Digger

NOVEMBER 2026



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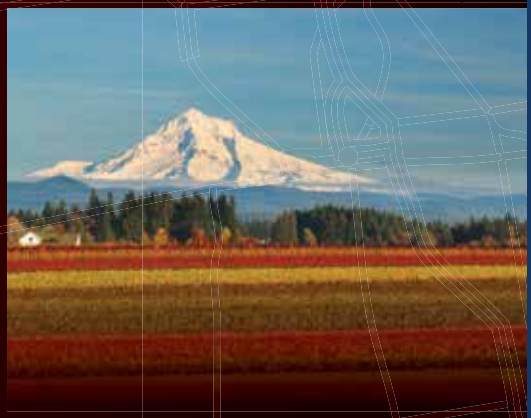


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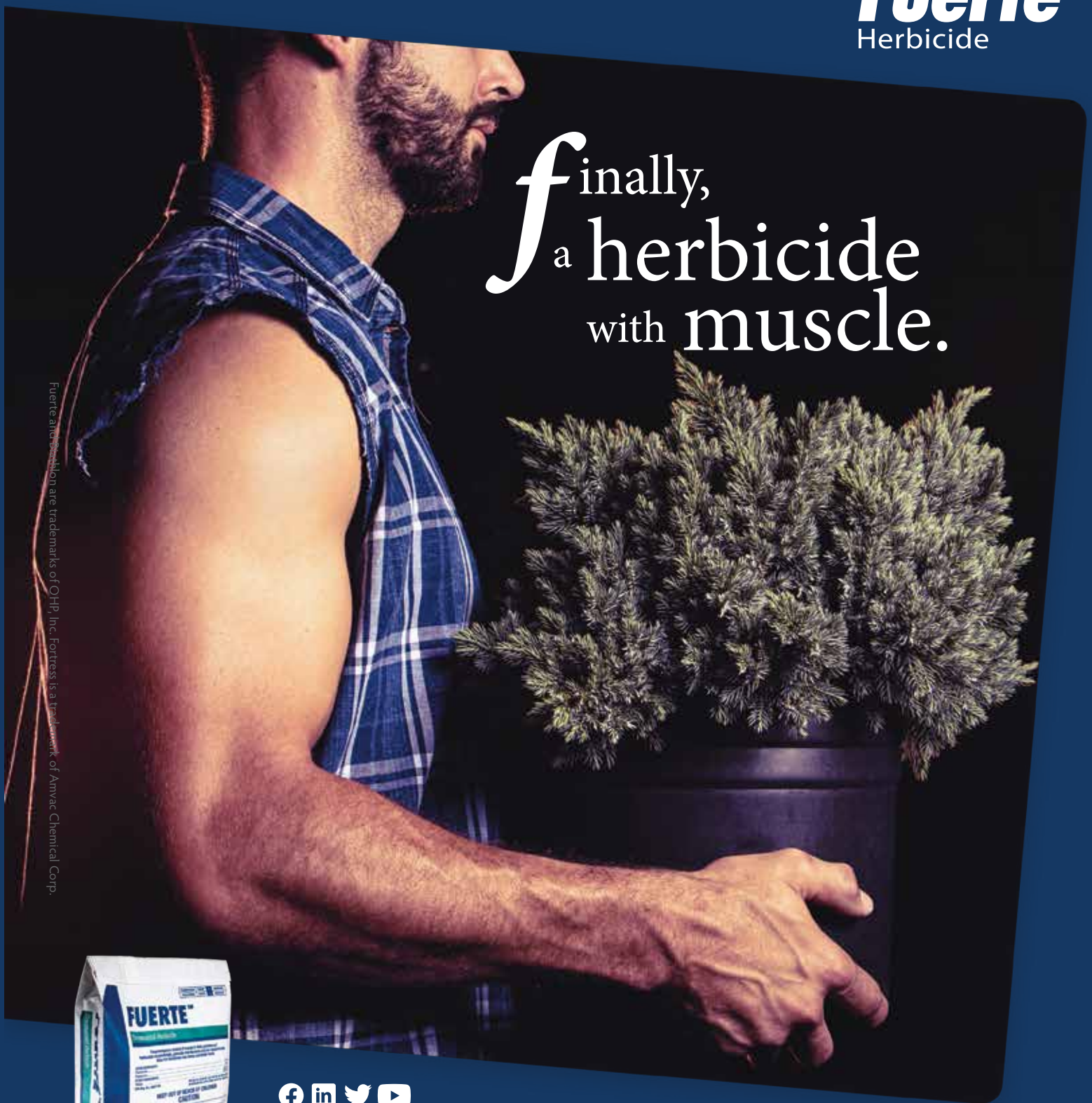
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November 2027 Vol. 70 No. 11
The Transportation Issue





The Transporation Issue

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On the cover: Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc. Crew Leader Celso Barron drives an ariculated loader to load a pallet of plants into a truck to be packed by nursery workers. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

On this page: Left: Mauricio de Jesus Rosendo (left) and Sebastian Lopes load plants into a truck at Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc. in Woodburn, Oregon. Getting plant material loaded properly is key to them arriving safely at the destination. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL.
Right: Charlie Hall delivers the keynote address at the 2026 Farwest Show. PHOTO BY MAX STEIN

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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

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 3, 5, 10

AG SAFETY SEMINARS

The Oregon Agricultural Chemicals and Fertilizers Association is hosting a series of in-person and online agricultural stewardship and safety seminars in November. Earn an anticipated 8 hours of pesticide relicensing credits. Pendelton, Oregon, Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. November 3, $160. Wilsonville, Oregon, Wilsonville Holiday Inn, 25425 S.W. 95th Avenue, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. November 5, $160. Webinar, 8 a.m. –5 p.m. November 10, $150. For more information or to register, go to **OACFA.com/#Safety-Seminars**.

NOVEMBER 6–7

OAN ANNUAL CONVENTION

Make plans to attend Raiders of the Lost Bark: The 2026 OAN Annual Convention, November 6–7 at Central Oregon's spectacular Sunriver Resort and reconnect with friends, celebrate our industry, and making memories together. Gather your team for a weekend filled with laughter, recognition, great conversations, and the relationships that make OAN and Oregon's nursery industry stronger. Join OAN for fresh ideas, new connections, and opportunities that will help shape the future of our businesses and our association. Complimentary childcare will be available during these events: Hospitality Suites, Annual Meeting, and President's Awards Banquet. Registration and full schedule are available at **OAN.org/Convention2026**. All attendees must register. The deadline was October 23, but check with the OAN at 503-682-5089. The deadline for discounted convention block rate housing was October 15, but lodging may be available through Sunriver Resort at **SunriverResort.com**. Please mention the OAN Convention.

