this year is being held in vibrant New Orleans, Louisiana. For details or to register go to Irrigation.org/2025Show.

DECEMBER 9-11

OREGON FARM BUREAU ANNUAL CONVENTION

Connect with fellow farmers, attend workshops, develop your advocacy skills and learn from industry professionals at the Oregon Farm Bureau's Annual Convention December 9–11 at the Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 N.E. Airport Way, Portland, Oregon. Get an update on the latest issues in Oregon agriculture and hear insights from American Farm Bureau and OFB staff. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to OregonFB.org/Events.

DECEMBER 12

FARWEST SHOW CALL FOR SPEAKERS

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is seeking speaker proposals for the 2026 Farwest Show, August 26–28 2026 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon. Topics may include horticulture and plants; pesticide application; integrated pest management; wholesale grower-focused information; marketing, merchandising, retail and business tactics; consumer trends; landscape design and architecture; and mechanization, technology and innovation, as well as other topics. For information,

requirements and to submit a proposal, go to FarwestShow.com/Speaker_Signup/. All proposals must be submitted by December 12, 2025. A committee will review the proposed presenters and topics and make selections based on timeliness, ingenuity and industry relevance. New for 2026 will be the Farwest Automation Summit, a forward-looking initiative focused on how automation is transforming the nursery and greenhouse industry. Some of the possible topic categories could include innovation and emerging technologies; the role of artificial intelligence (AI); tariffs and their impact on automation costs; what's on the horizon for automation in horticulture; labor savings and workforce solutions; and industry needs for 2026 and beyond.

JANUARY 7-9

MID-ANTLANTIC NURSERY TRADE SHOW

Registration for the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) is officially open. The show, taking place January 7–9 at the Baltimore Convention Center, is widely regarded as the first big show of the year, and as such is a very well-attended event. Last year alone it drew more than 11,000 attendees and 900 exhibitors. Register for the early bird discount (\$20 per person) now through December 5. From December 6 onward, registration will go up to \$30. For more information and to register, go to MANTS.com. ©



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.

Feared summer labor shortages fail to materialize

News stories earlier this summer reported widespread concern that farm crops could rot in the fields due to on-farm activity by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). There was concern that even the threat of enforcement could frighten and drive away workers.

However, crops were by and large harvested like in a normal year. Labor shortages and crop losses did not materialize. The reason is that ICE focused its enforcement elsewhere, according to a report by *The American Prospect*, a liberal-leaning policy journal.

“Farmer organizations, from the American Farm Bureau Federation representing large growers, to the National Farmers Union representing family farmers, and the United Farm Workers union, went into high gear,” the journal reported. “They pressured both the White House and their elected representatives to get ICE to stay away from the harvest. It largely worked.”

Enforcement activities were redirected to cities and factory towns instead of farms and meatpacking plants, the article stated.

“With my visits to nurseries this summer, the question of labor availability has come up,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “While there is significant concern, our growers simply have not seen a shortage of labor this year. My sense is that California and Washington going down to 40 hours a week has forced a lot of workers seeking those hours to come to Oregon. That will drastically change in 2027 when we’re down at 40, and we’ll find ourselves right back with a workforce shortage.”



A new tree-planting initiative, announced by Portland Parks & Recreation’s Urban Forestry division, aims to plant a total of at least 15,000 trees over the next three years. PHOTO BY RG

PORTLAND ROLLS OUT \$100 MILLION TREE EXPANSION

A major expansion of Portland’s citywide tree planting and tree care efforts includes a relaunched partnership with Friends of Trees, *The Oregonian* newspaper (Portland, Oregon) reported.

The initiative, announced by Portland Parks & Recreation’s Urban Forestry division, aims to plant a total of at least 15,000 trees over the next three years, more than doubling Portland’s annual plantings, which currently stand at about 3,500 per year. Over 6,700 trees are planned for planting this coming season. The plan calls for the city to pay for planting 660,000 trees over the next 40 years, particularly on the far east side of Portland where lower income and many people of color live.

It’s not specified where the trees will come from, but, of course, a rich supply and abundant variety of quality street trees are available from Oregon growers.

The effort will be funded via \$40 million from the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund, the climate justice fund seeded by a 1% tax on large retailers in the city.

To expand its tree planting, Urban

Forestry will partner with 12 contractors and 13 community-based organizations, including Friends of Trees, the venerable Portland-based nonprofit that for more than a decade had brought together hundreds of volunteers to plant roughly 40,000 street and yard trees all over Portland.

OREGON LOSES ‘JAPANESE BEETLE FREE’ REGULATORY STATUS

The Oregon Department of Agriculture “can no longer certify Oregon as a Japanese beetle-free area,” the agency stated in an Oct. 2 letter to State Sen. Lew Frederick (D-District 22). The reason is that ODA is winding down its Japanese beetle eradication program, due to a lack of funding from the state.

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek failed to include the \$2 million program in her budget, and an attempt to fund the program separately through the Legislature, either via standalone bill or “Christmas tree” style package, also failed. Sen. Frederick was the chief sponsor of the standalone bill.

“As a direct result, the California Department of Food and Agriculture issued >>

Northwest News

a notice revoking the state's pest-free status, and imposing new restrictions on our state's nursery and agricultural products," ODA's letter stated. "This action demonstrates the tangible economic impact resulting from a lapse in program funding."

The letter went on to state that it's not as simple as restarting the program. A comprehensive strategic assessment is required. "[ODA] is prepared to develop a new comprehensive analysis for a future control program should the need arise," the letter concluded.

"We warned legislators and the governor this could happen," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. "This lapse in funding is frustrating because we have been so close to eradication of this pest. The loss of funding was a senseless policy choice we can't ignore. This lapse by the governor will have serious economic consequences for the industry. However, shipping pest free material remains an essential priority for our growers."

REGISTER FOR OAN WINTER TRUCKS TO TRADE SHOWS

Registration is now open for the Oregon Association of Nurseries Winter Trucks to Trade Shows program, which allows members to ship booth material — conveniently and economically — to several key green industry trade shows.

- **MANTS**, Baltimore, Maryland, January 7–9, 2026, \$595/pallet (reservation deadline December 5, 2025).
- **Utah Green**, Sandy, Utah, January 5–7, 2026, \$395/pallet (13 pallets needed by December 5, 2025).
- **Idaho Horticulture Expo**, Boise, Idaho, January 21–23, 2026, \$290/pallet (13 pallets needed by December 19, 2025).
- **ProGreen Expo**, Denver, Colorado, February 3–5, 2026, \$480/pallet (13 pallets needed by January 2, 2026).

Space on each truck will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. To reserve space, the OAN needs full payment for each pallet. Pallet pricing does not include drayage or material handling fees. These fees are determined and billed



The Oregon Department of Agriculture is winding down its Japanese beetle eradication program due to a lack of funding from the state. PHOTO COURTESY OF WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

directly by the show management and/or show decorator.

Questions? Contact Jamie Moore at JMoore@OAN.org, 503-582-2010.

Reserve your space now at OAN.org/T2TS.

