

Digger^{leaf}

MARCH 2026

Perennials issue

These beauties
can take the heat

PAGE 17

A look at some
unusual varieties

PAGE 15

Natives vs.
native cultivars

PAGE 25

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Perennials issue

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On the cover: Gaillardia SpinTop® Yellow Torch. PHOTO COURTESY OF DÜMMEN ORANGE

On this page: Left: Allium 'All the Buzz' PP37117 CPBRAf. PHOTO COURTESY OF WALTERS GARDENS Right: The orchid-like flowers of Impatiens tinctoria appear in late summer. Photo by Mike Darcy



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What the OAN means to me

**Twenty-five years ago,
when I first got into the
nursery industry, the Oregon
Association of Nurseries
didn't mean much to me.**

I knew it existed. I knew it was based in Wilsonville. I paid my dues and got back to growing plants.

I believed success came down to hard work, long days, and figuring things out as you went.

What I didn't understand back then was how much was happening behind the scenes and how often the OAN was working on my behalf without my even realizing it. As the years have gone on and I've become more involved, my perspective has changed.

The OAN isn't just an office in Wilsonville or a staff that puts on events. It's an organization built to support this industry from every angle. The benefits are real and practical: advertising programs that help tell our story, the Farwest Show that brings the entire industry together, credit card processing options, health and dental insurance, legal access, the Nursery Guide, scholarships, and more. Individually, each benefit matters and collectively, they make running a nursery easier.

Those are the things most of us see first and they're important. But the longer I've been around, the more I've come to realize the OAN's greatest value often shows up when things get difficult.

The OAN is the insurance policy many of us didn't even know we had until there's a real problem standing at our doorstep. Right now, that problem is the Japanese beetle.

This isn't just another pest we can quietly manage and move on from. It's a serious industry-wide challenge with real consequences for growers, shippers, and customers. Without coordinated leadership, clear communication, and strong advocacy, every nursery would be left to navigate this on their own. This would include calling regulators, interpreting rules, and hoping



Patrick Newton

they're doing the right thing. That's not a position any of us want to be in.

This is where the OAN proves its value in a big way.

Through the leadership of the organization and especially through the steady, knowledgeable work of Executive Director Jeff Stone, the OAN has stepped up as a central voice for the industry. They've been communicating with regulators, pushing for science-based solutions, keeping members informed, and making sure growers aren't isolated or left guessing.

That kind of advocacy doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen without trust. It's built over years of relationships, credibility, and showing up consistently. It's easy to overlook when things are running smoothly, but when challenges like the Japanese beetle emerge, the importance of having a strong, unified organization becomes crystal clear.

For me, the OAN has come to represent stability. It's a reminder that we're part of something bigger. We share markets, challenges, labor issues, regulations, and risks. Having an organization in Wilsonville that understands this industry from the ground up and is willing to fight for it matters more than ever.

The OAN isn't just a membership you carry; it's a partner you rely on. And when real problems show up, it's good to know we're not facing them alone. ☺



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*.

MARCH 6

DINGER DAZE

Solve your pain points and reduce labor costs with innovation, automation and mechanization. Join Wurdinger Manufacturing for Dinger Daze from 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Friday, March 6, at 4730 Brush Creek Drive N.E. in Silverton, Oregon. View equipment, browse vendors and have lunch on Wurdinger. Raffle prizes will be drawn and given away hourly. RSVP by emailing Melissa@WurdingerManufacturing.com or by calling 503-873-9872.

MARCH 7

SECOND ANNUAL WINTER JEWELS' HELLEBORE SALE

Little Prince of Oregon is continuing the tradition of hosting an annual sale of Winter Jewels Hellebore after the nursery purchased the brand from Ernie and Marietta O'Byrne at Northwest Garden Nursery in 2023. The sale is from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. on March 7 and is open to the public. RSVP is required by going to LittlePrincePlants.com/Hellebores.

MARCH 13-16

2026 YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Join more than 800 young agricultural leaders from across the country at the 2026 Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Leadership Conference, March 13–16, in Portland, Oregon, to learn, share and grow together to build a sustainable future for agriculture and Farm Bureau. The agenda includes several networking opportunities, general sessions, and breakout sessions and workshops that fall into several categories including collegiate/young professional; consumer engagement; member engagement and leadership development; innovation and niche marketing; on the farm; and policy and advocacy. For more information and to register, go to TinyURL.com/2026YFR.

MARCH 22

PLANT NERD NIGHT

Join the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon for a little mayhem and a lot of expertise at Plant Nerd Night, noon–4 p.m. March 22 at Lake Oswego Senior High School, 2501 Country Club Road, Lake Oswego, Oregon. For more information, go to HardyPlantSociety.org/Event/Plant-Nerd-Night.

MARCH 24-27

CALIFORNIA SPRING TRIALS

California Spring Trials returns this year with exciting new varieties and colors. The event, held along the California coast, is managed by the National Garden Bureau. For breeder summaries, trip planners and more information, go to CASpringTrials.us.



PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

APRIL 25-26

OREGON AG FEST

Explore the incredible world of Oregon agriculture in a fun-filled, festive environment for the entire family. The two-day event, aimed to help families better understand where their food, fiber and flora come from, is a unique learning experience, where hands-on exhibits make learning about Oregon's vast agricultural industry educational and entertaining. Tickets are \$15, free for kids 15 and under. Oregon Ag Fest is held at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. N.E. in Salem. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to ORAgFest.com. Make sure you stop by the Plant Something Oregon booth from the Oregon Association of Nurseries and pick a plant to pot and take home.

APRIL 1

OAN HORTICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Do you know a high school, college or graduate student who is considering a career as a nursery or landscape professional? If so, applications are now being taken for 20 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 from the Oregon Association of Nurseries Foundation. The scholarships are sponsored by individual OAN chapters, and its members. April 1 is the last day to apply. Go to OAN.org/ONF for more information, or contact OAN Director of Finance Stephanie Collins at 503-582-2001 or Scholarships@OAN.org.

APRIL 3-4

HORTLANDIA

The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon sponsors Hortlandia, its annual plant and art sale, April 3–4 at The Wingspan Event and Conference Center, N.E. 34th Ave. and Cornell Road, in Hillsboro, Oregon. Vendors from all over the Northwest will provide the latest plant introductions alongside old favorites. Handmade, one-of-a-kind garden art made from materials like metal, wood, glass, ceramic, fabric and stone will be on display throughout the event. Admission is \$25 for the evening sneak preview on Friday, April 3, then \$5 on Saturday, April 4. Parking is \$10. For more information, go to HardyPlantSociety.org.

JUNE 25-27

AMERICAN CONIFER SOCIETY NATIONAL MEETING

The 2026 American Conifer Society National Meeting returns to Oregon and is being hosted by the Western Region and they're excited to welcome everyone back. Visitors will be reminded of Oregon's beauty and rich plant diversity. Oregon is conifer country – more evergreen landscape plants are grown in Oregon than any other state in the nation. The event takes place Thursday June 25 through Saturday June 27 at the Holiday Inn Portland South, 25425 South 95th Ave., Wilsonville. For more information or to register, go to ConiferSociety.org.

VARIOUS DATES

FREE CPR/FIRST AID CLASSES

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is once again offering FREE first aid and CPR certification training for OAN members in 2026, thanks to their continuing partnership with SAIF. These classes provide hands-on instruction in small group settings, covering essential first aid and lifesaving CPR skills. Certifications are valid for two years, and sessions are available in both English and Spanish from 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m. English: March 18, June 17, July 15, September 16, October 14, November 18, December 16. Spanish: March 19, June 18, July 16, September 17, October 15, November 19, December 17. All classes take place at the OAN office: 29751 S.W. Town Center Loop West, in Wilsonville. Register at OAN.org/CPR. ©



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.



Rio Verde may be sold to Willamette Tree Wholesale

Rio Verde — a nursery in Cornelius, Oregon — could soon have new owners, the *Capital Press* agricultural newspaper (Salem, Oregon) reported.

The nursery has had financial struggles and has been the subject of a legal battle. Last year, a federal judge ordered a receiver to take control of Rio Verde Holdings due to a dispute amongst its owners, Matt Edmundson, a nursery owner from Colorado, and O&S Holdings of Missouri (owned by Tory Schwope and Jerald O'Brien).