NOVEMBER 18–19

GREEN INDUSTRY SHOW & CONFERENCE

The 2026 Green Industry Show & Conference is set to take place Wednesday–Thursday, November 18–19, at Westerner Park in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. This year's theme, Rooted In Innovation: Growing Smarter for Tomorrow, encapsulates the spirit of innovation and growth within the landscape industry. For more information or to register, go to **GreenIndustryShow.com**.

DECEMBER 1

FARM BUREAU FUSION CONFERENCE

Oregon Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers and the Promotion and Engagement Programs are coming together for a great Fusion Conference designed to provide members with opportunities to tell their stories and experiences that will help them grow as leaders and as individuals. The Fusion Conference will focus on advocacy, networking, leadership, media training, and telling the story of agriculture. The conference is December 1 at the Boise Center in Boise, Idaho. For information, go to **OregonFB.org/Events.**



OAN's next open house will be at Iseli Nursery in Boring, Oregon. PHOTO COURTESY OF ISELI NURSERY

DECEMBER 1

OAN OPEN HOUSE

Save the date for the Oregon Association of Nurseries' Open House December 1 at Iseli Nursery in Boring, Oregon. Whether you're a longtime OAN member or newer to the industry, this is a great opportunity to see a successful nursery in action and build your network. Bring a friend! Know someone who isn't an OAN member yet? Invite them along, it's a great introduction to the strength and support of Oregon's nursery community. Check back at **OAN.org/Events** for more information coming soon!

DECEMBER 2

FARM BUREAU TRI-STATE CONVENTION

The Oregon Farm Bureau joins Washington and Idaho Farm Bureaus for the Tri-State Annual Convention, December 2 at the Boise Center in Boise, Idaho. Special guests include American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall. 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 2027 Farwest Show, August 25–27, 2027 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, 2026. A committee will review the proposed presenters and topics and make selections based on timeliness, ingenuity and industry relevance.

JANUARY 13–15

MID-ATLANTIC NURSERY TRADE SHOW

The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) is one of the horticulture industry's largest B2B trade shows. Hosted annually in Baltimore, Maryland and the Baltimore Convention Center, thousands of industry professionals gather at MANTS to connect, source plants and products, discover what's new, and build business relationships. For more information and to register, go to **MANTS.com.**

FEBRUARY 10

OREGON NURSERIES' HALL OF FAME BANQUET

Save the date for a night to recognize those individuals instrumental in the development of the Oregon nursery industry. The Hall of Fame Banquet will be held at the Abernethy Center in Oregon City. Stay tuned for more information coming soon.

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**.

Two branches of 7 Dees merge

Some 70 years after the 7 Dees name was established, two branches of the family business are together again, *Lawn & Landscape* magazine reported. Dennis' 7 Dees and Drake's 7 Dees have merged, and now operate as simply 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers. Dennis' 7 Dees ranked No. 91 on *Lawn & Landscape's* Top 100 list of green industry companies this year, by revenue.

The family's horticultural roots date to 1927, when Bernard and Florence Esch started an Oregon landscaping business and rhododendron nursery. In 1956, their daughter Merle and her husband, Robert Snodgrass, established Seven Dees, named for their seven children — all with names beginning with D.

Over the following decades, the businesses became separate companies called Dennis' 7 Dees and Drake's 7 Dees, each building its own legacy in landscaping and garden retail. Following Drake Snodgrass' retirement, the companies reunited this year. The former Drake's location on Scholls Ferry Road is now the 7 Dees Raleigh Hills Garden Center, and the company remains family owned. Nathan Dirksen serves as CEO, with David Snodgrass as president and Drew and Dean Snodgrass as vice presidents.

The company has retail locations in Vancouver, Lake Oswego, Seaside, Raleigh Hills and Seaside, as well as a houseplant shop in Bridgeport Village shopping center in Tigard. 7 Dees also has its landscaping division and main office on Johnson Creek Boulevard in Southeast Portland. The company website is **7Dees.com**.



The Farwest Show is looking for speaker and seminar topic recommendations for 2027. PHOTO BY MAX STEIN

INTERESTED IN BEING A SPEAKER AT THE FARWEST SHOW?

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is now accepting speaker proposals for the 2027 Farwest Show, a trade show and conference serving the national nursery and greenhouse industry. The show will take place August 25–27, 2027 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon.

"Farwest brings together the brightest minds and boldest ideas in the nursery and greenhouse industry," OAN Events and Education Coordinator Jamie O'Brien said. "We are seeking presenters who can help make the 2027 show our best yet, by sharing their expertise, innovative practices, or solutions to industry challenges."

The show is planning more than 50 educational sessions. 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.

Speaker proposals may be submitted at **FarwestShow.com/Speaker_Signup/**. The site lists speaker requirements and outlines the speaker selection process. All proposals must be submitted by December 16 to be considered. A committee will review the proposed presenters and topics and make selections based on timeliness, ingenuity and industry relevance.

In addition to speaker proposals, the show is looking for feedback from participants on what to include in the educational seminar lineup. "We'd love your ideas," O'Brien said. "Whether you have a topic suggestion, a speaker recommendation, or a trend you'd love to see explored, your feedback will help shape the 2027 seminar lineup."

Feedback may be submitted at **SurveyMonkey.com/r/Q9NGY2J**.

AMERICANHORT TOURS OREGON NURSERY COUNTRY

The AmericanHort Nursery Bus Tour rolled into Portland last week with a full bus and a crew ready to learn. "Oregon was ready for us, and did not disappoint," said Jennifer Gray, senior director of Horticultural Research Institute Programs and Advancement.

For two days in the Willamette Valley, host nurseries opened their yards, greenhouses, and labs. "We saw what they are great at, talked through what is still a challenge, and heard, at every stop, how much of the success comes down to their teams," Gray said.

Day one started at **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc**. Kyle and Noah Fessler walked the group through their impressive mechanization and equipment, plus their in-house insectary.