2026 INSECTICIDE, MITICIDE & FUNGICIDE GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE

Ball Publishing has released its 2026 Insecticide, Miticide & Fungicide Guide and it's now available to download. The staff at *GrowerTalks* magazine updates the guide each year and if there has been any change to formulation, recommendations and labeling, they compile this information for the guide.

The guide is organized into an easily understandable and searchable form, with quick guides and tables where necessary. Scattered among the guides and tables are stories and case studies with a fun and informative feel.

Go to TinyURL.com/BallGuideEnglish to download the English version, and TinyURL.com/BallGuideSpanish to download the Spanish version.

WESTERN COVER CROPS COUNCIL LAUNCHES SPECIES SELECTOR TOOL

The Western Cover Crops Council has launched the Cover Crops Species Selector Tool. "This tool has taken many years to develop, and we are very excited to help get the word out to producers,"

said Lisa Kilders with the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District. "Finally they have included multi-year cover crops (perennial crops) in the tool, so there are recommendations that apply to nursery production. The tool also keys into the location and uses soil types and goals to produce a recommendation."

Users can enter their field locations and select up to three cover cropping goals. The tool recommends a ranked list of cover crops based on goals, climate, and soil type. The Species Selector also provides extensive information about individual cover crop species such as growth habits, agronomic considerations, and more.

For more information or to use the tool go to TinyURL.com/CoverCropTool.

TEXAS ENACTS QUARANTINE AGAINST INVASIVE TWO-SPOTTED COTTON LEAFHOPPER

Texas Department of Agriculture has enacted an emergency quarantine to stop the spread of the two-spotted cotton leafhopper, which has spread across much of the southeastern United States, according to *Quality Assurance* magazine. The pest was first detected last month in hibiscus plants shipped into the state from Costa Farms Nursery and its subsidiaries in Florida. The quarantine applies to shipments from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee, where the pest has been detected.

Texas grows 40 percent of the cotton grown in the U.S. and is a backbone of the state's economy, making the pest a major

economic threat.

Measures include:

- Destruction of infected plants.
- Rejection of shipments without any phytosanitary documents.
- Quarantine and additional monitoring at border stations and expansion of inspections within the state.
- Seizure of vehicles transporting regulated products into the state.

Announcements

DAVID SOBEL JOINS THE OAN AS TRADE SHOW MANAGER

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is pleased to welcome David Sobel as its new trade show manager, effective October 8.

In this role, Sobel will be responsible for developing and producing the highly anticipated Farwest Show.

“David brings extensive experience in business development, sales, marketing, and event management, which will be instrumental in elevating the Farwest Show to new heights,” said Executive Director Jeff Stone.

With over 25 years of experience owning a landscape business in Salem and 13 years running an event production company, Sobel is well-equipped to lead this initiative. He is also passionate about philanthropy, serving as the fundraising events manager for Cultivate Initiatives, a nonprofit aimed at empowering marginalized individuals and communities through various services.



David Sobel

In addition to his professional pursuits, Sobel has a love for music; he has performed as a DJ and is currently part of an acoustic duo that plays at local wineries and venues.

Originally from California, Sobel has called Oregon home for more than 50 years and currently resides in northeast Portland, close to the Oregon Convention Center.

“I’m thrilled to be here,” Sobel said. “Joining a nonprofit whose mission I genuinely believe in is incredibly rewarding. The opportunity to merge my passion for horticulture with my event production experience is fantastic!”

He added, “I look forward to continuing the rich legacy of the Farwest Show while exploring new innovations that will add value to our interconnected industries, particularly in automation and technology. My goal is to make Farwest a one-stop shop for retailers and to create the most exciting and innovative show yet!”

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FALL CREEK FARM & NURSERY NAMES NEW CEO

Mark de Beer, Ph.D., has been named CEO of **Fall Creek Farm & Nursery Inc.**, a leading global blueberry genetics and nursery company announced. His appointment was effective October 13.



Mark de Beer

De Beer brings two decades of leadership experience in animal nutrition and genetics to Fall Creek.

Most recently, he served as president of Aviagen North America, a global leader in poultry genetics, with earlier leadership roles at Elanco Animal Health and

DSM Nutritional Products. Originally from South Africa, de Beer earned bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science from the University of Stellenbosch, and a Ph.D. in poultry science from the University of Arkansas.

NUTRIEN APPOINTS NEW SENIOR MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Connor Hamburg has been promoted to senior manager of government and industry affairs at **Nutrien**, according to Agri-Pulse, an agricultural news website. He has been



Connor Hamburg

with the company for four years, recently in a manager role. Previously, Hamburg worked for the Renewable Fuels Association and National Corn Growers Association.

PROVEN WINNERS BECOMES SINGLE UNIFIED COMPANY

Historically operating as two distinct businesses that control and operate the Proven Winners brand in North America, Pleasant View Gardens (Loudon, New Hampshire) and Four Star Greenhouse (Carlton, Michigan) announced that they have decided to join forces and form one company, Proven Winners, under one ownership structure in a partnership transaction with Staple Street Capital, a private equity firm.

By combining forces, Proven Winners will be able to deliver greater simplicity, scale, and service for growers, retailers,

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and consumers, the company said in a statement. Pooling resources enables the development of additional national programs, enhanced ordering and distribution tools, and stronger marketing to drive consumer demand. A key focus of the new organization will be expanding the brand's reach into underserved markets, making it easier for gardeners everywhere to access its products.

Day-to-day operations and customer relationships will remain unchanged in the near term. The company's brand license partners — including Nordic Nurseries, Ed Sobkowich Greenhouses, Spring Meadow Nursery (Proven Winners® ColorChoice® Shrubs), Walters Gardens (Proven Winners® Perennials), Classic Caladiums (Proven Winners® Heart to Heart® Caladiums), The Plant Company (leafjoy® Houseplants), and Garden State Bulb — will continue their successful collaborations, supported by an even stronger Proven Winners marketing engine.

GOWAN ACQUIRES CERADIS AG INPUTS COMPANY

Gowan Co. of Yuma, Arizona, has acquired the Netherlands-based agri-tech firm Ceradis in a strategic push to expand its innovation pipeline and expand global reach, the company said in a press release..