The nursery's court-appointed receiver, Gene Buccola of High Plateau Asset Management, recently disclosed in court documents that **Willamette Tree Wholesale** of Salem has submitted a letter of intent to purchase the operation and its land.

Rio Verde's operations were recently slashed due to insufficient cash for payroll and its sales last month had fallen by more than 75% compared to the previous year, according to the court-appointed receiver.



From left: Associate Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine Samantha Simon, OAN President Patrick Newton, OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone, USDA-APHIS Acting Administrator Kelly Moore, AmericanHort Regulatory and Trade Policy Coordinator Kamron Newberry and Acting Deputy Administrator at USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine Matthew Rhoads. PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF STONE

OAN LEADERS SEEK HELP FROM USDA ON JAPANESE BEETLE

Oregon Association of Nurseries President Patrick Newton (Powell's Nursery, Gaston, Oregon) and Executive Director Jeff Stone flew to Washington, D.C. to seek funding and regulatory relief on the Japanese beetle.

Newton and Stone met with the Senate Agriculture Committee staff in charge of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), House Agriculture Appropriations staff, and a legislative assistant for U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) to set a future path for funding measures next year for Japanese beetle.

"The main part of the 24-hour trip to D.C. was a meeting with USDA-APHIS Acting Administrator Kelly Moore, Acting Deputy Administrator at USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine Matthew Rhoads, and Associate Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine Samantha Simon," Stone said.

Stone and Newberry also met with the executive committee of the National Plant Board regarding re-establishing Oregon's Category 1 status. "A lot is going on behind the scenes with this issue and the Oregon Department of Agriculture will play a major

role," Stone said.

The OAN is working with the ODA to reboot Oregon's Japanese beetle trapping and mitigation program after Gov. Tina Kotek defunded the program by leaving it out of the budget. Trapping still took place in 2025.

The OAN is supporting an increase in the nursery license fee with the increase earmarked for the JB program. OAN is also working with Oregon State Sen. Fred Girod (R-District 9, Stayton) on a bill that would provide \$1.8 million for Japanese beetle eradication efforts.

In the meantime, OAN is working with the ODA to provide Oregon nurseries the information and support they need to start nursery-level trapping before the JB flight season begins in June.

OAN members can view the Japanese Beetle Resource page at OAN.org/JapaneseBeetle and the Japanese Beetle Shipping Requirements page at OAN.org/JBStates.

USDA, OSU SCIENTISTS DEVELOP PLANT PATHOGEN SURVEILLANCE PLATFORM

U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists in Corvallis, Oregon, in collaboration with Oregon State University, have developed a disease surveillance platform that could improve >>

U.S. agriculture by unlocking the future of plant health, USDA-ARS said in a bulletin. PathogenSurveillance is an innovative, open-source software tool that can quickly analyze and identify novel microbial variants based on DNA sequences.

The automated PathogenSurveillance pipeline is an innovative workflow tool to help scientists respond in real-time to emerging, or re-emerging, invasive pathogens and pests. The surveillance platform will improve plant health and aid in reducing the spread of new and emerging diseases in agronomic, urban, and forest ecosystems.

"This genomics pipeline revolutionizes plant health, allowing us to identify any microbe, pest, or pathogen in just minutes-to-hours once there is a genome sequence," said Nik Grunwald, ARS research plant pathologist at the Horticultural Crops Disease and Pest Management Research Unit in Corvallis. "This will be a benefit to researchers, disease clinics, and diagnosticians in their work to identify clonal, or other types of variants such as the UG99 stem rust, or NA2 of sudden oak death."

HRI ANNOUNCES BOARD LEADERSHIP AND TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS

The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), the research affiliate of AmericanHort, has announced its 2026 Board of Trustees leadership appointments, including new officers, term renewals, and the appointment of a new board member.

Mark Yelanich, Ph.D (Metrolina Greenhouse) will serve as 2026 president, Ed Tankard (Tankard Nurseries) will serve as 2026 president-elect, and Jonathan Berry (J Berry Nursery) will assume the role of immediate past president.

Matt Foertmeyer (Foertmeyer & Sons Greenhouse) will begin a three-year term representing Region II.

Five trustees were appointed to second three-year terms. They include OAN member Shane Brockshus (**Bailey Nurseries**), OAN member Mike Hiller (**KCK Farms**), Matt Sawyer (Bennett's Creek Nursery), Simon Traskey (Star Roses & Plants), and



A camellia plant infected with *Phytophthora nemorosa*, which causes leaf blight. PHOTO BY NIK GRUNWALD

Lloyd Traven (Peace Tree Farm).

Additionally, several current trustees will remain on the board in 2026, including OAN member Jonathan Jasinski (**Microplant Nurseries**), Peter Mezitt (Weston Nurseries), Amy Morris (N.G. Heimos Greenhouses), Denise Mullins (Smith Gardens), OAN member Ben Rough (**J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.**), Bennett Saunders (Saunders Brothers), Steve Taber (Southwest Wholesale Nursery), and OAN member Maria Zampini (**UpShoot LLC**).

OAN member Leigh Geschwill (**F & B Farms and Nursery**) and Ed Bemis (Bemis Farms Nursery) are finishing up their service on the Board of Trustees this month. Bemis has completed two six-year terms on the board, and Geschwill has completed multiple terms of service, including her leadership as HRI President.

"Leigh has been a remarkable leader for HRI and a steadfast champion for research that strengthens the horticulture industry," said Jennifer Gray, HRI Administrator. "Her leadership helped reinforce a culture of stewardship and accountability, and her influence is reflected in HRI's continued focus on connecting research investment to practical, actionable outcomes for growers and businesses. We are deeply grateful for her service."

OAN WELCOMES CONNIE LINDSAY AS TRADE SHOW MANAGER

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is happy to announce the addition of Connie Lindsay to the team as the new trade show manager, responsible for the Farwest Show. Lindsay brings with her a wealth of experience and enthusiasm for event planning

and trade show coordination.

A native Oregonian, Lindsay has spent the last decade honing her skills in special event planning and trade show management at GK Machine, a machinery supplier based in Donald, Oregon. Her deep roots in the industry, combined with her educational background from Oregon State University and Merritt Davis College of Business, make her a perfect fit for this role.

"I'm excited to bring my event planning and sales experience to provide members with a great Farwest Show experience," Lindsay said. Her role will focus on supporting both members and non-members, ensuring their involvement in the Farwest Trade Show is seamless and successful.

"Connie brings a strong background in marketing, sales, and events from her tenure at GK Machine," OAN Director of Finance and Administration Stephanie Collins said. "We're excited that she will help move Farwest Show forward with fresh ideas, energy, and perspective."

"Please join us in giving Connie a warm welcome to the OAN team," said Executive Director Jeff Stone. "We look forward to the incredible contributions she will make to our association and the Farwest Show!"



Connie Lindsay

OAN HIRES NEW JUNIOR STAFF ACCOUNTANT

Cammi Landry has joined the Oregon Association of Nurseries as junior staff

accountant. “She comes to us with the ‘end result’ accounting experience and is looking forward to working on the front end of accounting transactions,” said OAN Director of Finance and Administration Stephanie Collins. “She’ll be a wonderful asset to our team!”



Cammi Landry

Landry is originally from Southern California and moved to Oregon two years ago. She’s a graduate of Azusa Pacific University with a degree in accounting and business management. “My professional background is primarily in public accounting with a focus on tax, where I built a strong foundation in finan-

cial accuracy and compliance,” Landry said. “I have experience preparing and reviewing detailed financial information, researching regulatory requirements, and supporting organizations and individuals in meeting compliance obligations. This work strengthened my attention to detail, accountability, and ability to work within structured financial frameworks.”

“As OAN’s new junior staff accountant, I’m excited to apply these skills in a nonprofit setting by supporting accurate financial reporting, transparency, and sound financial practices that help advance the organization’s mission and impact,” Landry said. “I’m excited to be part of an organization like OAN that makes such a meaningful difference in people’s lives. Being surrounded by work that creates real, positive impact is incredibly motivating, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to contribute to a mission that truly matters.”

In memoriam

GORDON BAILEY, JR.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is saddened to report that Gordon (Gordie) Bailey, Jr., third-generation family leader of **Bailey Nurseries** and

longtime industry advocate, passed away Thursday, January 29, at age 90, at his home in Newport, Minnesota.