At **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**, Todd



AmericanHort members and staff, including CEO Lionel van der Walt, toured Oregon nurseries over two days. PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICANHORT

Nelson showed the group drones and equipment they designed to fit their needs. "Todd made a point that really stuck with me: new equipment is a change-management job. Bring employees into it early, and the team wants to dive in. Leave them out, and it does not stick," Gray said.

J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. took the group through the nursery, seedling beds, and grafting. They plant half a million seedlings every fall. Lunch was a cookout in their arboretum.

In the afternoon, Jesse Nelson ran an intelligent sprayer demo at **Hans Nelson & Sons Inc**. The group finished up at Iseli, where Greg Elwell let the visitors explore their memorial garden. After, he got on the bus and talked the group through the nursery, the equipment, the plant mix, and the culture.

Day two started at **Microplant Nurseries Inc.**, where Jonathan Jasinski and his team gave the group a crash course in tissue culture. At Oregon Perennial Company, Pete and Andre, a father and son, spoke about peonies, cut flowers, and culture.

The discussion around culture continued at **Robinson Nursery Inc.**, along with the research and trials they have going and about 3.5 million trees on the ground. After a fantastic lunch at Robinson's, the group visited **Monrovia Nursery Company's** Dayton nursery, where guests learned they service the whole country from that one facility. Perennials are the biggest category there, 22 acres going to 30, with plants turning in about eight weeks. **Bailey Nurseries Inc.** wrapped the tour with breeding, trialing, and their branded programs.

Profile Products LLC and **Harrell's LLC** sponsored the tour and kept the group moving between stops. "We came ready to learn, and Oregon showed up! Two days of companies opening up what they are great at and giving the credit to the teams who make it all work," Gray said.

MONROVIA REVEALS GARDEN DESIGN TRENDS FOR 2027

Wondering what home gardeners will be purchasing and planting next season? Monrovia's Garden Design Trends Study reveals insights into the top aesthetics, motivators, and plant categories for 2027.

Backed by consumer research and long-term data, the yearly analysis is compiled with proprietary information. Each year Monrovia Nursery Company conducts extensive consumer research with more than 1,500 homeowners. That data, paired with reviews of social media, website traffic, and email engagement, along with consumer behavior in adjacent industries such as design, food and art, helps formulate the garden design insights.

Top trends for 2027:

Palm Springs Style — Gardeners looking to create a striking desert oasis are bringing the look to containers as well as the landscape, transforming gardens with architectural succulents and energizing tropical color.

The Gilded Garden — Romance and beauty are alive and well in our gardens and this trend shines a spotlight on classic plants like roses, peonies, hydrangea and boxwood. The Gilded Garden maximizes the popularity of European-inspired garden design with an elevated, modern twist.

Gardening for the Wild — Sustainability meets structure in this expanding garden trend. Pollinator friendly gardens are moving beyond an untended wildflower patch to a more polished and intentional, yet still natural looking garden design.

Moody Botanicals — Soothing, moody plants are on trend. Gardners are leaning into dark, dramatic design palettes featuring smokey blue-gray, deep burgundy and emerald foliage, especially in shaded spaces.

Edited Edibles — Gardeners are wanting more from their edible plants — and not just more fruits and vegetables to harvest. This trend has gardeners looking for specialty herbs, berries with year-round interest and conversation-starting selections like pomegranate, figs, kiwi, and olives.

The New Garden Party — The idea of outdoor living is not new, but the

approach is now styled, elevated and energized. Patios and gardens are the new go-to entertaining space, and garden elements are the preferred décor.

NEW TECH COULD HELP FARMERS KEEP TRACK OF SOIL HEALTH

For years, understanding what's happening beneath that surface has been one of agriculture's biggest challenges. Important soil and plant indicators, like pH, microbial activity and plant physiology, are always changing, yet notoriously difficult to track in real time, Morning Ag Clips reported.

Now, a group of researchers in the Paul M. Rady Department of Mechanical Engineering at Colorado University at Boulder have developed a low-cost electronic sensor capable of continuously monitoring soil pH, offering a new window into the hidden world underground.



Invasive species may be adapting to the hotter, drier climate of urban areas, allowing them to potentially spread into surrounding areas. PHOTO BY DICZMAN

They believe it's a step toward a future in which farms can constantly monitor their own soil conditions, helping growers detect changes sooner so they can respond with more informed decisions.

"In many cases, by the time farmers discover that something is wrong with their soil or plants, the window for effective treatment may have already passed," said Professor Gregory Whiting, leader of the Boulder Experimental Electronics and Manufacturing Laboratory (BEEM Lab). "Monitoring these factors continuously »





can help us better manage agricultural land and secure our food production."

CITIES MAY BE IDEAL TRAINING GROUND FOR INVASIVE SPECIES

Research from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences suggests some invasive plants are adapting to urban environments in ways that help them tolerate hotter, drier conditions, potentially preparing them to better withstand the impacts of a changing climate, *Nursery Management* magazine reported.

Many urban areas are hotter, drier and have more stressful conditions than surrounding rural landscapes, and invasive species may be adapting to those challenges.

Those adaptations could then help them survive not only in cities but potentially spread into surrounding areas as climate change progresses.

"Urban-evolved invasive species may be well-suited to future climate conditions, providing them an advantage over native species and complicating management efforts," said Luke Flory, director of the institute and associate chair of agronomy.

GARDEN TRENDS REPORT SAYS 'BLOOMSCROLLING' IS HOT

People are embracing gardening as a relief valve from digital burnout, and the green industry is poised to benefit, according to Garden Media Group. The horticulture-focused public relations and marketing agency, based in Pennsylvania, issued their 2027 Garden Trends Report, and called it "Digging for Dopamine." The name refers to the slow pursuit of joy that gardening represents.

"Gardening's rewards get better the more you do it — the pleasure compounds," the report states. "In 2027, people are starting to remember that. Instead of doomscrolling, they're bloomscrolling."