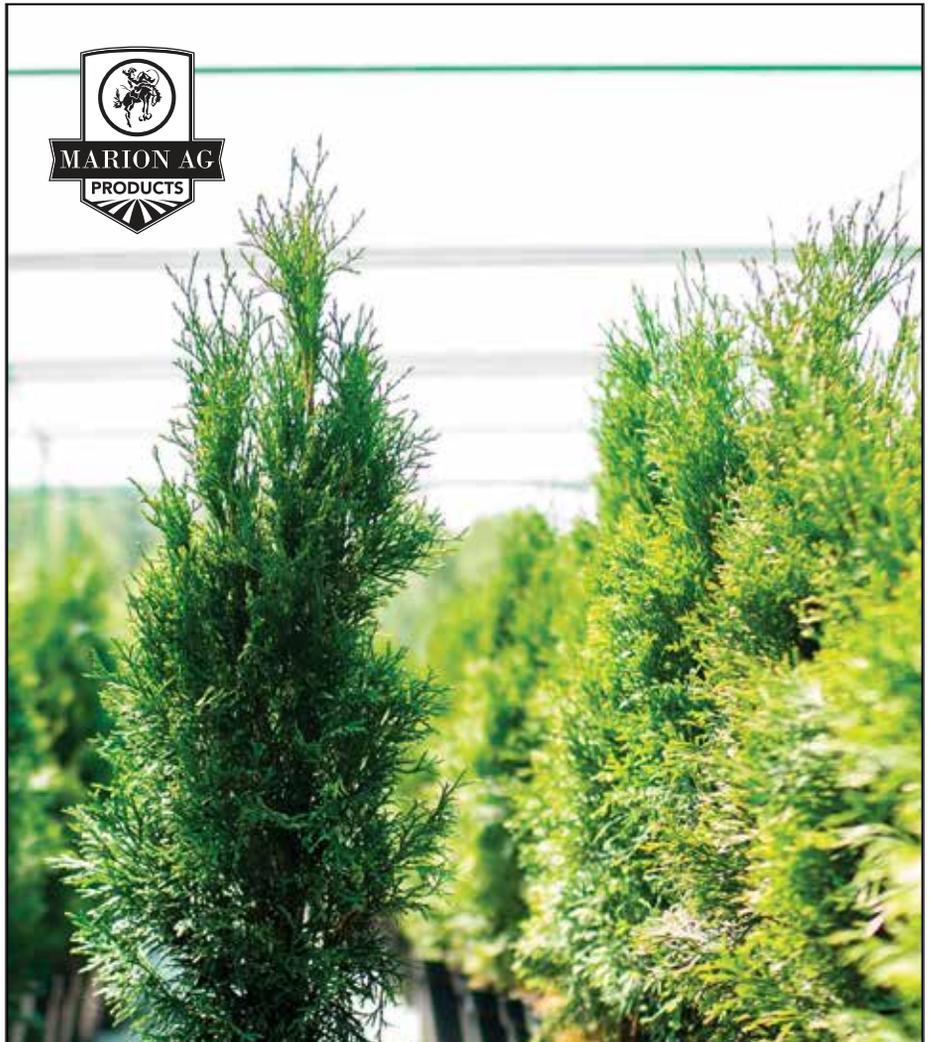
Ceradis specializes in crop protection compounds and biocontrol solutions.

Gowan said the deal strengthens Gowan's global presence in Europe and the Americas, expands the portfolio of research, development and innovative formulations, and reinforces the commitment to growers by providing greater technical support and tailored solutions.

MONROVIA ANNOUNCES 2025 HOLIDAY PROGRAM

Monrovia's 2025 holiday program includes two seasonal wraps that ensure plants are dressed in their holiday best, providing grab-and-go gift options that also add festive flair to garden center shelves.

New this year is a red and green tartan plaid for conifers and evergreens. >>



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Monrovia's classic holiday berry wrap is returning for flowering plants and other giftable favorites.

Garden center customers choose the plants, which are then shipped ready-wrapped for display. Holiday wraps, along with seasonal tags, are complimentary and are available for #1, #2 and #5 sizes. In addition, special pricing is now available on dwarf Alberta spruce.

GREENHOUSE MAGAZINE RELEASES NEW PERENNIAL VARIETIES GUIDE

Each year, plant brands and breeding companies collectively introduce hundreds of new varieties to the market, the result of work from countless horticulture experts trialing and perfecting genetics to make them successful for growers, retailers and consumers. For the past eight years, the team at Greenhouse Management has presented these companies' most exciting new introductions in the New Perennial Varieties guide, a preview of the latest plants coming to the market.

Download the guide at TinyURL.com/PerennialsGuide.



HIP LABELS RELEASES NEW BIODEGRADABLE PLANT TAG

HIP Labels has released a truly biodegradable plant tag that biodegrades in soil. The tag biodegrades more than 90% after 90 days. BioTAG™ works for all applications of hang and stake tags, the company said in an announcement.

The tags are made with a bioplastic that degrades in water and soil. Soil temperature, moisture and microbial activity drive the disintegration rate of the bioplastic. For more information, go to HipLables.com/Bio-Tag. ©

MEET THE LEADER

The voices of Oregon's nursery industry



PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND?

I grew up my early years in Texas, where I played outdoors every day I could. I flipped over every rock in our yard and developed an interest in insects at an early age.

My family moved a couple of times, and I learned quickly how to make friends at new schools. I never let go of my outdoors interest and was lucky to live in Southern California, then Central Florida, where I could continue to spend time outside with sports or friends.

My first job punching a time clock was at a garden center in Ohio. It was the perfect environment for a kid that couldn't sit still and was willing to help any customer that had their hands full. I then worked summers in high school for Kern Nursery, planting bare root shade trees, and operating any piece of farm equipment I was allowed to. There was no task I wouldn't do, but I asked a lot of questions to learn the reasons why we did those tasks.

When asked by the guidance counselor at school what I wanted to study in college, I went straight for the horticulture program at the local land grant university. It was at the Ohio State University that I met my life partner Hillary in an entomology class. We were both majoring in horticulture, and I switched my minor from Spanish to entomology after realizing the increasing impact of pests in our industry.

Propagating woody plant material became a passion and I knew it could >>

Patrick Peterson

**Nursery and greenhouse
crop consultant**

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be a career. **John Holmlund Nursery** had just built a state-of-the-art greenhouse and was the perfect place for me to start my Oregon career. We built a robust propagation department, and I quickly involved myself in any pest control seminar or plant propagation group.

Through the International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS), I networked with fellow growers from almost every single operation in the area. IPPS introduced me to all of my next career opportunities. I worked at John Holmlund Nursery for five years, then moved over to the High Forest Farm at **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.** for two years.

My first technical sales role as a pest control advisor was at **Marion Ag Services Inc.**, where I worked for 12 years. I then moved to a chemical manufacturer's area representative role for Bayer, working five years as they re-entered the ornamental market, covering 16 states. I had always wanted to work some in the golf market in addition to the ornamental market, so I moved over to the other German chemical company, **BASF**, for a role that covered more products but fewer states.

I worked for BASF until a major family event caused me to consider traveling less, and I now work just in Oregon and Washington for the **Simplot Turf and Horticulture** division based out of Hubbard as a nursery and greenhouse crop consultant.

WHAT'S YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE?

Treat all people with respect and fairness, regardless of what their job role is. Some of my favorite customers look a little rough around the edges and are perfectly content working in the field to get the job done as equals to anyone on their staff.

WHAT'S A GOAL YET TO BE ACHIEVED?

Visit all of the National Parks in the U.S. There is so much beauty in the natural history and geology of the United States. I have explored some amazingly remote parts in 33 of the 50 states.

WHAT'S WAS YOUR BEST BUSINESS DECISION?

Setting roots in Oregon to both live and work. The Willamette Valley is an extremely rich agricultural production area, with dream soils, clean water access, and an ideal climate. This area attracts all types of people, and my business has been building relationships with the growers that choose to produce horticultural crops here.

WHAT WAS YOUR HARDEST BUSINESS DECISION?

Leaving the stable and supportive work environment of nursery production to pursue a role as a crop consultant. I had very little knowledge of what was expected of me until I learned how many growers appreciate solid horticultural advice and fair access to the tools needed to achieve success.