Gordon Bailey, Jr.

For nearly 70 years, Gordie worked at Bailey Nurseries, where he played a pivotal role in shaping the company’s growth, culture, and long-term vision. Known for his humility, deep knowledge of plants, and »



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unwavering belief in people, his influence extended well beyond the company to the broader horticulture industry.

A respected industry leader, Gordie served as president of the Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association (MNLA) and was inducted into the Hall of Fame for both MNLA and the American Nursery & Landscape Association.

JOANNE E. TANCREDI

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is saddened to report that Joanne E.

Tancredi passed away January 8 after a long battle with lung cancer. She was 75.

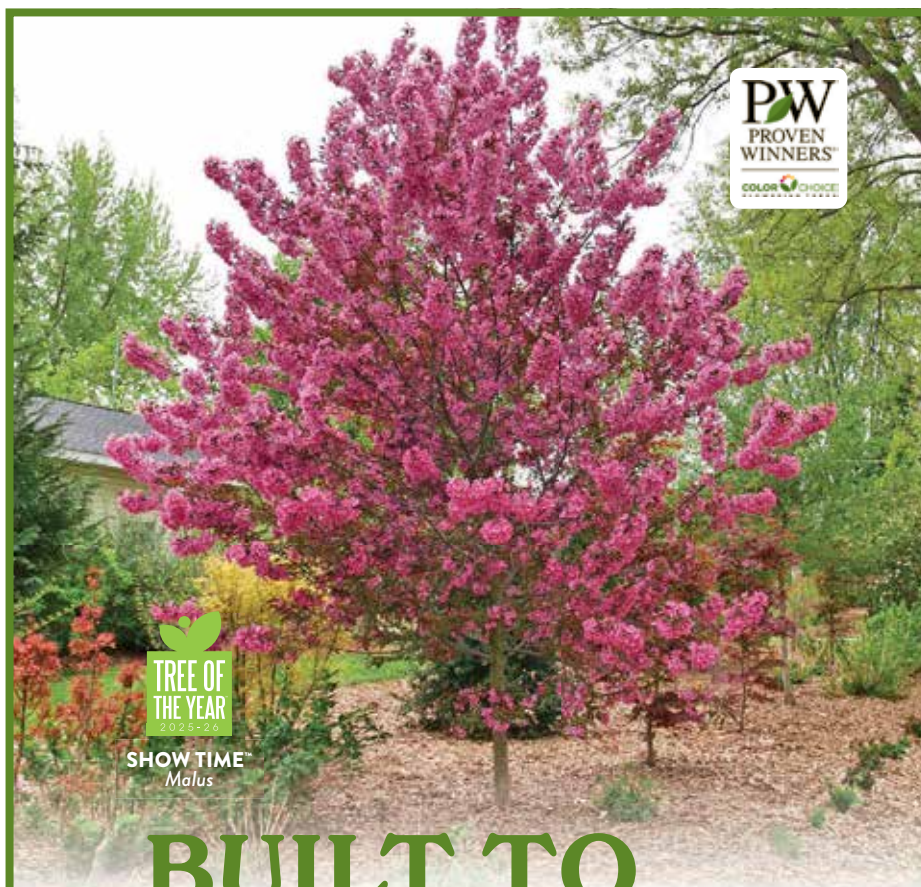
Joanne was a native Oregonian. She was born June 24, 1950 in



Joanne E. Tancredi

Eugene, raised in Roseburg and attended the University of Denver prior to transferring to the University of Oregon. There she met her future husband Val in a history class in 1969. They married in 1971 and had an adventurous life including living and working throughout the Middle East because of Val's agricultural irrigation career. As they both raised younger siblings, they never had children. Their last jobs were at **Stettler Supply Co.** in Salem from which they retired in 2013.

Joanne and her husband were active members of the OAN. Val was a board member of the Willamette Chapter from 2000–2014 and served as chapter president from 2002–2004. Joanne participated many chapter activities including 14 years at Agfest, Christmas parties and meetings, attended many OAN conventions, and participated in OAN career days at OSU. Val was chosen as an Honorary Life Member in 2013. Joanne was awarded the 5-Star Award from then-departing OAN president Carson Lord in 2013. ©



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Deadline approaching to obtain water right permit extensions



Legislative changes to the state's water right permitting process significantly impact permit extensions. ADOBE STOCK

For Oregon's nursery and greenhouse operators, water rights are essential to success. Legislative changes to the state's water right permitting process, adopted through House Bill 3342 (2025), modify long-standing timelines and procedures for perfecting water rights. The core expectations of diligence and beneficial use remain, but the legislation limits — and, ultimately, eliminates — growers' ability to obtain needed extension for permits they already hold.

Permit extensions

Under prior law, holders of irrigation or nursery water right permits were required to complete construction and perfect their rights within five years of permit

approval, unless an extension was granted for good cause. This short window often proved difficult for nursery operations, where water development projects can be complex and capital-intensive. Weather delays, supply-chain issues, and permitting from other agencies frequently made the five-year deadline hard to meet. Therefore, permit extensions have been a critical tool for nursery owners.

HB 3342 has lengthened the initial development period to seven years. However, subsequent extensions are now much more limited.

One extension, two years maximum

The law now limits extensions on existing permits to a single, two-year



Steve Shropshire

Steve Shropshire serves as legal counsel to the OAN and is a member of the Jordan Ramis PC Dirt Law® team, representing the nursery industry and other agri-businesses as outside general counsel and on water rights, real estate, and land use matters. Steve can be reached at 503-598-5583 or Steve.Shropshire@JordanRamis.com.

Key changes at a glance: water right permit extensions

1. Standard timeline extended

Previous rule: 5 years to complete construction and put water to beneficial use.
New rule: 7 years allowed before a permit expires.

2. Only one extension allowed

Old law: Multiple extensions could be granted "for good cause shown."
New law: Only one extension may be approved, for permits existing on April 1, 2026, for a maximum of two years.

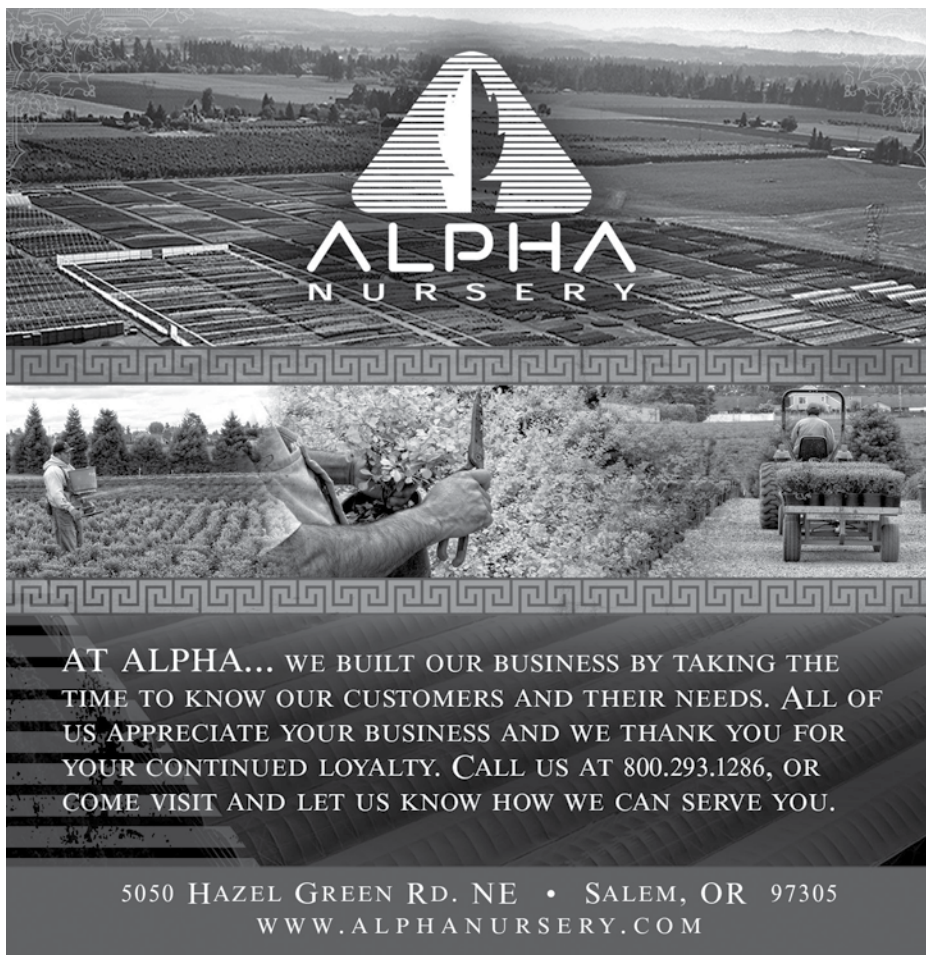
3. Bottom line for nurseries

More time up front, but less flexibility later.
Success now depends on strong project planning, documentation, and timely action.

period. Previously, multiple extensions were allowed, and OWRD was obligated to grant them for "good cause."

