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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.



Patrick Newton

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

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. ☺