WHAT WAS YOUR GREATEST MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

Working in the nursery industry of New Zealand when fresh out of college. In my 30s, I traveled to the North Island, inspired by the invitation of fellow IPPS members and consulting horticulturalist couple, Donald and Hilary McHort. I saw an environment that could have taught me a lot as a young propagator and now know that the experience with their plant palette and production practices are valuable knowledge when consulting in the Pacific Northwest.

WHO WAS YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT MENTOR?

For nursery production, Mike Reihis showed me how a smart and fair production manager should set goals for employees. For consulting, George Bear showed me the power of sharing with customers how products work, allowing them to make an informed purchase. Amongst peers, Chris Ames showed me how to represent the best virtues of a true Oregon nursery professional. In business, John Hockett showed me what building a business from the ground up looks like.

WHAT'S YOUR BEST BUSINESS ADVICE?

In every job role, be engaged in the process and stay informed of what defines success.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE NURSERY INDUSTRY?

I like the people, so many amazing diverse people, but I love the plants. I love the humanitarian aspect of horticulture, knowing that plants we cultivate will outlive us and help create critical green infrastructure for both current and future generations.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE?

What is your greatest challenge? Spreading myself thin. There are a lot of great nursery people that I want to work with but only so many hours in the day.

WHAT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES FACING THE INDUSTRY TODAY?

The rising costs of producing ornamental plants coupled with the decrease in available skilled labor. The introduction of new exotic pests, often accidentally spread by the uninformed public.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

I get up every morning seeking to learn something new that day. If I can help anyone make an informed decision, then that day is a good day.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

In the work environment, a grower once asked me to help with their fertilizer program. After a full review of their practices from irrigation through to pest control, we came up with a moderate overhaul of their production program. That next growing season was one of their best, full of healthy plants and less stress from chasing problems. On a personal level, I have inspired my niece to pursue a similar career working in the green industry. ☺



An uncertain road

When it comes to freight rates, the future is always in motion

Trucks wait their turn to be loaded at a loading dock at Bizon Nursery in Hubbard, Oregon. Shipping prices have come down from their COVID-era highs. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL

BY JON BELL

There was a time, about five years ago — back in the heyday of COVID — when nursery stock was flying off the benches as fast as could be. Growers were shipping plants across the country however they could: trucks, rail, refers, you name it.

Rail transportation, despite some of its flaws in terms of delays and long shipping times, was flourishing simply because plants needed to be moved. A new crop of drivers looking to tap into the rush pulled up and cashed in.

“It was absolutely crazy,” said Erica Hill, director of intermodal services at Independent Dispatch, a Portland, Oregon-based freight forwarding company. “Everybody was using any kind of intermodal box they could get their hands on.”

With every boom, however, comes a bust. The super strong nursery craze persisted for a couple years while COVID worked its way through the country, but it eventually leveled off. Sales tapered; so did demand for shipping, until trends dropped back to pre-COVID-boom-time.

“If we ever get the COVID numbers again, it’ll be a miracle,” said Willy Wachtveitl, a freight broker with **Integrity Logistics** in Wilsonville, Oregon.

These days, shipping has definitely mellowed out for the nursery industry. There have been a few lows and a few highs over the past year, but nothing too dramatic — and that appears to be how the road ahead will unfold as well.

Cheap and plenty

Though the COVID boom has retreated, there are still some lingering impacts that can be felt today. For starters, trucks are cheap for shipping.

“A truck is \$3,000, \$4,000 or even \$5,000 cheaper right now than it was in the peak of COVID,” Wachtveitl said.

Hill said she has seen that firsthand impacts of that on intermodal transport.

“Intermodal has been struggling to compete against trucks because they are so cheap right now,” she said. “Really for the last two years for intermodal rail service, there’s been a deficit of shipments just because trucks are so cheap. It’s been

a bummer for us.”

Part of that has to do with supply and demand. During COVID, lots of new drivers entered the pool. A lot of them are still in it, even though demand for shipping has dropped off.

“The pandemic brought a large influx of new motor carrier authorities,” said Charlie Hall, Ph.D. and Ellison Chair in International Floriculture at Texas A&M University. “Even after a prolonged shake-out, the active carrier base remains larger than in early 2020, which has kept capacity relatively loose.”

While that’s not ideal for shippers, it works well for nurseries who’ve got goods to move because shipping rates are low — well below 2021–22 peaks, according to Hall.

Slower sales

Although nursery sales have trimmed down since the pandemic, they remain fairly steady. Hall reported in his “State of the Industry” update at Cultivate’25 that top-line sales so far in 2025 were up compared to 2024 for nearly 80% of growers. The vast majority are also seeing higher >>

An uncertain road

sales numbers than they did in 2019 — pre-COVID — but only about half have had an increase in the number of units sold; the other half have seen a decrease.

Dale Parra, a freight broker with **Truck Transportation Services** in Wilsonville, has noticed that this year.

“We are seeing smaller orders from the vendors,” he said. “I think people are playing it conservative. They’re worried about the economy and don’t want to over-buy. It was a bad spring in the north-east and Midwest too. There was lots of rain, and I think that had an impact.”

Indeed, the larger economic picture has also been impacting sales and shipping.

“I think the constant chaos makes people a little more cautious,” Parra said.

Policy changes at the federal level have created a lot of uncertainty, particularly when it comes to costs, labor and other factors. And, of course, the tariffs »



Antonio Moreno loads a pallet of trees into an awaiting truck at Bizon Nursery. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL



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still have everyone on edge. “Tariff headlines in 2025 have injected noise into shipper behavior, which can whipsaw capacity and rates short-term,” Hall said. “Tariffs can also lift landed costs on imported inputs.”

Good to go

As the fall shipping season approached, Parra said he expected a slight jump in rates, but nothing dramatic. Trucks will likely continue to be available and less expensive than rail, at least for the time being. Hill said she understands why many who ship go the truck route — it’s usually much faster than rail and, for now anyways, the cost difference between trucks and rail is negligible.

“A lot of times it’s just not worth it or there’s not a big enough savings for customers to switch to rail,” she said.

However, if fuel prices continue to rise, intermodal freight becomes more attractive >>

Intermodal shipping has been struggling to compete with low trucking prices. PHOTO BY IAN DEWAR PHOTOGRAPHY

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An uncertain road



Trucks wait their turn to be loaded at Bizon Nursery. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

because trains use less fuel than trucks. Hill also said that railroads seem to have improved in terms of avoiding delays and running consistently, which might have turned off some customers during the pandemic.

“The good news is the railroads are all running well and service is back to normal,” she said, “but there’s just not as much moving these days.”

In addition, she said some railroads and container services that once may have shied away from nursery stock because it was perceived as messy or dirty freight have changed their tune and are more willing to ship it now.

As for the busy spring 2026 shipping season, Parra said he’s optimistic that it will be a good one.

“We’ll just see how the orders play out, but it should be good,” he said.

Drastic movements by the Trump administration could cause some market turmoil and impact shipping lanes, so it’s hard to predict how even the next few months will pan out. But there’s one way nurseries can help make things easier for themselves — planning ahead.

“The most important thing on all of it is, the more advance notice to ship it, the better the rate will end up being,” Wachtveitl said.