Under the new law, a grower who cannot complete construction or achieve beneficial use within the initial five-year period may request **only one additional extension, lasting no more than two years.**

Under the new framework, OWRD ➡



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must grant a single two-year extension if: 1) fish-related conditions have been satisfied, and 2) the applicant can show good cause for the extension (e.g. diligent efforts toward completion, delays related to weather conditions, economic hardship, and delays caused by other governmental requirements).

This new limit makes careful project management and documentation even more critical. Once the extension expires, the permit terminates if beneficial use has not been achieved. For nursery operators, this means there is still flexibility — but no second chances beyond the final seven-year maximum.

No extensions after April 1, 2026

Most importantly, the one-time extension allowance only applies to existing permits for which an extension application is pending on April 1, 2026. After that date, OWRD will no longer accept permit extension applications. Any grower needing extra time to complete development of an existing permit must move quickly to submit an extension application before the deadline.

Transfers not affected

Water right transfers, like permits, also have development timelines. However, HB 3342 did not change the law with regard to transfers. Therefore, OWRD should still process transfer extensions under the existing rules.

Contact a water rights professional for more information

Any grower who believes they need to obtain an extension should immediately contact a certified water rights examiner or water rights lawyer to get the application prepared and submitted prior to the deadline. ©

This guidance document is intended to inform the reader of general legal principles applicable to the subject area. It is not intended to provide legal advice regarding specific problems or circumstances. Readers should consult with competent counsel with regard to specific situations.



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Let's look at a few unusual perennials



Melianthus major has spikes of attractive reddish-brown flowers, but serrated the foliage is the showstopper. PHOTO BY MIKE DARCY

Sometimes a word that gardeners often use can convey different meanings, depending on the context. The speaker's intended meaning can be quite different from what the listener hears or understands.

The word "perennial" is a good example. Generally, it is used to refer to a plant that lives for a number of years and usually flowers each year. Often gardeners use the term to mean an herbaceous plant, with a peony being a good example.

A peony will send up new stems in the early spring, then bloom several months later. By late summer and early fall, the leaves and stems will begin to die. At that time, gardeners will usually prune it to ground level, removing the distressed leaves and stems. Although the tops are dead, the roots live on below the ground. The plant will be dormant for the winter and then renew itself in the spring.

But what about trees and shrubs? Aren't they also perennials? Technically, yes. But in common garden terminology? Probably not.

Sometimes, shrubs are referred to as a woody perennial. That is defined as not only a plant that lives more than one year, but one that has hard rather than fleshy stems and has buds that survive above the ground.

However, most gardeners would probably refer to them as just shrubs rather than perennial shrubs.

Examples of perennial shrubs

Solidago 'Crown of Rays' (golden-rod), is a North American native herbaceous perennial. This easy grow, easy care plant gives gardeners vibrant yellow gold flowers in late summer and early fall. The flowers are good pollinators and provide a source of food for butterflies and birds, as well as making a good cut flower for the



Mike Darcy

Head "plant nerd," longtime speaker, host of gardening shows on radio and TV, and author of the In the Garden email newsletter. You can reach Mike, or subscribe to his newsletter, at ITGMikeDarcy@Comcast.net.



The orchid-like flowers of *Impatiens tinctoria* appear in late summer. PHOTO BY MIKE DARCY

house. The flower stalks should be left on the plant so that seeds are produced which are a favorite diet of gold finches.

A plant growing in tropical Africa would most likely not be expected to perform well in our Pacific Northwest environment, but the hardy impatiens, *Impatiens tinctoria*, is an exception. Expect it to die to the ground in the late fall and with a layer of garden mulch, it should survive the winter. It's fast growing, with bamboo-like stems that can reach up to 5-6 feet tall in one season. Give it a shady spot, or morning sun location in the garden. The orchid-like flowers appear in late summer, and this year with the mild fall have persisted into November. With the tall stems, plant it in the background of lower growing plants.

With underground stems that can appear 8-10 feet from the mother plant, *Tetrapanax papyrifera* 'Steroidal Giant', ➤

What I'm Hearing

is a native of Taiwan that is an aggressive spreader and needs plenty of room. Planting it in a large pot would be a good way to enjoy the plant and keep it in check. Huge, tropical-looking leaves make this a focal feature in the garden. Left unchecked, it can become like a forest.

I have an area in the front of our house where there is plenty of room and I have just let it take over. In the summer, it is a mass of huge leaves. When cold weather arrives, the leaves tend to die, leaving bare stems, almost like small tree trunks. When we had the severe freeze two years ago, the plants died to the ground but came back in the spring with a vengeance.

Native to Southern California and Baja, *Romneya coulteri* (matilija poppy) is a spectacular perennial. With its gray-green leaves, it looks good even when not in bloom. But when the flowers appear, WOW! It has a cluster of golden yellow stamens that are



With temperatures becoming warmer, many gardeners are pushing the zone and are growing plants that generally would not survive our winters like this *Tibouchina urvilleana*, (princess flower). PHOTO BY MIKE DARCY

surrounded by white petals that have a look of crepe paper. The flowers appear in late spring and into summer.

Planted in full sun, *Romneya* is drought tolerant and does not usually need supplemental irrigation. This grows into a large shrub, so give it plenty of room. It spreads by rhizomes and can be



Native to Southern California and Baja, *Romneya coulteri* (matilija poppy) is a spectacular perennial. PHOTO BY MIKE DARCY

an aggressive spreader, but it is easy to keep in check. If you cut the stems to the ground in late fall, new shoots will appear in the spring.

One of my favorite foliage plants is *Melianthus major*. It does have spikes of attractive reddish-brown flowers, but the foliage has an outstanding tropical look and that is what I like. The grayish green foliage has leaves that are divided into leaflets with serrated edges. The leaves may look sharp but are very soft to the touch.

There have been several years when due to cold temperatures, the foliage has died to the ground, but in the spring new growth soon appears. It can make a very impressive statement in the garden and will look good all summer and into the fall season.

Pushing the zone

With temperatures becoming warmer, many gardeners are pushing the zone and are growing plants that generally would not survive our winters. What do we call a plant that is generally considered as a tropical or semi-tropical and now is happily growing in our garden here? How about “amazing?”

For example, I have a *Tibouchina urvilleana*, (princess flower), that over the summer has grown into a large shrub. As I write this column, it is January 23, and the plant is in full bloom and has never looked better.

I wonder what other “technically speaking” perennials and tropicals I can add to my garden to improve my special space. ©