The forecast is the agency's 26th annual trends report. It identifies seven supporting trends:

- **Digital detox.** People are retreating from their screens and looking for opportunities to interact with neighbors, gardens and each other.
- **Heading outside.** People are replacing dieting, workouts and mental health apps with the proven health benefits of gardening.
- **Embracing Rococo design.** People are ditching minimalism for ornate, playful and intimate designs in their homes and gardens.
- **Unstructured child's play.** Gardens can be a refuge from overstructured outdoor spaces that always seem to have a lesson attached.
- **Exploding popularity for hot sauces.** Specialized brands represent not just a condiment, but an element of identity that people are embracing.
- **Regenerative Organic Certified® certification.** This certification goes beyond the USDA Certified Organic seal to take into account soil health, animal welfare and worker fairness, and its popularity is booming.
- **Blue as the 'it' color.** The report identifies blue as humanity's oldest manufactured color — one that's having a moment which garden retailers can capitalize upon.

The report outlines various ways green industry businesses can capitalize on these trends. It can be downloaded at **GardenMediaGroup.com**.



Garden Media Group released its annual Garden Trends Report for 2027. PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN MEDIA GROUP

FARM GROUPS CALL OUT STATE, FEDERAL POLICY IMPACTS

The Oregon Association of Nurseries joined with Oregon Farm Bureau and other Oregon farm groups to call on leaders at every level to recognize the mounting pressures on farmers and ranchers and choose policies that strengthen, rather than undermine, Oregon agriculture. OAN and the groups penned an opinion article that appeared in the *Capital Press*, calling attention to the fact that Oregon agriculture is being squeezed and undermined by policies from both Salem and Washington, D.C.

"Agriculture demands resilience and the ability to manage risks often beyond our control," the article states.

"But many of the challenges facing Oregon agriculture today are not beyond anyone's control. They are the result of policy choices in Washington, D.C., and Salem, and our government has the power to change course or make different decisions."

The article called out several policy impacts that are hurting farmers:

- The war with Iran has driven up fuel prices and the USDA projects that farmers will spend nearly 29% more on fuel this year.
- The war has also driven up fertilizer prices by more than 30%.
- The decision to increase beef imports has brought cattle prices down during at a critical time that weakens the incentive for ranchers to rebuild herds.
- Tariffs have increased the cost of production, while retaliation and anti-American purchasing sentiment threaten markets farmers have spent years building.
- Oregon farms face housing, labor and employment requirements that go well beyond federal standards, adding significant costs and complexity

that put family farms and ranches at a competitive disadvantage. This will be magnified as Oregon's agricultural overtime threshold drops to 40 hours on January 1, 2027.

WASHINGTON'S AG OVERTIME LAW HURTS TAKE-HOME PAY, ACCORDING TO SURVEY

Washington state's new overtime law may be leaving some farmworkers with fewer hours and smaller paychecks, Pacific Northwest Ag Network reported. The conclusion is based on a Washington State University survey that collected 643 responses from farmworkers.

Of those that answered a follow-up question, nearly 685 said their paychecks had decreased under the current overtime law. The survey also found 71% either wanted or needed more hours, while nearly half said employer limits were affecting their ability to work as many hours as they wanted. Workers also reported pressure to complete the same amount of work in fewer hours, particularly during harvest.

In Oregon, much the same phenomenon has been reported. Both Oregon and Washington are phasing in agricultural overtime, but the OAN is hoping to create a higher overtime threshold and restore the extra hours that growers can no longer afford to give their workers.

"The overtime law is costing both growers and workers," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said.

STRONGER EL NIÑO PORTENDS MILD WINTER AND LOW SNOWPACKS

Oregon, Washington and Idaho should be warmer than average this fall as a strengthening El Niño approaches record potency, according to the National Weather Service.

The weather service's Climate Prediction Center issued a three-month forecast for October through December that relied heavily on the high likelihood of a very strong El Niño.

The climate center estimates there is a 75% chance the El Niño will be the strongest on record before the year ends. Records date back to 1950.

An El Niño typically means mild winters and low snowpacks in the Northwest. This El Niño's unprecedented power, however, makes it unpredictable, Oregon State Climatologist Larry O'Neill said.

"This El Niño is very likely to be the strongest El Niño we've ever seen," he said. "Because of that, we're kind of going into uncharted territory. It could defy our expectations." »



CORTEVA TO PAY $35 MILLION TO SETTLE LAWSUIT

Farm-chemical maker **Corteva Inc.** will pay $35 million to settle an anti-trust lawsuit filed by the Federal Trade Commission and 12 states, including Oregon and Washington, *Capital Press*, an agricultural newspaper in Salem, Oregon, reported.

The Indianapolis-based company also agreed to discontinue a rebate program that rewarded distributors and retailers who sold high volumes of Corteva products.The FTC and states alleged the rebates stifled competition from less-expensive generic products, costing farmers millions of dollars a year. The FTC and a coalition of states sued Corteva and Syngenta Crop Protection in 2022. Syngenta continues to fight the accusations.

EPA, HHS TO COLLABORATE ON GLYPHOSATE REVIEW

The EPA and the Department of Health and Human Services are teaming up to review the safety of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup herbicide. The agencies have announced a memorandum of understanding under which they "will exchange scientific information, identify research gaps, and expand research into potential human health effects," according to Agri-Pulse. "EPA retains sole authority for registration decisions under the [Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act], and the MOU creates no new authority for either agency."

How will it work? "This agreement with Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and HHS gives our scientists access to research capacity at HHS that addresses potential gaps in the record," EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin stated in the release. "EPA will weigh what that work produces the way we weigh any other scientific evidence. We will evaluate the relevant evidence, address important scientific questions, and show our work, providing insight into how the science informs our decisions, as we always do, to conduct the most transparent and thorough review possible."



Scientists with the U.S. Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy Vermont spent the summer injecting 6,000 young elm trees with Dutch elm disease spores to test their resistance to the disease. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY VERMONT

DISEASE THAT DECIMATED ELM TREES COULD BRING THEM BACK

The very disease that has decimated millions of American elms in the U.S. is now being used to bring the iconic trees back, according to the Associated Press. In Vermont, Leila Wilson, a research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service, is one of the scientists leading an effort to beat Dutch elm disease, which has killed tens of millions of elm trees over the last century.

Scientists with the Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy Vermont spent the summer injecting 6,000 young elm trees with Dutch elm disease spores to test their resistance to the disease. The survivors will be sent to a breeding program with a goal of growing the genetic diversity of disease-tolerant elm trees. They will one day be used for restoration in forests, riverbanks and backyards.