Even a week or two of notice is helpful, he added.

“Two weeks out to get an appointment to even send a truck in makes a big difference,” Wachtveitl said. “It makes it easier for the nurseries. It makes it easier for the truck. It makes it makes it easier on everyone. And the easier I can make it, the better off I like it.” ☺

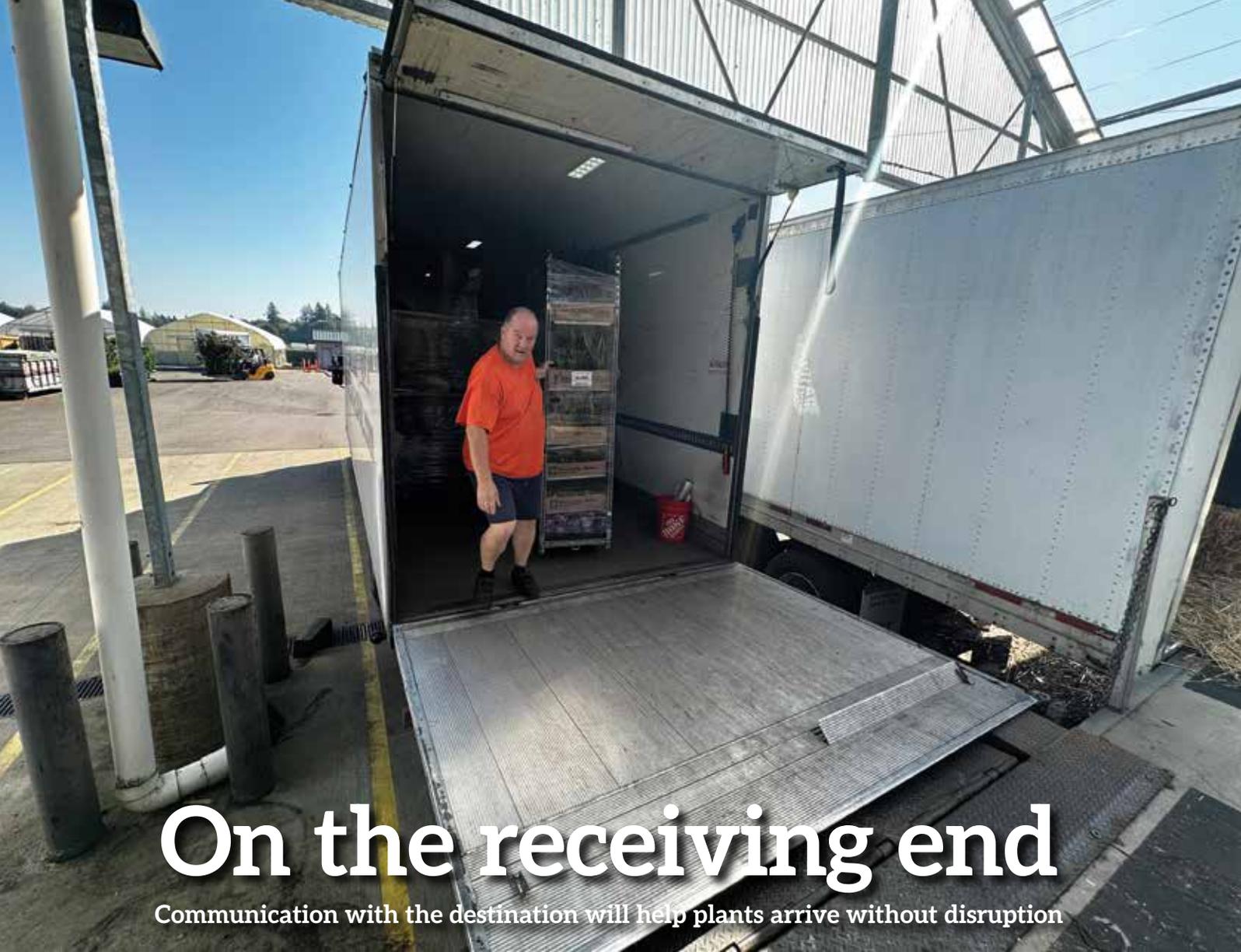
Jon Bell is an Oregon freelance journalist who writes about everything from Mt. Hood and craft beer to real estate and the great outdoors. His website is JBellInk.com.

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On the receiving end

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Carl Michael with Mainland Floral unloads his truck at Al's Garden & Home in Sherwood, Oregon. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL

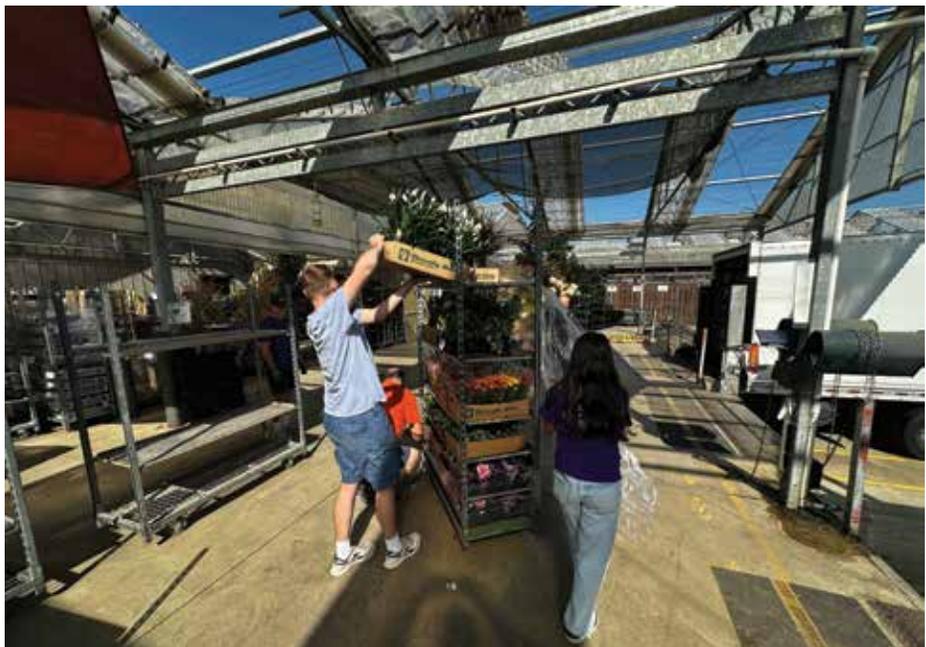
BY MITCH LIES

Keeping to schedules is a key element to meeting customer needs in the complex world of nursery shipping. And often the receivers, the independent garden centers, wholesale nurseries, landscapers and others, play a critical function in keeping schedules on track.

Joel Mandel, West Coast operations manager for **Northland Express Transport** in Portland, Oregon, said one of his first steps after getting an order is always to call the receiver.

“We will call right away once we have an order in hand to verify a couple of things with the receivers,” he said. “We’re asking to confirm their address, what their receiving hours are and if there are any special directions into their facilities.”