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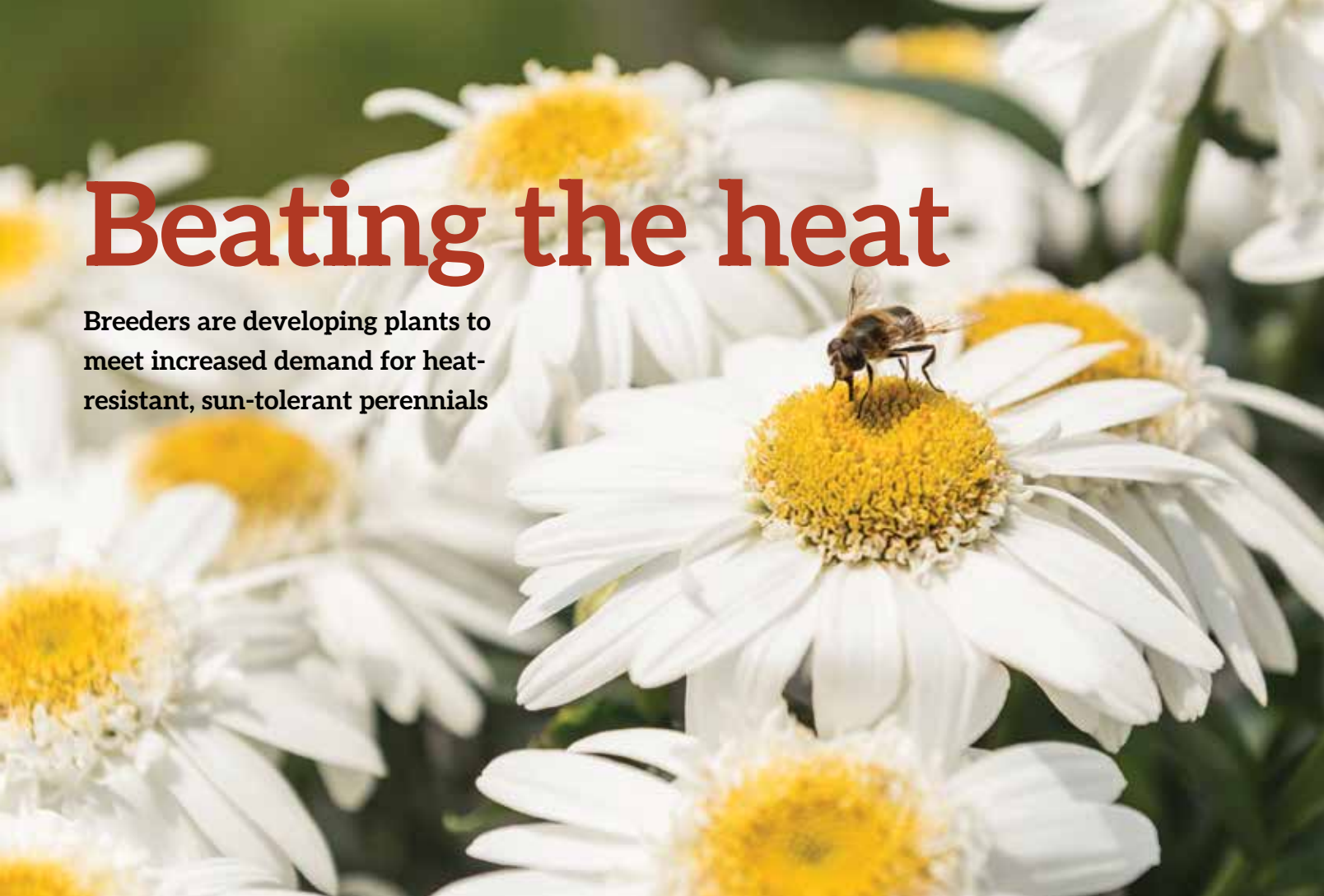
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Beating the heat

Breeders are developing plants to meet increased demand for heat-resistant, sun-tolerant perennials



Leucanthemum 'Sweet Daisy Birdy' is a first-year flowering perennial from Dümme Orange in Columbus, Ohio. PHOTO COURTESY OF DÜMMEN ORANGE.

BY EMILY HOARD

Hoping to meet an increased demand for heat-resistant, sun-tolerant perennials with strong blooming power, plant breeders have been trialing plants in a wide range of climates and growing conditions.

How it started and developed

The industry's focus on heat resilience has increased over the last decade and continues to grow, said Katie Miller, perennial product manager for Dümme Orange. She said growers and consumers enjoy the long-term color and texture of perennials in the garden because they last year-round.

"About 20 years ago, the design trends around xeriscaping and firewise landscape planning in the western United States created a focus on plants that are uniquely suited just to withstand heat as well as being drought tolerant, which really translates to survival for periods of time with little to no supplemental water," Miller said.

Firewise landscaping means creating a barrier of healthy green plants around a property in an area prone to wildfires.

Over time, breeders have been making improvements in plants that were already heat tolerant to begin with, said Katie Tamony, chief marketing officer at **Monrovia Nursery Company** in Dayton, Oregon.

"We're seeing *Agastache*, *Delosperma*, *Gaillardia*, *Verbena*, for example with significant improvements in



The *Kniphofia* PYROMANIA Collection adds drama to the landscape and does well in sunny, hot and dry conditions. PHOTO COURTESY OF PROVEN WINNERS

Beating the heat

bloom power, color, and overall heat tolerance,” Tamony said.

Climate connection

Matt Pielin, regional product manager at Walters Gardens in Zeeland, Michigan said he thinks shifting climate patterns have accelerated the work of breeding plants for heat and sun resistance.

“Prolonged heat, recurring drought and periodic water restrictions have made it increasingly important to develop plants that can thrive with less water and withstand higher temperatures,” Pielin said. “As a result, modern breeding efforts are placing greater emphasis on heat- and drought-tolerant perennials that deliver reliable performance.”

Miller said longevity is one of the factors consumers consider when purchasing plants.

“Part of the longevity comes from being able to withstand hot, cold, dry and critters,” Miller said. “Combined with national retailers seeking more uniform, nationally consistent offerings, there has been growing demand for perennials and annuals that perform reliably across regional climates.”

Breeders have been participating in trials in a wide range of climate conditions to meet this demand.

The USDA updated its cold hardiness zones map in 2023, reflecting rising average temperatures across the country. Miller said this update has led some growers and retailers in colder climate areas to add in plants that they would have previously avoided due to concerns over the plants’ survival in the winter.

“We’re also seeing the need for heat tolerance in cold hardy areas because of the fluctuations in temperature growing more as the climate changes,” Tamony said.

Regional differences

Tom Foley, Jr., director of product development at **Everde Growers**, said plants bred as heat-resistant perennials in the West need to withstand and thrive in full sun and dry conditions without burning.

“The Western sun is intense — bright, clear, and relentless compared to the Eastern U.S. or Europe,” Foley said.



Miner's Merlot (*Euphorbia* 'KM-MM024' PP32321) has burgundy foliage that holds color through summer heat. PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERDE GROWERS



Euphorbia Sahara™ 'Glacier Blue' (PP19027) has creamy white margins with gray-blue foliage; thrives in full sun and low-water conditions. PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERDE GROWERS



“Combine that with zero summer rainfall, and plants that can’t handle heat and drought will fail quickly.”

He said in Mediterranean climates like much of the West, perennials are thought of differently than in other places where plants die back in the winter and return in the spring. Instead, they are expected to provide year-round interest, as with grasses, woody sub-shrubs and evergreen species.

“In regions with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters, homeowners, landscape architects, and contractors expect plants to look good all year,” Foley said. “Evergreen foliage becomes a priority, and the plant palette expands beyond traditional perennials.”

He added that other regions are looking to the West as a proving ground for resilient perennials.

“Western gardeners have long prioritized low-water plants, but now other regions are catching up,” Foley said. “Extreme weather—heat waves, droughts, and heavy rains—is becoming common globally.”

Tamony said she’s seen the need for heat-resistant perennials in the Rocky Mountain areas and even the Midwest as more regions undergo heat and drought in the summer.

Miller said some markets, such as in California, have adjusted the types of plants that are offered in the market.

“In the previous decade there have been significant attempts to reduce water needs and install plants that can thrive on minimal supplemental watering,” Miller said.

Trialing plants

Dümmen Orange in Columbus, Ohio, has 28 different genera within a diverse array of perennial breeding projects, Miller said. “Because of the extensive timeline for any given breeding project, the diversity of projects and focus areas, we depend on trialing for extreme heat and extreme cold hardiness across the majority of our crops,” Miller said. “Having crops that can offer broad appeal to most of the climate regions around the U.S. and Canada make it more successful in the long run.” »



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Beating the heat



Yucca 'Dragon Slayer' thrives where other perennials struggle. PHOTO COURTESY OF PROVEN WINNERS

It can take three to five years to select plants for a project and then an additional three to five years for the selections to be ready to launch commercially.

Dümmen Orange uses traditional cross breeding methods to select the best performing plants for extended flowering periods, as seen with their *Iberis sempervirens* 'White Shadow'. The company also breeds for first-year flowering perennials like Lavender La Diva Eternal Elegance (*Lavandula angustifolia*), *Phlox paniculata* 'Flame Ice Blue' and *Leucanthemum* 'Sweet Daisy Birdy'.

The first-year flowering plants do not need to go through the process of vernalization, which requires a cold period during the winter to trigger growth, flowering and seed production. Therefore, they tend to do well in hot climates.