"We will put those newly propagated trees into a seed orchard, basically just a big, fenced area, will grow and love those trees for about 15 or so years, at which point they should produce seeds, and that seed can be used for restoration," Wilson said.

The young elms were bred from a group of a few dozen trees in the Northeast that have survived Dutch elm disease, which is a fungus that arrived in the United States a little less than a century ago.

The fungus, spread by bark beetles, stops trees from being able to absorb water, which in turn starves them. The disease is a key reason towering elm trees of more than 70 feet (21 meters) are less common in New England today than they were generations ago. The drive to save elm trees is part of a broader fight in the U.S. to try to beat back forest pests and diseases, which threaten longstanding industries such as logging and damage some of the nation's most fragile ecosystems.

Announcements

TEXAS NURSERY & LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION NAMES PRESIDENT AND CEO

Jesus Azanza has been selected by The Texas Nursery & Landscape Association (TNLA) Board of Directors as the new president and CEO. Azanza was set to begin his new role on November 1, 2026.



Jesus Azana

Azanza brings more than 17 years of experience in association leadership, strategic planning, advocacy, marketing, business development and member engagement. He currently serves as executive director for the Austin, Greater Houston and San Antonio chapters of the Community Associations Institute, where he advises each chapter's board of directors and leads organizational operations, governance, financial management, programming and growth initiatives.

"Jesus has an impressive record of strengthening associations, increasing member engagement and developing programs that deliver measurable value," said Kyle Cahill, TCLP, TNLA board chair. "His collaborative leadership style, strategic perspective and commitment to exceptional member experiences make him an excellent choice to lead TNLA into its next chapter."

CHARLIE HALL AMONG GARDENCOMM HONOREES

GardenComm honored eight individuals and organizations whose work has advanced horticulture, garden communication, science and sustainability and service to the green industry. The awards were given during the organization's Awards & Honors Ceremony, which was held in conjunction with the 2026 Farwest Show in Portland, Oregon.

The recipients this year included horticultural economist Charlie Hall, Ph.D., who was this year's keynote speaker at Farwest; Seed Savers Exchange co-founder Diane Ott Whealy; and author and educator Ellen Zachos. Other honorees included Shelley Cramm, author and garden speaker; Randy Schultz, garden-industry marketing and communications; UpShoot LLC; Nadina Galle, ecological engineer and author; and Thor Hanson, conservation biologist and author.

BIOWORKS LAUNCHES BIORAIN A_X TO HELP MITIGATE LIMITED-WATER CONDITIONS

BioWorks, a provider of biological crop protection and plant health solutions, has launched BioRain A_X™, a microbial inoculant designed to mitigate the effects of limited water environments while improving overall plant health and potential yield.

In environments where water is limited, BioRain A_X helps plants maintain crop growth, vigor and productivity through increased water access and retention, the company said. BioRain A_X supports commercial production in outdoor specialty crops, ornamentals, greenhouses, nurseries and other high-value crops. BioRain A_X is powered by a targeted consortium of beneficial microorganisms that colonizes the rhizosphere of the plant to improve soil structure, increase water retention and enhance nutrient availability. This creates a stronger, deeper root system that enables more efficient water and nutrient uptake, the company said.



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AIRBNB OFFERS GRANTS TO HELP FARMERS DIVE INTO AGRITOURISM

Farmers interested in agritourism will have a new source of financial assistance through the Farm to Stay Grant Program, a partnership between Airbnb and American Farmland Trust, Pacific Northwest Ag Network reports. The groups are launching a grant program designed to help farmers prepare their properties for overnight guests or launch agritourism experiences. Grants will range up to $10,000 and are available to farmers across the country.

Eligible projects could include renovating farm properties for guests or developing activities such as apple picking, wine tasting, farm-to-table dinners, and agricultural workshops. Airbnb and American Farmland Trust will also offer webinars covering how farmers can create listings or experiences, welcome their first guests, and build a long-term agritourism business.

Want to learn more? Airbnb said eligibility and guideline details will be made available before applications open in late November. Go to **Farmland.org/Farm-to-stay** for more information.

COAST OF MAINE LAUNCHES NATIONAL GROWING GARDENERS PROGRAM

Coast of Maine Organic Soils and Fertilizers has announced the launch of Growing Gardeners, a joint initiative with Farm to Table Kids and Mizzen Education that empowers educators and brings hands-on garden learning to schools and out-of-school programs across the country.

This tri-partner collaboration provides a comprehensive solution to build, rejuvenate and sustain educational gardens, Coast of Maine said in a statement.. The program pairs expert-designed gardening lessons with on-demand digital access and trusted gardening guidance, ensuring educators have the full support required to cultivate outdoor classrooms and inspire continuous learning.


Dark Mode™ Diervilla


Heuchera Fyre Wing series


Ginkgo biloba 'Troll' Dwarf


Whitewater Weeping Redbud



Saturnalia™ American Oak Hybrid


Edge of Night Mondo Grass


Coral Spear® Crabapple


Centennial Ruby™ Hydrangea


Crimson Feather False Spirea


Featherman Chastetree

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DANNY SUMMERS

Beguiling plants win Retailers' Choice Awards at Farwest

A group of garden retailers participated as judges at this year's Farwest Show, all helping to find great products displayed by exhibitors that were worthy of Retailers' Choice Awards.

"We awarded 11 companies awards for 15 amazing plants and products," said Danny Summers, managing director of The Garden Center Group.

The judges were impressed with the variety as well as the quality of plants and products on display this year by exhibitors.

Award winners are listed below along with the exhibitor booths where they were found at Farwest. (These booths may not necessarily indicate who introduced the plant.):

Dark Mode™ Diervilla
Diervilla × 'Baildertwo'
Bailey Nurseries
St. Paul, Minnesota

The judges said… "WOW" to Dark Mode™ Diervilla, a bold, upright native selection with purple-black foliage that holds its color all season.

Recurrent yellow flowers contrast vividly against the dark leaves, adding multi-season interest and pollinator appeal.

Compact at 3 feet tall and 3–4 feet wide, it finishes uniformly and works well in production, retail, and landscape settings.

***Heuchera* Fyre Wing series**
Blooming Nursery Inc.
Cornellius, Oregon

The new *Heuchera* Fyre Wing Series, introduced this year by **Terra Nova Nurseries Inc.**, is an amazing group of new Heucheras with never-seen-before colors plus deeply cut, lacy foliage.