“We are also checking to see if the driver is going to be unloading at a dock or just a parking lot,” Mandel said. >>



Counter clockwise from left: Carl Michael, Ben Kaufman and Stephanie Avila unload plants from a delivery rack at the loading dock at Al's Garden & Home in Sherwood. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL

On the receiving end



Kendall Swaneveld unloads plants from a delivery truck using a forklift at Al's Garden & Home in Sherwood. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

“And if it is a parking lot, do they have equipment such as a forklift or a pallet jack ready to go. And we are coordinating the delivery time to give them an idea of when to expect the driver, and also to know the optimal hours for them to accept a delivery. If it's an independent garden center, for example, you don't want to interfere with their busy times, especially if it's just a parking lot that they (offload in).”

Matt Frederick, logistics coordinator with **K&M Distribution** in Rogue River, Oregon, said in cases where a delivery is scheduled early in the morning, he'll ask if the receiving location is near a truck stop where a driver can spend the night.

And he will check if any logistics have changed since the last time he talked to the receiver: Some receivers start working earlier in the day in the heat of summer, for example, and quit earlier in the day. That's the kind of information that can keep trucks on schedule.

John Miller, freight broker for **Rosewoods Transportation** out of Washougal, Washington, said that he will ask receivers if there are any unusual circumstances a driver should be aware of, such as road closures due to construction or other information that can help a driver get in and out of a facility quickly.

Often, Miller said, an experienced driver who has delivered to the same site

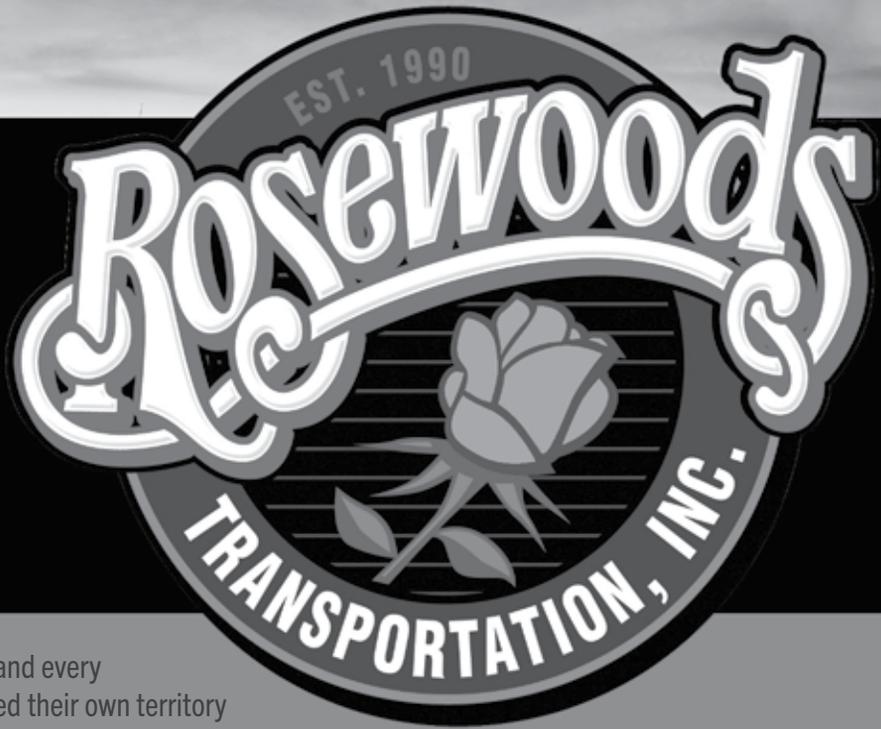
year after year will be operating on autopilot. “They might not look on Google Maps until they're literally heading there on their next stop.” At that point, it may be difficult for a driver to reroute in the case of construction.

Mandel will also ask a receiver if there are any impediments to getting in and out of a receiving station.

“We ask if there is a gate involved, and if so, is there a lock for that gate and is there a combination for that lock that we can provide the driver? Any number of those things is what we're checking on in an initial phone call with the receiver,” Mandel said. “And then we're updating our notes and our systems so that we have that available»

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On the receiving end

so we can make it a little bit easier the next time we deliver to the company.”

Receivers can help

Miller said he believes the responsibility is on him to ask the right questions of a receiver and relay that information to the driver. But, he said receivers can help ensure their needs are met by providing information upfront, by letting shippers know of any unusual circumstances surrounding the shipment and informing them of any preferred hours of delivery.

“The receiver needs to tell somebody what they’re wanting,” Miller said, “and then the shipper can pass that along to us. And it’s extra helpful when the shipper is able to pass that information along to the driver during the loading process. That way it’s coming straight from the horse’s mouth, so to speak, and they’re not relying on me to pass that information along.”



Clockwise from bottom, Portland Nursery's Juan Andres Manuel and Jay Hutchison help Schiedler Family Nursery's driver Dennis Hagenauer unload a delivery of plants at the Stark St. location. PHOTO BY VIC PANICKUL



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In general, receivers are easy to work with, according to Miller. And in general, nursery shipments come off without a hitch. Problems can arise, however, when communications break down.

“The worst-case scenario would be if no one tells the driver what needs to be done and the driver picks up the load and just shows up unannounced,” Miller said. “Then there might not be a crew there to unload them. Maybe they’re not open or maybe they can’t take you at that particular time, and the driver is going to have to sit and wait until they’re ready for you. And the driver might have multiple deliveries to make that day, but then everyone else that is expecting that day is going to have to sit and wait until the next day, as well.

“It’s not just the receiver or the driver that gets negatively affected in that,” Miller said. “It affects potentially the shippers and the other customers on that truck.”

“The receiver needs to tell somebody what they’re wanting, and then the shipper can pass that along to us.”

— John Miller
FREIGHT BROKER
Rosewoods Transportation

Communication is key

The key to ensuring deliveries run smoothly, according to brokers, is regular communication, starting from the time a shipper receives an order and continuing until a shipment arrives at the receiving station.

Frederick said he will give an approximate time of delivery in his first contact with a receiver and keep them abreast of any in-transit issues as the load gets closer.

Having that information can be critical, particularly for wholesale nurseries that move crews from an operation to a loading dock to load a truck and for commercial landscape crews that depend on a shipment to keep busy.

“The biggest difficulty is with the labor,” Frederick said. “If you have an eight-man crew sitting around for two, three, four hours and nobody’s gotten a hold of you to let you know that a delivery is delayed, then you’re pretty much burning daylight and wasting man hours.”

Frederick said that K&M Distribution sends drivers tracking links to their phones which they activate, enabling receivers to track their location, helping eliminate scenarios where crews are waiting for a delivery or where a driver arrives at a dock and no one is there to help unload. “We get the receiver’s



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On the receiving end

email addresses and then we'll send them a tracking link so they can see the truck in motion," he said. "And then we'll call daily and update each customer as per how the in-transit is going."

In most cases, according to Miller, receivers expect to get a call informing them of an estimated time of arrival at a minimum of 24 to 48 hours ahead of a delivery. "That way, they're ready," he said. "They know you're coming. They can make sure there's a crew there."

Big box stores are more particular, Mandel said, often preferring to schedule precise delivery times well in advance. "They are very appointment sensitive," he said. "We have to get actually scheduled delivery appointments, making sure we have piece counts and purchase order numbers from the shippers so that we could schedule those delivery appointments."