Selected varieties then undergo tests for heat tolerance in southern Florida and Texas.

"Heat combined with humidity can have a very different impact on perennial performance compared to heat with minimal humidity," Miller said. Places with hot days and cold nights also have a different impact on plants than places with more consistent temperatures.

The perennials are planted in the ground and evaluated for two to three seasons during the trial.

"This allows for the best overview of survivability from one season to the next as well as performance since there is a difference between surviving and thriving," Miller said.

Stand-out varieties

Tamony said she's excited to see the development of more perennials with improved heat resistance, blooming power and sun-tolerant color.

One that stands out is Monrovia's Fiesta™ Lantana (*Lantana camara*) series.

"This is a sterile lantana that throws all its energy into bloom instead of seed, so you get a lantana that's just covered with bright happy blooms on a plant that stays nice and compact," Tamony said.

She's also a fan of the new *Heliopsis* 'Bacio Del Sole', which is a variety of a plant native to North America that is bred for heat tolerance and increased flowering. Monrovia's Hosta Sunhosta™ (*Hosta* 'HOST SUN 08') is also bred to perform well in heat and sun.

Consumers and contractors want

plants that establish themselves quickly, are easy to maintain and are visually stunning, said Foley.

"Breeding priorities have shifted toward blooming power, heat resistance and sun tolerance," Foley said. "Customers want plants that deliver color from spring through fall with minimal care."

He said the *Agapanthus* Ever® series are game-changers for their long-lasting blooms and ability to thrive in heat and sun.

Dianella 'Clarity Blue' PP27348 is a grass-like perennial that Foley said is ideal in low-water landscapes.

Foley also highlighted several *Euphorbia* varieties that do well in full sun and low-water conditions, including *Euphorbia* Sahara™ 'Glacier Blue' (*E. x martinii* 'Glacier Blue' PP19027), Miner's Merlot (*E. x MM024* PP32321), and Tiny Treasure (*E. x martinii* 'Waleuutr' PPAF).

Others that stood out to Foley are the *Penstemon* 'Dark Towers' PP20013 with its dark foliage and long-lasting lavender blooms, and *Salvia* 'Allen Chickering,' an evergreen sub-shrub with purple flowers and no need for summer irrigation.

Pielin said his company has some varieties that are perfectly suited to toler-



The Hibiscus Summerific Collection produces massive, tropical-looking flowers. While these plants need plenty of water, they love the sun and heat. PHOTO COURTESY OF PROVEN WINNERS

ate both sun and heat.

Pielin recommended the Proven Winners' *Agastache* hybrid Meant to Bee® (*Anise Hyssop*) collection.

"*Agastache* are well-adapted to thrive in dry soils and is right at home in rock gardens and xeric container plantings where it will attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and honeybees," Pielin said.

He said *Allium* plants are also easy-to-grow pollinator friendly plants that do well in full sun conditions.

Blooming power

Pielin said the Hibiscus Summerific Collection produces massive, tropical-looking flowers. While these plants need plenty of water, they love the sun and heat.

A more drought-tolerant perennial is *Hyssopus* 'Nectar Ninja', known for its fragrance and soft lavender-blue blooms.

"With a naturally rounded, compact habit, this drought-tolerant perennial thrives in full sun and average to poor soils, making it a versatile and resilient choice for modern landscapes," Pielin said.

The *Kniphofia* PYROMANIA Collection does well in sunny, hot and dry conditions.

"The spiky flowers and upright habit gives a very unique drama to your landscape, with rebloom extending the color late into the season," Pielin said. "*Kniphofia* is evergreen in mild regions and herbaceous in cooler zones."

Pielin said *Muhlenbergia capillaris* 'Candy Floss' blooms early, about a month before other selections.

"Its deep rose-pink plumes float above fine-textured foliage, creating a soft, airy effect that adds movement and color to the fall landscape," Pielin said.

Pielin also recommends *Rudbeckia*

'Treasure Trove' with its many golden star-shaped flowers that bloom for an extended time.

He added that *Yucca* 'Dragon Slayer' thrives where other perennials struggle.

"A perfectly rounded rosette of rigid, powdery blue, sword-like foliage delivers strong structure with little to no maintenance," Pielin said. "Exceptionally drought tolerant and highly resistant to deer and rabbits, this full-sun perennial is a powerhouse for hot, dry landscapes."

Conclusion

Miller said perennial breeding is about creating confidence for both growers and consumers.

"As the breeder, by selecting for plants that are more universal in their ability to withstand adverse conditions, consumers should ultimately experience greater long-term success in their gardens," Miller said.

Tamony said heat and drought tolerance is one of the most exciting trends she's seeing in plants because it really addresses the needs of the current market.

Foley said the future of perennials is about performance and sustainability.

"Plants that thrive in heat, conserve water and deliver season-long beauty aren't just trends—they're necessities," Foley said. "Breeders and growers who embrace these priorities will shape the landscapes of tomorrow." ☺

Emily Hoard is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master's degree in multimedia journalism. You can reach her at Hoarde123@Gmail.com

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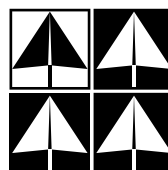
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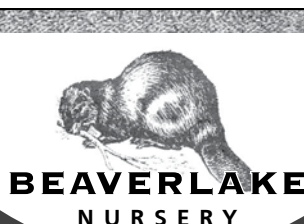
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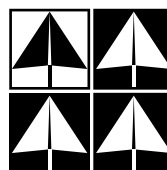
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GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Series content is coordinated by Dr. Lloyd Nackley, associate professor of nursery production and greenhouse management at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon.



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What we found

Italic name = wild-type native
'Name in quotes' = cultivar

Pollinator richness (# of species)

Yarrow			Columbine		Farewell-to-Spring				California Poppy				Douglas' Aster		
21	15	14	9	3	32	17	23	9	31	19	16	21	29	29	25
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	'Moonshine'	'Salmon Beauty'	<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	'XeraTones'	<i>Clarkia ameona</i>	'Aurora'	'Dwarf White'	'Scarlet'	<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	'Mikado'	'Purple Gleam'	'White'	<i>Symphotrichum subspicatum</i>	'Sauvie Snow'	'Sauvie Star'

Pollinator visitation

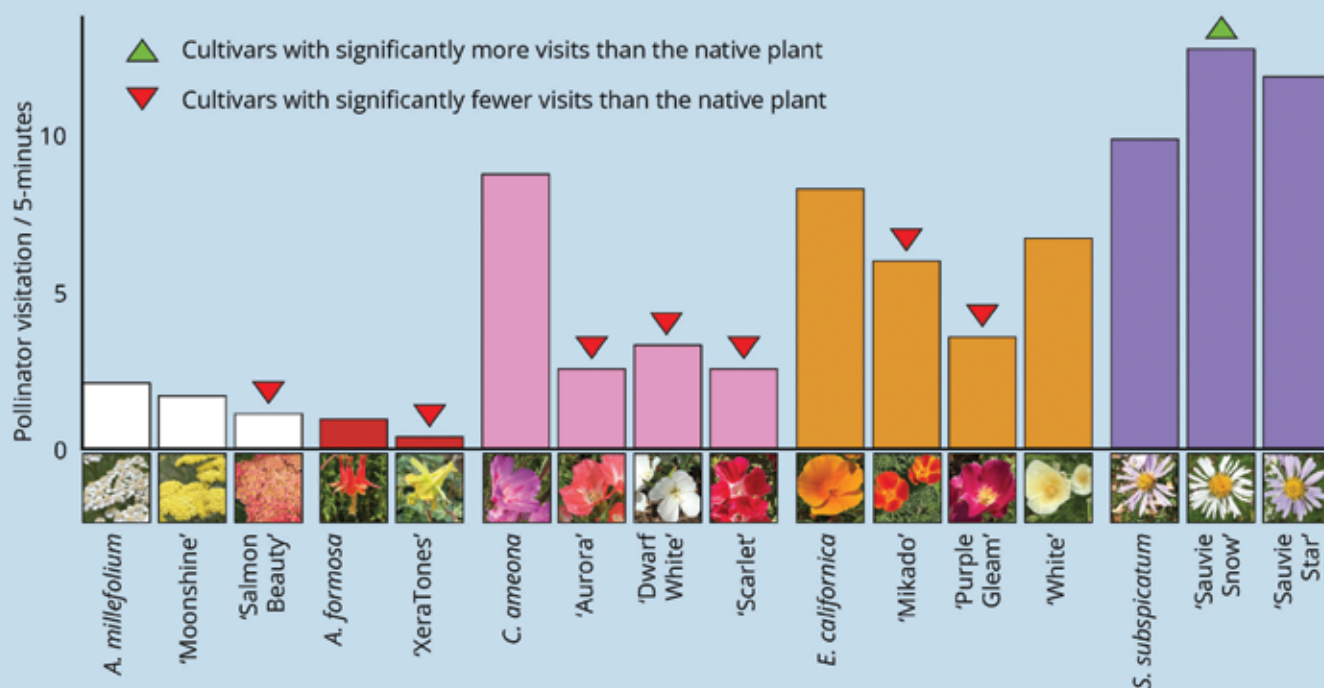


Figure 1. Pollinator richness (horizontal bar along the top) and visitation (bar graph towards the bottom) on five groups of native plants, and their cultivars. Cultivars with triangles had significantly greater (green) or fewer (red) visits than its native plant comparator. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