This new series features seven colors, each with imaginative names and matching fun dragon characters! It was also awarded Retailers' Choice Award at Cultivate'26 by a different group of retail judges.

***Ginkgo biloba* 'Troll' Dwarf**
Blue Heron Farm
Salem, Oregon

'Troll' is an amazing dwarf ginkgo that is a male grafted clone (seedless). The dwarf compact habit of 'Troll' makes it perfect for containers, the ever-shrinking landscape, conifer beds, and fairy gardens.

'Troll' may reach 4 ft in height by 3 ft in width in 10 years. 'Troll' has a nice dense growth habit and a spectacular golden fall color.

Whitewater Weeping Redbud
Cercis canadensis 'Whitewater'
Blue Heron Farm
Salem, Oregon

This weeping redbud features stunning variegation and has a weeping habit that grows to 6 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.

In the spring, it features deep rose-purple, pea-shaped flowers bloom in April and May that are displayed on the bare branches. The flowers give way to heart-shaped leaves, which emerge mostly white with green flecks and mature to mostly green with white flecks.

Its weeping habit is an exciting addition to the bright variegated foliage.

Saturnalia™ American Oak Hybrid
Quercus × 'HSLMK' PPAF
Heritage Seedlings & Liners Inc.
Salem, Oregon

A hybrid of silverleaf (*Q. hypoleucoides*) and red oak (*Q. rubra*) found among seedlings grown at **Heritage Seedlings** »

& Liners Inc.

Red-blushed new leaves mature to glossy dark green with acute lobes and thick texture, silvery green beneath. Long lasting fall color is bronze-green to rusty red.

It has vigorous upright growth, a strong leader, open branch angles and wide adaptability merit its use as an urban tree across the continent.

Early trials show it to thrive in the heat and humidity of North Carolina, as well as its first winter at the Chicago Bontanic Garden. Grows to 25 feet wide by 40 feet tall.

Edge of Night Mondo Grass
Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Edge of Night'
Iseli Nursery
Boring, Oregon

A "Pin-Striped" Black Mondo?

An attractive form of Black Mondo Grass. A very narrow white stripe runs down the outside edge of each blade-like leaf, providing a subtle contrast with the predominant shiny black color.

Edge of Night's variegated leaves aren't flashy, but they make a statement. The sleek black blades catch the light while the narrow white edge adds definition — giving your garden a tailored, high-end look even in shaded spots.

Its low profile keeps it tidy and contained, without crowding other plants. The retail judges were impressed!

Coral Spear® Crabapple
Malus x 'JFS GM272MX' PPAF
J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.
Boring, Oregon

Coral Spear® is the latest introduction to the Spear® line of crabapple trees to be released from the New Plant Development Department of **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co**.

Deep pink buds open to pink flowers that retain their color through the flowering season. This narrow upright crabapple maintains it's dark green disease-free foliage throughout the growing season. Small yellow to golden orange fruit appears in the fall.

Coral Spear® is the latest addition to the JFS series of columnar crabapples that also includes Ivory Spear® and Raspberry Spear®. Grows to 20 feet tall and 8 feet wide. Hardy to zones 4a–9b.

Centennial Ruby™ Hydrangea
Hydrangea macrophylla
'Hokocentennial' PPAF
Monrovia Nursery Company
Dayton, Oregon

Selected from a hydrangea breeding program in the Netherlands, this plant was introduced and submitted by **Monrovia Nursery Company**. It's a special release to celebrate Monrovia's 100th anniversary.

The flowers of this hydrangea are simply stunning. The rich ruby-red







Candybox® Chilean Guava


Calluna 'Bud Bloomers' Series


Variegated Hawaiian Banana


Elephant Ear Zebrina



Philodendron nangaritense

PHOTOS BY DANNY SUMMERS

mophead blooms deepen in color as the longlasting flowers age, sometimes taking on almost black hues.

It's deciduous, with exceptionally sturdy and compact, with strong stems and thick green leaves and it is reblooming. Grows to 3 feet wide by 3 feet tall. Hardy to zones 4a–9b.

Crimson Feather False Spirea
Sorbaria 'Crimson Feather' PPAF
Monrovia Nursery Company
Dayton, Oregon

The colors are the real show for this plant both in new growth and fall.

Bright golden to chartreuse leaves feature deep scarlet-red new growth, making for a fantastically colorful shrub. The stunning red color holds into summer and is truly a sight to behold.

Sorbaria Crimson Feather's new red growth is the brightest in the assortment so far, and as if that's not enough, Crimson Feather is not susceptible to diseases either.

Reaches 5 ft. tall and wide and hardy in zones 2-10. Clusters of white flowers bloom in July.

More compact than 'Sem', making it excellent for containers. This hardy, easy-care shrub requires little to no pruning to maintain.

Featherman Chastetree
Vitex negundo heterophyllla 'V14-9-1' PPAF
Proven Winners® ColorChoice®,
Sycamore, Illinois

This amazing new chastetree was hybridized by Carol Robacker at the University of Georgia and introduced by Proven Winners® ColorChoice® Shrubs/**Spring Meadow Nursery**.

The dense, deeply-cut foliage on a narrow selection of *Vitex* with hidden sterile flowers. Can you imagine a *Vitex* as a unique drought tolerant hedge? A carefree plant that withstands drought, heat, and snow. Grows to 2–3 feet wide by 3–5 feet tall. Hardy to zones 5a–10b.

Candybox® Chilean Guava
Ugni molinae 'Pl16' PPAF
Proven Winners® ColorChoice®
Sycamore, Illinois

Hybridized by Viveros Hijuelas of Quillota, Chile and introduced by Proven Winners® ColorChoice® Shrubs/Spring Meadow Nursery. It's a new compact form of Chilean guava that makes an excellent drought-tolerant hedge.

Adorned with delicate, silky flowers throughout the plant in summer, the resulting fruit is an explosion of spices and sweetness in autumn.

Drought tolerant, evergreen and well-behaved shrub for the landscape and edible gardens. Grows to 2–3 feet wide by 2–3 feet tall. Hardy to zones 7a–9b.

