



All abuzz

A sense of excitement was in the air at this year's Farwest Show

More than 4,000 nursery professionals came to the 2026 Farwest Show, with more than 30% attending for the first time. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

BY VIC PANICHKUL

A good buzz and sense of excitement filled the aisles at this year's Farwest Show. "The vibe was amazing. Everybody seemed excited to be here, excited to see which nurseries were here, and excited to reconnect with friends and associates," said Farwest Show Committee Chair Mikaela Eaton, farm manager for **Eschenfelder Farms**. "The traffic was great all day Wednesday and Thursday morning, I was so busy on Wednesday that I couldn't leave my booth."

"It felt like a homecoming," said Mark Leichty, director of business development at **Little Prince of Oregon Nursery**, which returned to the Farwest Show after a long absence. "We wanted to make sure everyone knows we haven't just disappeared."

There was a sense of anticipation from the younger staff members who were working the booth. "It was rewarding to see their creativity in putting the booth together and they were rewarded with a [Best 10x10] booth award from Farwest,"



AmericanHort CEO Lionel van der Walt, center, listens intently to Farwest Keynote speaker Charlie Hall. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Leichty said.

This year's attendance at Farwest was strong with more than 4,000 attendees. More than 30% were first-time attendees, said OAN Trade Show Manager Connie

Lindsay. There were more than 300 exhibitors, including 55 that were new. Education seminars registration increased 17% from last year, said Events and Education Coordinator Jamie O'Brien. ➤



Farwest Show Committee members Ryan Holmes (Truck Transportation Services), Mikaela Eaton (Eschenfelder Farms) and Joe Carli (All Green Goods) catch up at Spirit of 77 at the Pub Crawl. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone is dunked for donations to the Oregon Nurseries Foundation. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

"Attendees were able to grow their knowledge at Farwest with seminars covering everything from horticultural purchasing 101's to pesticide safety to garden podcasts," O'Brien said.

"One new seminar attendee was so impressed with the show that she told her company they should be an exhibitor next year," Lindsay said. "The exhibitors really showed well this year. The show floor looked amazing and many of the new products shown by the new exhibitors were definitely a highlight for me."

This year the show also created some exciting energy with two special features: a pet adoption area, and a dunk tank hosted by exhibitor Ash & Acre that raised money for ONF scholarships.

"The puppies and kittens were definitely a big hit," said Lindsay. Visitors would wait patiently to cuddle with their favorite furry adoptee.

And on Friday afternoon, guests lined up to make donations to the Oregon Nurseries Foundation for the opportunity to dunk OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone by throwing balls at a target. It was all good-natured fun for a good cause. "These special events added to the excitement on the show floor," Lindsay said.

"We were very happy at the turnout for the show and for our booth," said Daniel Ornelas, regional sales manager with REPSO. "We have a new product

and we're a first-time exhibitor and we had great interest," he said. "We'll be back next year with more staff because we were so busy we couldn't get away from our booth to visit customers who are also exhibitors here."

"My impression of Farwest was very positive," said first-time attendee and CEO of AmericanHort Lionel van der Walt. "The quality of the exhibitors and the concentration of nursery businesses in the region make it a very valuable gathering. What stood out most was the strength of the relationships across the industry. It is a great environment for reconnecting with members, meeting with growers, and having meaningful conversations about the opportunities and challenges facing the industry."

"We usually send a team of store managers and buyers" to the Farwest Show, said Jose Menendez, VP of operations for SummerWinds Nursery, which operates stores in the California Bay Area and around Phoenix, Arizona. This year was no different.

"This has been a good show for us," said Athena Boyer, co-owner of **SeaCoast Compost** of Charleston, Oregon. "There was a lot of movement especially during the first day."

"I've been pleased," said sales rep Lucia Christie with **Blooming Nursery** in Cornelius, Oregon. "It's been busy for us all three days and the traffic has been

steady. We've seen a lot of existing customers and it's a great place to do that — multiple people in the same spot!"

"The show's been really good and we've gotten a lot of interest from nurseries who have sought us out because they're curious about drones," said Jonathan Buswell, of **HarvestWise Drone Solutions**. "There was an automation summit here and it was very well attended. Asa [DeForest, the owner] was a panelist and as soon as that summit was over, we had a flood of people at the booth. We've had a lot of good interaction at our booth and there's been no big gaps in traffic. It's been one of the better shows in the past five years."

"It's been a good show for us and we've seen a lot of our clients and vendors," said George Carter of GGS Structures of Vineland Station, Ontario, Canada. "I think next year we will bring one more person with us." The traffic was busy enough that Carter and his counterpart could not leave the booth and another person at the booth would let them be able to see their customers who were exhibiting and couldn't leave their booths.

"This is our first show and our owner wanted us to come to find a West Coast distributor," said Kirk Vanderschel of Versailles Garden, which manufactures pottery, fountains and high-end greenhouses. "We ended up with a really good booth



Scan QR code to watch a video of OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone at the dunk tank.

location and traffic has been very good.”

“Overall, I think there has been better traffic and a lot more energy at this show than last year,” said Carlton Davidson, west regional sales manager for **Bailey Nurseries**. “There are a lot of new faces here, but I’ve also been able to see a lot of our existing customers too. We did something different this year and scheduled for our booth. The traffic has been steady so we scheduled two inside sales reps to work the booth and two more sales people to walk the aisles outside the booth to meet customers rather than everyone standing here. You also get to see the new varieties being shown in the show in case we see something that we should be growing too.”

For noted economist Charlie Hall, Ph.D., professor of international floriculture at Texas A&M University and Farwest Keynote speaker, it was his sixth

trip to Farwest. “It was a great show,” he said. “It’s always good to see all of the beautiful plant material and the networking here is incredible. A lot of people miss the fact that you have to form the relationship with people before you can make the sale. And you can’t develop trust unless you meet face-to-face with them.”

In this year’s keynote address, Hall conceded that we live in an unpredictable world these days. However, he challenged green industry businesses to make their best possible strategic decisions with the information they have, whether looking at production levels, pricing, or capital investments. The key is knowing the difference between risks, which are known, and uncertainties, which can’t be predicted.

All indecision has a cost. Those who study, set a personal deadline, and then act are most likely to be rewarded, he said.

Overall, the post-COVID market

for plant products has remained strong, Hall said. He expects even more demand once more people start purchasing homes, which the numbers say will happen.

“We have a latent demand for 1.7 million housing units between now and 2030,” he said. “When mortgage rates get below 5.5%, that’s a tipping point. Everybody that’s been waiting in the wings to buy and sell a house, they’re gonna pull the trigger, and when they pull the trigger, they’re gonna need some flowers, shrubs and trees and landscaping services.” ☺

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