Native vs. native cultivars

OSU's study of native plants and cultivars provides insights into preferences of gardeners and pollinators

BY JEN HAYES AND GAIL LANGELLOTTO

Native plants have greatly increased in popularity among gardeners over the past several years, in part due to these plants' purported value to bees and other pollinators. However, many native plants are difficult to grow and finish at scale in modern nursery production systems.

Also, some native plants are viewed as too unattractive and too weedy-looking for gardens, although simple messages about the pollinators found on these plants can significantly increase a gardeners' willingness to plant them in their garden (Anderson et al. 2021).



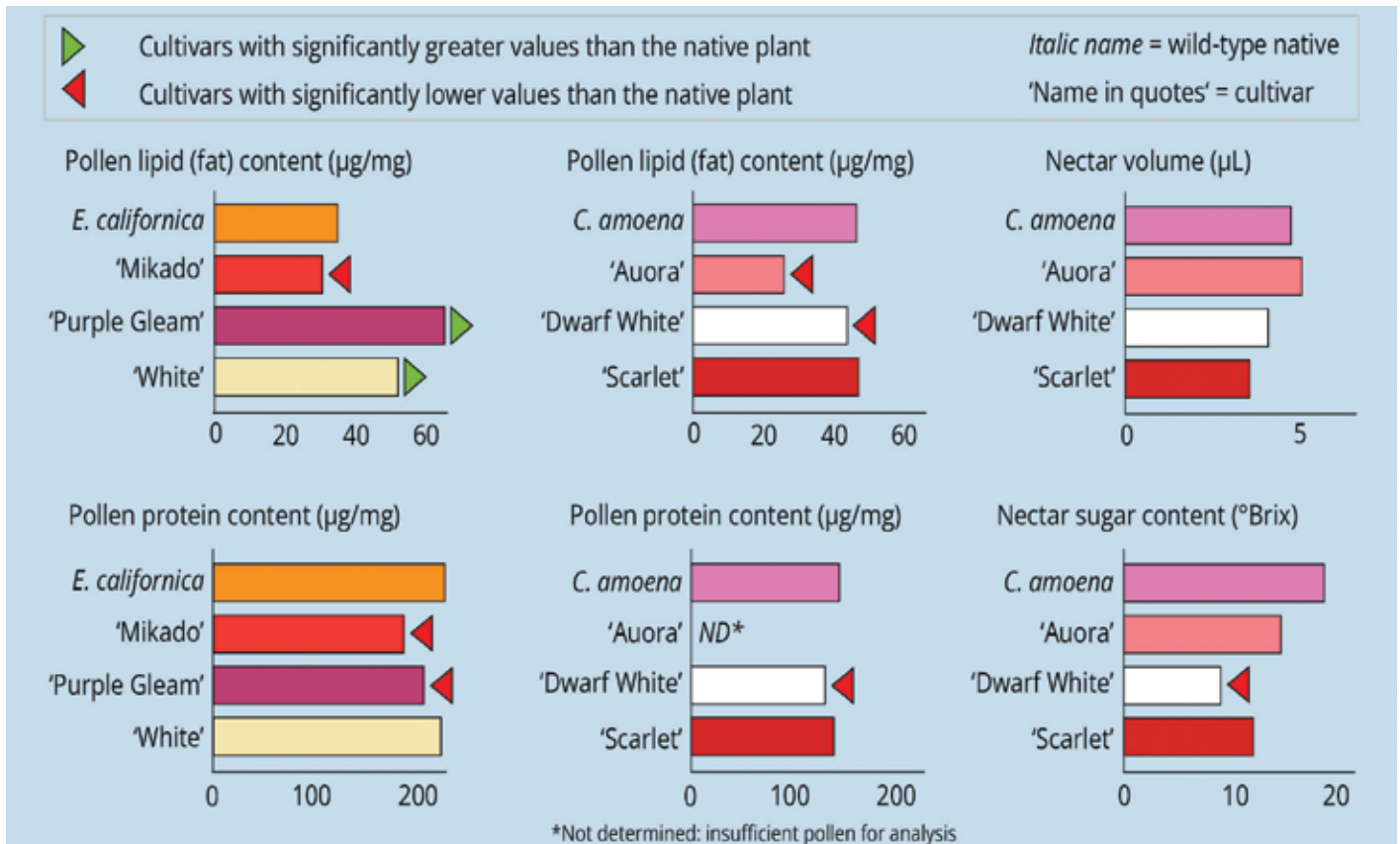


Figure 2. Pollen lipid (top two graphs) and pollen protein (bottom two graphs) content for California Poppy (left two graphs) and Farewell-to-Spring (right two graphs).



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Native cultivars are a potential solution to some of the production and marketing limitations associated with native plants. Native cultivars are often bred for improved aesthetic traits like compact habit, larger flowers, and novel flower or foliage colors. However, these selected changes may influence how both pollinators and gardeners perceive a plant.

Led by Dr. Jen Hayes, our lab group conducted a four-year study of the relative attractiveness of five groups of native plants and their cultivars to pollinators, and to gardeners. These five plant groups included Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*, including the 'Moonshine' and 'Salmon Beauty' cultivars), Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*, including the 'Xera Tones' cultivar), Farewell-to-Spring (*Clarkia amoena*, including the 'Aurora', 'Dwarf White', and 'Scarlet' cultivars), California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*, including the 'Mikado', 'Purple Gleam', and 'White' cultivars), and Douglas' Aster (*Symphyotrichum subspicatum*, including the 'Savvia Snow', and 'Savvie Star' cultivars).

We identified pollinators and conducted five-minute observations of their visits to native plant-cultivar groups over three years (2020–2022) to see if pol-

linators had a preference for either plant type. In general, we found more pollinator species on native plants than cultivars (Figure 1, Pollinator richness), and that pollinators visited native plants more frequently than cultivars (Figure 1, Pollinator visitation).

For pollinator visitation, we specifically found that visitation was significantly reduced for 7 of 11 comparisons (64%), not significantly different than the native plant for 3 comparisons (27%) and was significantly higher in 1 of 11 comparisons (9%).

Pollinator visitation was significantly higher on the 'Sauvie Snow' cultivar, compared to the native plant. Pollinator richness was on 'Sauvie Snow' was equal to the native plant.

The Douglas' aster cultivars were selected from a local population of *Symphyotrichum subspicatum*, rather than bred for ornamental traits. They may thus be more similar to the native species, relative to cultivars in other plant groups, which may have promoted pollinator association with the cultivars.

We also studied the nutritional traits (pollen and nectar) of these native plants and cultivars to understand how plant breeding might impact the rewards offered by native plants to pollinators. We found that cultivars varied significantly from native plants across multiple floral display or reward traits.

Flowering phenology did not differ among plants in the *Clarkia* or *Symphyotrichum* groups. Within the Columbine group, 'Xera Tones' flowered for a significantly shorter time period than the native, as did 'Mikado' and 'Purple Gleam' within the poppy group. Only *Achillea* 'Moonshine' flowered longer than its corresponding native plant.

In terms of floral rewards 'Xera Tones' had significantly less nectar (than native Columbine), and 'Dwarf White' (farewell-to-spring) and 'Sauvie Star' (Douglas' aster) had significantly less sugar content than their corresponding native plants.