***Calluna* 'Bud Bloomers' Series**
Calluna vulgaris
Qualitree Propagators,
Rosedale, BC, Canada

While common heather may not be what you think of as a typical Retailers' Choice Winner, this series caught a lot of attention, especially being shown in a bowl planter with lots of color, including two combinations, in addition to three solid colors of purple, white and pink.

Calluna 'Bud Bloomers' features dark green foliage adorned with colorful, urn-shaped buds from late summer into autumn.

The buds are shaped similarly to the nib of a pen, with the brilliant color of the flowers all on the outside of the bud.

The flowers do not open up, protecting their inner vibrance from rain and sun, a main advantage of the long-lasting beauty of *Calluna* 'Bud Bloomers'.

Variegated Hawaiian Banana
Musa × *Paradisiaca* 'AeAe'
Van Wingerden Greenhouses,
Blaine, Washington

This Variegated Banana is a star. *Musa* × *Paradisiaca* 'Ae Ae', also known Royal Hawaiian, Sacred Banana, Koae (hair prematurely graying) that is indigenous to the Hawaiian islands.

They get their name from their gorgeous white and green striped leaves. They can reach a height of 15 feet when grown in ideal conditions, but when grown in pots, they typically stay smaller.

Elephant Ear Zebrina
Alocasia 'Zebrina'
Youngblood Nursery Inc.
Salem, Oregon

While the retail judges had seen *Alocasia* 'Zebrina' before, they had never seen one this large, so its impact was stunning!

It's green and white stems were dramatic and stopped you in your tracks. The combination of dramatic stem contrasts and size to really increase the WOW effect! This is a case where size does matter!

Philodendron nangaritense
Youngblood Nursery Inc.
Salem, Oregon

Is it a large *Colocasia* or something else? Well, it turns out is a huge *Philodendron*! The judges were completely awestruck by its magnificent sized foliage and unique leaf shape. Originating from the Nangaritza Valley in southern Ecuador, this plant's elongated, lance-shaped leaves are a visual masterpiece, showcasing intricate silver or cream-colored veining against a backdrop of deep green.



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Rough seas for freight

Higher fuel expenses and tight capacity make shipping more difficult and expensive

This season has been beset with higher fuel costs, higher demand for drivers and higher enforecment of federal regulations. PHOTO BY KRISTINA

BY JON BELL

If there were to be a theme for nursery shipping in 2026, it may very well be higher.

Higher demand for more drivers.

Higher enforcement of federal regulations.

Higher usage of rail.

And, most prominently, higher fuel costs and prices.

"We definitely saw rates increase from last year and even kind of progressively increase a little bit throughout the spring season," said John Miller, sales manager for **Rosewoods Transportation Inc.**, a transportation broker in Washougal, Washington that specializes in nursery products. "It was in the midst of the spring season when the fuel hike really hit us. We've seen the rates continue to increase, and now (mid-September), we're shipping some fall nursery, and all across the board the rates are still higher than they were in the heart of the spring."

"JB Hunt's fuel surcharges this week (Sept. 19) are 124% for truck and 62% for intermodal, which are in line with most carriers. I've been in the industry over 30 years and have never seen fuel surcharges this high — it's crazy!"

— Erica Hill
DIRECTOR OF INTERMODAL SERVICES AT INDEPENDENT TRUCK DISPATCH INC.

While it may be straightforward to say higher shipping rates are the biggest factor at play in the 2026 shipping season, there are, of course, other pieces to the puzzle. Brokers have seen them all ebb and flow before, lending to the cyclical sway that determines how Oregon's nursery products make their way across the country — and how much it will cost to get them there.

But even if some of this feels familiar, some of it is entirely new territory.

"We've seen a lot of ups and downs over the over the years, and things go in cycles where it gets a little tougher, then it gets a little easier as far as the trucking side of things," Miller said. "Right now, we're just in a season where it's a little bit more difficult than it has been the past couple of years, but it's also something that we haven't faced before. We'll get through it. We still have to get their products from point A to point B."

Dire straits

By far the biggest factor driving higher shipping costs this year is the steep rise in fuel prices. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, die- »

sel hit $6.53 per gallon on September 21, up $2.78 or more than 40% from a year ago — the highest it's ever been.

On the West Coast, it was even worse. Diesel landed at $7.55 a gallon, almost $3 more than a year ago. The biggest reason for the increase: the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz due to the U.S. war with Iran.

"The Iran war has caused diesel fuel prices to soar, so carrier fuel surcharges are astronomical," said Erica Hill, director of intermodal services at **Independent Dispatch Inc.**, a Portland-based freight forwarding company. "JB Hunt's fuel surcharges this week (Sept. 19) are 124% for truck and 62% for intermodal, which are in line with most carriers. I've been in the industry over 30 years and have never seen fuel surcharges this high — it's crazy!"

Other factors have made 2026 a challenging shipping year as well. For start-



On the West Coast, diesel is up almost $3 more than last year. PHOTO BY DECE STD

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ers, there's always the aging workforce issue and low recruitment numbers in the trucking industry. In the past year-and-a-half, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has also begun cracking down on drivers with non-domiciled Commercial Driver Licenses. Those are issued to individuals who are legally permitted to work in the U.S. but who are not considered permanent residents, such as agricultural workers and temporary non-agricultural workers.

Some of those drivers may have overstayed their time in the U.S. but continued to drive. The current administration, however, has worked with states to put an end to that.

Additionally, there has been more enforcement of the English language proficiency requirements for drivers, who are required to speak, read and understand English at a certain level. For years, federal guidance did not recommend that violators be put out of service. The current administration has ended that guidance and now takes those who can't meet a proficiency assessment out of service.

"It definitely results in fewer drivers," said Joel Mandel, operations manager, West Coast, for **Northland Express Transport**, a third-party logistics company whose corporate office is in Grand Haven, Michigan. "Between those regulatory things, we're talking thousands and thousands of drivers, not just hundreds."

Get a load

As for the fallout from all these factors, the main one is increased costs to ship nursery goods out of the state. Mandel said loads have been running close to $1,000 more per load than in 2025, which has caused a bit of sticker shock. He saw that play out in a decrease in the number of reorders earlier this year. Normally, customers will order products for March, April and May and then reorder for later months. Not so much this year.

"I just didn't see a lot of those reorders come in," Mandel said. "You know, they're not used to getting an $8,000 bill, when the previous year they got a »





$7,000 bill. That's tough to reconcile."

