2026–2027 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Darcy Ruef — PRESIDENT
Al's Garden & Home
1220 N. Pacific Hwy.
Woodburn, OR 97071
DRuef@Als-GardenCenter.com
503-981-1245

Patrick Newton — PAST PRESIDENT
Powell's Nursery Inc.
5054 S.W. Boyd Road
Gaston, OR 97119
PowellNursery@gmail.com
503-357-0631

Chris Robinson — PRESIDENT-ELECT
Robinson Nursery Inc.
PO Box 100
Amity, OR 97101
Chris@RobinsonNursery.com
877-855-8733

Jesse Nelson — VICE PRESIDENT
Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.
31020 S.E. Waybill Road
Boring, OR 97009
JNelson@HansNelson.com
503-663-3348

Tyler Meskers — TREASURER
Oregon Flowers Inc.
PO Box 311
Aurora, OR 97002
Tyler@OregonFlowers.com
503-678-2580

Andrea Avila-Aragon — SECRETARY
Smith Gardens
23150 Boones Ferry Road N.E.
Aurora, OR 97002-9461
Andrea.Avila-Aragon@SmithGardens.com
503-678-5373

Noah Fessler — MEMBER AT LARGE
Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.
13009 McKee School Road N.E.
Woodburn, OR 97071
NoahF@WoodburnNursery.com
503-634-2231

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patrick Peterson — ASSOCIATE MEMBER
OHP Inc.
PatrickP@OHP.com
503-789-1557

Greg Elwell — CONTAINER GROWER
Iseli Nursery
GElwell@IseliNursery.com
503-663-3822

Blake Nelson — CONTAINER GROWER
Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.
Blake@BountifulFarms.com
503-981-7494

Sam Pohlschneider — CONTAINER GROWER
Pohlschneider Nursery
Sam@PohlschneiderNursery.com
503-969-1310

Jason Burns — FIELD / B&B GROWER
Surface Nursery Inc.
Jason@SurfaceNursery.com
503-663-5224

Sam Barkley — FIELD / BARE ROOT GROWER
J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.
SamB@JFSchmidt.com
503-663-4128

Vladimir Lomen — FIELD / BARE ROOT GROWER
Sester Farms
Vladimir@SesterFarms.com
503-663-4844

Margie Barnett — GREENHOUSE
Margie's Farm & Garden
MargiesFarmAndGarden@yahoo.com
503-866-6123

Jonathan Jasinski — GREENHOUSE
Microplant Nurseries Inc.
Jonathan@MicroplantNurseries.com
503-792-3696

Barb Iverson — RETAIL
Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm
Iverson@MonitorCoop.com
503-634-2243

Serving the industry where I grew up

As I take over as your president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, I am humbled by your faith in me, challenged by the issues that face the industry, and grateful for the opportunity to serve this industry that I love.



Darcy Ruef

There are many of you who may not know me, and I hope that we have a chance to talk, so that I can listen to the concerns you have and how the association can serve you.

A couple of things first. Thank you to our outgoing president, Patrick Newton, who had to deal with Japanese beetle and the potential harm to our grower community. I only hope I can live up to all you've accomplished during your presidency. You have been an inspiration; I look forward to continuing to serve with you.

I also want to take a moment and say thank you to the OAN board and to this industry for trusting me to advocate for and to represent an industry very near and dear to my heart.

My Dad, Jack Bigej, noted a couple of years ago, before he passed, that he would be the only past president of the OAN to have both a daughter and a son serve as president, as he did in 1992. Now it's true, Dad — here we go!

Of course, growing up in the nursery industry, I might not have appreciated the nursery lifestyle quite as much as I should have. The "long" days of taking cuttings and covering hoop houses in fall and winter weather had me swearing that an inside job was the job for me.

I, along with my siblings — Mark Bigej, Dorothy Russo, and Tracy Karsseboom — grew up in a family business called Al's Fruit and Shrub Center. Our Dad loved finding his own personal workforce projects (led by our Mom, Deanna Bigej). When Mom and Dad saw a need for college funding, they put us to work growing plants to sell to Al's and other nurseries in the area. This became Al's Fruit and Shrub Center's first venture into vertical integration.

We called our side business Little Big E Nursery. It did the trick, paying for all four of us to go to college so we could chase our dreams. Through various paths, Mark, Dorothy and I all wound up back at the family business in the early '90s. From there, our company grew into **Al's Garden & Home**, with four retail garden centers and three growing locations to support them.

There are a lot of things facing us right now, both as a business and an industry. We are double taxed with Oregon's Corporate Activities Tax, which taxes business activity rather than profits. That type of tax hits low-margin businesses like ours harder than most others.

We are faced with a slow economy here in Oregon, as well as high transportation and fuel costs, — not to mention escalating labor costs. I appreciate so much the work that has been done in both Salem and Washington, D.C. in the past year. I encourage everyone in the association to make your voice heard. It takes all of us to make a difference. Please do your part and vote on November 3. We need change.

Thank you to my husband, Joe, who is patient with me and has no idea what's about to hit him. Thank you, Dad, for giving me the love of the game and the industry.

And for everyone reading? I'm ready to listen and advocate for our family business, your family business and this industry. Let's go!

Darcy Ruef