For each plant group, there was at least one instance where pollen protein and/or lipid content was significantly »

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Plant Group C: Douglas' Aster



Figure 3. An example of the visuals presented to gardeners taking our aesthetic ranking survey. The order of the native plant (in this case, the one on the far right) and cultivars was randomly presented. Inset photos of flowers were set against photos that showed plant habit. In this case, a person is standing next to each plant, for scale. Visuals were coupled with more detailed information about each plant, including size, spread, bloom duration, etc., to help people determine which plants they preferred. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



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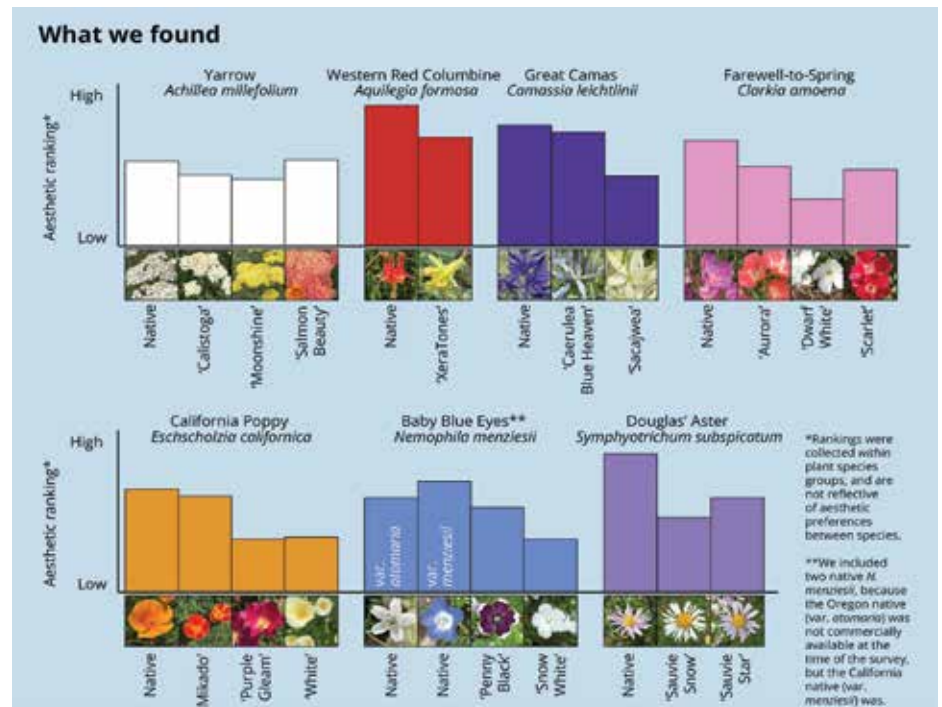


Figure 4. Aesthetic rankings (translated from Likert survey scores) of native plants and native cultivars. As with all of our studies, comparisons were made within a plant grouping, rather than across all plants. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

different than the native plant (illustrated for California Poppy and Farewell-to-Spring, Figure 2). These changes, whether positive or negative, change the protein-to-lipid ratio of pollen in ways that can ultimately affect the pollinator communities associated with each plant.

Notably, none of the native plant cultivars were bred for nectar or pollen traits. Thus changes in rewards were likely pleiotropic. All but one of our native plant versus cultivar groups had significantly different bee communities to their native plant counterpart. Once again, the mini-

mally developed Douglas' aster cultivars hosted similar bee communities to those found on the native Douglas' aster.

Finally, we created a survey to understand gardeners' aesthetic preferences for seven Pacific Northwest native plant species and their cultivars. We asked gardeners to rank native plants and cultivars of the same species by aesthetic preference, without labelling which plant was which (Figure 3).

We found that, on average, gardeners ranked native plants as more attractive than cultivars, except in the case of yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), where the cultivar 'Salmon Beauty' had the highest aesthetic ranking (Figure 4). Notably, across all flowers, white flowers tended to be disfavored. This suggests that native plant cultivars may not represent aesthetic improvements in native plant species, and that breeders and nurseries producing native cultivars may be missing an opportunity to cater to the preferences of the ecological gardening movement. ©

Jen Hayes is a postdoctoral scholar in the Pollinator Health Lab at Oregon State University. She can be reached at HayesJen@OregonState.edu. Gail Langellotto is professor of urban horticulture at Oregon State University. She can be reached at Gail.Langellotto@OregonState.edu.

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Visit our website (<https://gardenecology.oregonstate.edu/gardenecology>) to access the Garden Ecology Lab Briefs (in the 'For Gardeners' section), and learn more about our studies.

Gail Langellotto, Ph.D. is a Professor of Horticulture and the Director of the BioResource Research Program at Oregon State University.



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When I am out visiting Oregon growers, I have conversations about labor shortages, rising wages, and the push toward mechanization. These are real pressures, and automation will continue to play an important role in our future.

Still, there's a growing misconception that technology can replace hand labor in nursery production. It cannot — at least not in the ways that matter most.

Plants are living systems, not widgets. They respond to subtle cues that no machine can yet fully interpret. An experienced worker can spot early signs of stress in foliage, notice an off-color leaf, feel when soil texture is wrong, or recognize a growth habit that won't meet market expectations weeks down the line. These observations don't come from data dashboards; they come from years of hands-on experience.

Hand labor is not just about tasks — it's about judgment. Automation excels at consistency. Hand labor excels at adaptability.

Many of our most successful nurseries are built on long-term crews who understand specific crops, soils, and microclimates. When weather throws a curveball or a disease pressure emerges unexpectedly, experienced workers are often the first line of defense.

None of this is an argument against automation. Quite the opposite. The smartest growers are integrating technology to support their workforce, not replace it. Automation can reduce the physical strain of repetitive tasks, improve safety,

and allow workers to focus on higher-skill responsibilities. Mechanized pot fillers, automated conveyors, and irrigation controls can all free up labor for tasks that require judgment and care.

The goal should be augmentation, not substitution.

The numbers don't lie

Nursery Management recently reported that U.S. nursery industry has been operating with a labor deficit for decades, and the crisis is worsening due both to a limited share of available labor and increased costs to hire workers. Additionally, the USDA Census of Horticulture (2020) recorded approximately 8,441 nursery and greenhouse operations in 2009 and only 6,458 in 2019, a 23.5% decline over 10 years.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics used 2017 data for hours worked for greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production (NAICS 1114) in the U.S. as an index to compare all other years. Since its peak in 2002 at 32% higher than in 2017, the total number of wage and salary workers within business establishments declined approximately 50% in 2024 from that 2002 high.

Convincing policy makers to support ag

I hear a common refrain from our state and federal elected officials that they support the family farm. In their hearts, I believe they do.

However, the policies coming out of Congress and state legislatures can convey a different message. I am gravely concerned that many urban legislators say they like farming but not the act of farming. As my friend Rod Park (**Park's Nursery**) is fond of saying, "They like family farms but not farming as a verb."

It is hard enough to run a business, but as we focus on our human resource of farmworkers, it seems like there is a disconnect with burdensome regulations, impacts to the supply chain, and business climate to make ends meet. When legislators get involved with the acts of farming, it is rarely acknowledged that they are



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

outside of their knowledge base.

Reframing the labor crisis

From an association standpoint, we also need to reframe how we talk about hand labor. Too often, nursery work is portrayed as low-skill or temporary. That narrative does a disservice to the professionalism and expertise required to produce high-quality plant material.

We should be investing in training, career pathways, and recognition for skilled workers — just as we invest in equipment and infrastructure.

This matters not only for current operations, but for the future of the industry. As automation advances, the workers who remain will need even higher skill levels. They'll be interpreting data, managing systems, and making complex decisions that machines can't.

There's also a consumer angle we shouldn't ignore. Buyers — whether landscapers, retailers, or homeowners — care deeply about quality. They may appreciate efficiency, but they value healthy, well-grown plants above all else. Oregon is known for its quality nursery stock and we must preserve the building blocks of production to keep it that way.

As we plan for the future, let's resist the false choice between automation and labor. The real opportunity lies in blending the best of both — using technology to enhance human skill, and valuing the hands that make our industry possible. Because at the end of the day, no matter how advanced our systems become, nurseries will always be places where human hands — and human judgment — still matter. ©



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