Communication preferences

Freight brokers said they also like to know a receiver's preference for communicating. Some prefer text messaging, others prefer phone calls, still others prefer communicating by email.

"We know whether receivers prefer a phone call, a text or an email, who to contact. We know their cell phone numbers," Miller said. "And we need to have that type of thing. It's not what it used to be, as far as the trucking business goes. There is a lot more communication required."

It also helps to know how often a receiver prefers to be contacted, Miller said. Some don't like to be bothered with regular updates. Others prefer that.

Jon Karsseboom, owner of retail nursery **The Garden Corner** in Tualatin, Oregon, said that he generally is able to receive trucks whenever he is open. "We believe that when the shipper sends it, we

"Generally the drivers will call and say, 'Hey, I'm 30 minutes out' or 'I'm an hour out.' And we appreciate that. They check in so then we can get all prepped."

— **Jon Karsseboom**

OWNER

The Garden Corner

should be ready to catch it," he said. "We usually have someone here who knows how to drive a forklift, and rarely has there been an occasion where a truck is here and we can't unload it."

Still, Karsseboom said he appreciates getting text messages or phone calls when a driver is nearby. "Generally the drivers will call and say, 'Hey, I'm 30 minutes out' or 'I'm an hour out,'" he said. "And we appreciate that. They check in so then we can get all prepped."

One issue that receivers should be aware of, according to Mandel, is to document any issues with a load before signing a bill of lading.

"Generally, if everything goes well, a receiver is just signing off on a bill of lading," Mandel said. "But there is always the potential of damaged goods, and with live goods, it could be frozen, it could be that branches got broken. It could be that it got too hot. So, it is really important to notate any discrepancies on bills of lading."

Years ago, before cell phones, text messaging and the like, it was more common for delivery issues to crop up in the complex world of nursery shipping, according to Miller. With the communication tools available today, even with traffic jams and mechanical failures, brokers and shippers are able to provide receivers up to the minute updates on when a shipment is arriving.

And garden centers, wholesale nurseries, shippers and freight brokers are better off for it. ☺

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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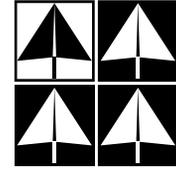
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GROWING KNOWLEDGE

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Innovation, inspiration, and insights

Succulents at VanBelle Finished Plants showcasing consistency and quality in one of their many high tech greenhouses. PHOTO BY LLOYD NACKLEY

The 2025 IPPS Western Region meeting in Canada offered growers many chances to connect and learn

BY LLOYD NACKLEY

Every year, the International Plant Production Society (IPPS) Western Region annual meeting offers attendees a chance to step out of day-to-day operations, connect with colleagues, and explore the latest trends in plant production.

This year's meeting, held September 16–19 in Langley, British Columbia, deliv-

ered all of that and more. From cutting-edge technology in tissue culture labs to sprawling nursery production facilities, the conference showcased both innovation and scale and reminded us why we love this industry.

Lessons from the cutting edge

One theme kept surfacing: the way technology, science, and human ingenuity intersect to solve the practical challenges of plant production.

In tissue culture labs, for example, the transition from fluorescent bulbs to modern, spectrum-tuned LEDs illustrates

how small adjustments in light quality, intensity, and duration can have outsized effects. In my greenhouse classes, I often emphasize light in three dimensions — quality, quantity, and duration — while reminding students that durability, energy efficiency, and operating costs are just as critical for growers. Seeing LEDs applied at commercial scale brought that lesson to life, highlighting how theory becomes tangible problem-solving.

Research by Professor Bruce Bugbee at Utah State and others has shown how modern, spectrum-tuned LEDs maintain low energy demands while enhancing >>

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Growing Knowledge

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For decades, tissue culture relied on fluorescent bulbs for low light intensity with a higher blue-light ratio, but LEDs allow growers to customize spectra without driving up energy costs. Though Hannah Ball did not focus on it, her presentation at the IPPS meeting sparked curiosity about what might come next: could manipulating spectral quality or intensity accelerate callus formation, perhaps even shortening tissue culture cycles as seen in floriculture research by Michigan State University's Professor Roberto Lopez and Eric Runkle.

In a session about drones, we were reminded at the conference that technology is a tool, not a solution. In the Willamette Valley, most spray drone research focuses on pesticide applications, like some of the demos we've hosted at NWREC and other Extension events. However, spray drones are not yet permitted for pesticides in this part of Canada.

Mia Gabrielson from SkyAg Solutions pivoted to applications like whitewashing glasshouses. What initially seemed niche quickly revealed itself as a clever adaptation. Touring massive Fraser Valley greenhouses, it became clear that autonomous sprayers are not just practical but more efficient than crews scaling tall glass structures.

This lesson echoes throughout horticulture: automation works best when it complements human labor. This way it can enhance safety, efficiency, and consistency rather than attempting to replace people entirely.

Equally compelling was the story of adaptive learning and grower ingenuity.

At Qualitree Propagators, the shift to recycled irrigation water posed a challenge in nutrient management. What stood out was not just the technical solution, using in-house spectrophotometry to monitor water quality, but the story behind it. Staff without prior formal training became a functioning water-quality lab, developing practical, reproducible systems that improved nutrient efficiency while minimizing environmental impact.

Stories like this are what IPPS is all about: seeking and sharing knowledge. They are a vivid reminder that innovation



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At Reimers Nursery Ltd. (Chilliwack, B.C., Canada), loading forklifts, conveyor belts and buffer belts help increase efficiency across their production. PHOTO BY LLOYD NACKLEY

often comes from people empowered to learn and experiment. This lesson resonates far beyond any single greenhouse. Supporting those ideas regionally is Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), Institute for Sustainable Horticulture. Faculty there shared insights highlighting the challenge of balancing sustainability, cost, and energy use while incorporating AI and automation.

They also showcased KPU's Applied Genomics Centre, a first-class lab supporting professional development and industry partnerships. Students gain hands-on experience in molecular genetics and metabolomics, translating directly to the needs of commercial plant production. This model stands in stark contrast to the defunding pressures currently facing U.S. agricultural research.

Plants themselves remained at the heart of our work. Shelby Klassen and DeVonne Friesen from Bloomin' Easy

walked attendees through the multi-year process of taking a plant from selection to release, emphasizing breeder relationships, regional trials, and marketing strategies to ensure successful introductions.

Guy Meacham from **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.** highlighted evolving criteria for urban trees in a changing climate, focusing on resilience and space efficiency, while Ryan Contreras from Oregon State University showcased breeding programs that draw on global genetic material to tackle disease, drought, and other environmental challenges.

Together, these presentations reinforced that innovation in horticulture is a blend of science, patience, and practical problem-solving. Hearing these talks back-to-back, I was struck by the human dimension behind every plant: the years of careful observation, repeated trials, and decisions that balance aesthetic appeal, environ- ➤

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The railyard at VanBelle Youngplants showing commitment to efficiency. This system has been around for decades and is something they designed around. Growers touted how much faster it is to move whole benches rather than loading and unloading plants on to a trailer. PHOTO BY LLOYD NACKLEY

mental resilience, and ease of production. For students and early-career professionals, these sessions are a masterclass in the complexity and joy of horticulture.

Touring the Fraser Valley's nurseries

If the speakers were inspiring, the tours were mesmerizing. This year's itineraries were thoughtfully designed to provide a view of Fraser Valley's diverse production scales. We visited Reimer's Nurseries Ltd. and Cedar Rim Garden Center. Both operations demonstrate personal touches and a commitment to innovation. These nurseries integrate technologies such as planting machines and precision equipment while serving a wide array of customers.

We also toured large-scale operations at Qualitree, **Van Belle Youngplants**, and Rainbow Greenhouses, where efficiency, standardization, and communication are essential. These facilities focus on supplying North America's largest retailers. A takeaway from all three was how scaling



Hardy hibiscus tree from Ryan Contreras and Oregon State University's Ornamental Plant Breeding Program was showcased at the conference. PHOTO BY RYAN CONTRERAS

up requires simplification of processes and empowering staff to make real-time decisions. Walking through these massive greenhouses, it was impossible not to be impressed by the choreography of human and machine working in tandem.

One striking observation was the commodification of holiday plants. Four-year-old Alberta spruces, cultivated with meticulous attention to water, pruning, and pest management, will be sold and transformed into six-week office decorations, glittered and potted in bright tins. It is a vivid illustration of how horticulture balances long-term care with short-term consumer demands, demanding precision, patience, and agility from growers.

Touring both small operations and massive greenhouse complexes highlighted that attention to detail, smart workflow design, and empowered staff are critical, regardless of scale. Regardless of the size of your operation, the principles of observation, care, and continuous learning remain the same.

Takeaways: Connection, curiosity, and common ground

Some of the best lessons came from informal conversations with Canadian and U.S. colleagues while walking between nurseries or over dinner. We discussed labor management, new cultivars, and shifting regulations.

Beyond the plants and technology, the most meaningful aspect was connecting with peers across borders. Tariffs, currency exchange, and political currents were topics of conversation, but the shared joy of growing and selling plants transcended any cynicism. The challenges and rewards were strikingly similar on both sides of the border.

I left these conversations reflecting on the importance of community in our work, and how sharing both successes and failures makes all of us better growers and educators.

Bob Geneve, our banquet keynote, brought it all back to wonder. His talk, "The Fascinating Ways That Plants Move," captivated an audience of horticulture experts with examples of plant movement that are often imperceptibly slow or occasionally astonishingly fast.

Even after decades in the industry, it reminded us that there is always room for curiosity and amazement. I found myself thinking about students who might see their first circumnutating vine or rapidly closing mimosa; the excitement in the room is exactly what we hope to instill in the next generation of horticulturists.

Oregon IPPS had a strong showing, and the door is always open for more involvement. The annual meeting rotates each year: in 2026, it will be held in Utah, with a return to our Pacific Wonderland in Oregon in 2027. For those who have not attended, it is an opportunity to learn, be inspired, and share experiences with a community of passionate professionals who, despite differences in scale, geography, or specialization, all share a love for plants. ©

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Your voice matters



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There seems to be a consistent theme as we approach every election cycle: your voice matters.

And unless we use our voices to change the trajectory of the discussion in our state, and nationally, we will suffer the consequences.

Oregon is in trouble economically. There seems to be little preparation for the downturn that is just beyond the horizon. Oregon is hemorrhaging jobs, employers are closing shop or outright leaving, and our state leaders are fiddling like Nero while it all burns.

The state cannot simply tax its way out of what is barreling down on the economy. I hear my union friends say that Oregon is a great place to work. I totally agree — it is. But one needs a job to work and that is what is at stake a year from now with the 2026 elections.

Leaders need to lead

The nursery and greenhouse industry plays a vital role in our economy, environment, and community well-being, yet its importance is often overlooked. As economic, ecological and political forces collide, being an advocate for this industry has never been more critical.

Most of the Oregon Legislature represents urban areas. The numbers do not lie.

We cannot allow urban legislators to say on one hand they love farmers, while on the other they make farming more difficult by taking away tools or adding regulation. This cognitive dissonance can be found at every committee hearing, and in every bill introduced.

Don't get me wrong — OAN has built longstanding relationships with both sides of the political aisle. But these relationships are just not doing enough to protect the state's largest sector of agriculture.

Oregon's nursery industry is an economic force, with \$1.2 billion in sales. That's something to be proud of. We are small, medium and large businesses that create jobs, support economic health, and build community connections.

We advocate for fair policies, research funding, and educational programs for growers, because these are investments in econom-

ic stability and generational opportunity.

These investments are needed because this industry faces significant challenges, from labor shortages and regulatory pressures to the impacts of climate change and disease management. Without strong advocacy, many growers will struggle to stay viable. Championing their needs at the local, state, and national levels ensures that their voices are heard.

Advocating for the nursery and greenhouse industry is about more than plants — it's about supporting environmental resilience, the economy and our community. Look in the mirror and get active and raise your voice.

What politicians don't understand

Farming is more than a profession — it's a way of life built on unpredictability, grit, and deep-rooted commitment. Yet politicians across the political spectrum fail to grasp the complex and relentless pressures farmers face. While policies are debated in air-conditioned offices, farmers are out in the field battling the elements, market swings, and regulatory burdens that most policymakers seem far removed from.

One of the biggest disconnects lies in the assumption that farming is simply about growing crops. Farmers must be business managers, mechanics, environmental stewards, and often meteorologists, all rolled into one. Their success is tied not only to their skills and work ethic, but also to factors completely outside of their control. These include market prices, climate variability, and trade policy decisions.

Moreover, many politicians push environmental regulations with good intentions, but little practical understanding. Policies around land use, water management, pesticides, and emissions often pile on without recognizing that farms are already some of the most efficient, sustainable producers in the world. Farms don't do this because of rules and mandates, but because their survival depends on it.

These regulations often feel more like obstacles than solutions, especially when they are enforced without meaningful consultation with the farming community. Ultimately, what politicians don't understand — or choose to ignore — is that

farming is not just a job; it's a high-stakes, high-risk commitment to the family farm under constant pressure. If those in power truly want to support agriculture, they must stop romanticizing it, start listening, and work alongside farmers instead of legislating from a distance. Only then can they begin to address the real pressures farmers endure every single day.

The starting bell for 2026

OAN's member rolls include the complete spectrum of political beliefs. This is a tremendous boost to our ability to educate and influence policymakers.

The 2026 election will determine who represents us in the U.S. Congress and the Oregon Legislature, and who serves as Oregon governor. In all of these races, we must demand a seat at the table.

But where to start? Your home, your neighborhood, your community. Democracy only works when you participate.

People say, "Too many elections are out of reach and why bother voting — the fix is in." The fix is in if you do not vote. In the end, YOU are the one who sets the course of the state and nation.

How to get engaged? The OAN has advocacy training scheduled for January 13, 2026, in Wilsonville. We have Government Relations Committee meetings that are open to the membership. This is where our policy direction and core political effort are crafted. You have your voice that can go directly to legislators as they convene in February for a legislative session.

All of these are within your grasp if you wish to engage. Don't be the one to look back and say, "I wish." Be the one who can say, "We did this." ☺

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