Miller, too, said he thinks shipping costs year-to-date are probably up anywhere between 15% and 25% compared to the same time last year.

"It's pretty considerable," he said. "It could be up to as high as 30% more in certain areas."

Fewer drivers have made availability more of an issue, but Miller said that didn't have huge impacts on the shipping scene this year. It may have created a more competitive environment and given trucking companies and drivers more flexibility in what loads they wanted to prioritize, but in the end, plants still got shipped.

"At the end of the day, drivers have got to keep the trucks moving," Miller said.

The higher shipping costs have led to price increases for nursery products. They've also motivated some nurseries and brokers to consider other ways to move their plants — namely via railroad. That mode of transportation has historically been only negligibly more affordable that trucks, but these days it's noticeably cheaper and prices are often more certain.

"We are getting a lot of interest in converting from over the road to intermodal rail service," Hill said.

Driving ahead

While 2026 has proven to be a challenging year for shipping, not all the news was gloomy. Mandel said there's solace to be found in the cyclical nature of the business, and that while it may be choppy waters at the moment, smooth sailing is bound to return.

"It's not necessarily the first time where we've seen an adjustment made," he said. "We'll probably see a future adjustment, which is going to stabilize costs or lower rates."

One potential effect? With rates high, more drivers are likely to enter the workforce. The added capacity could help drive rates down, which is what played out after the COVID boom.

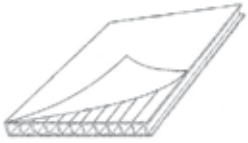
"Rates started going down the past few years," Mandel said. "Now they're climbing back up again, and that might actually spark some people to get back in the driver's seat."

He added, however, that before that happens, more drivers might continue exiting the industry if costs for fuel, maintenance and insurance remain high.

Miller said that despite the bumpy road this year, driver reliability has remained solid and the pool of drivers available continues to be filled with high-quality folks. »

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"We rely heavily on good, long-standing relationships, and so, despite everything that's going on, we still have our regular carriers that we've been working with for decades," he said. "Our best drivers are still willing to take our loads and do the nursery loads to kind of maintain that loyalty, which I think is a high point, because it can be very easy to have people run the other direction, when things get crazy."

More of the same

As for the future and next year's shipping season, nothing is certain, especially given the current political and international climate. Miller said to expect continued high shipping rates, and Mandel said it would be wise for nurseries to build in a little more cushion for shipping costs.

"I would prepare for it not to get any better," he said. He added that it's important for nurseries to maintain relationships they have with reliable brokers they can count on, "especially if you know they will do a good job for you."

Hill said diesel prices will remain high as long as the Strait of Hormuz remains closed, which will continue to constrain capacity and push prices. But she did offer some practical advice to nurseries who are starting to size up the year ahead.

"Diversify your provider base and strengthen your existing carrier relationships now for better shipping coverage next spring," she said. "Lock in pricing and capacity using equipment commitment programs now to ensure an allocated supply of containers when you need them most."

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.**



Safe passage

Nurseries, freight brokers work to ensure product safety in transit

Mauricio de Jesus Rosendo (left) and Sebastian Lopes load plants into a truck at Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc. in Woodburn, Oregon. Getting plant material loaded properly is key to them arriving safely at the destination. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

BY MITCH LIES

Getting nursery material from point A to point B safely and undamaged is a fluid process, according to freight brokers and nursery owners. It requires precision at the loading dock and careful monitoring during transit.

Often, what is done prior to calling a carrier is a vital first step.

Robert Bissell of **Left Coast Logistics** (Lake Oswego, Oregon), said he starts by talking with a nursery to get a sense of what they're shipping. "Is it durable enough for a dry van or even rail, or do we need to find a refrigerated trailer for the move?" he asks.

With that information in hand, he starts by matching carriers with the job, beginning with studying their safety ratings on carrier monitoring services like Carrier411 and RMIS Carrier Directory.

"We look at a carrier's safety record, operation, insurance, authority, equipment and overall track record before putting them on a load," Bissell said. "From the brokerage side, safety really starts with selecting the right carrier."

Matthew Frederick of **K&M Distribution Inc.** in Rogue River, Oregon, said he is familiar with many of the carriers he works with. Even so, he too begins his selection process by turning to Carrier411. "It starts there," he said.

The platform is designed for brokers, shippers and other logistics professionals. It tracks carrier fitness in multiple categories, including driver safety and vehicle maintenance.

"Driver safety and vehicle maintenance are the two biggest indicators of how your carrier is going to be able to make the transit," Frederick said. "If they have a bad driver-safety score and their vehicle maintenance is low, then those two combined are a very good indicator that there is going to be a problem in transit."

VIN verification

In addition to checking databases, qualifying carriers involves matching VIN numbers to the trailer hauling the load. "That is part of our due diligence," Frederick said. "We try to make sure we get the last five VIN numbers on the trailer, so we know that they're covered under insurance."

K&M also calls carriers to verify the identity of a dispatcher or a driver to ensure against double-brokering, or re-tendering of loads. This practice that has become more common and can increase risks with safety and liability. »

"There is so much double-brokering going on, and so many people going around the rules these days, that it is a full-time job just qualifying carriers," Frederick said. "Honestly, it's the hardest thing we do."

Bissell added that the dispatchers at Left Coast Logistics, which works strictly with nurseries, have a minimum of 15 years of experience in the shipping business. "That helps ensure that we get qualified, experienced carriers," he said.

Once a freight broker qualifies a carrier, brokers work to align transportation equipment with the product being shipped. This is particularly so, Bissell noted, when dealing with refrigerated freight, which is particularly sensitive to damage during transit.

"Maintaining the required temperature throughout the trip is critical to getting the product to its destination in good condition," he said.

At **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.** in Woodburn, Oregon, owner Todd Nelson said that when transporting material in dry vans, loaders work to protect product from temperature extremes by lining metal sides with four-by-eight sheets of cardboard to prevent plant material from touching the metal, which can become too warm or too cold during transit.

"It creates a small insulation barrier," Nelson said.



Crew Leader Celso Barron drives an ariculated loader to carry a pallet of arborvitae into a truck at Bountiful Farms. For safety and efficiency, Bountiful Farms uses well-lit articulated loaders to load trucks and assigns a crew leader for each load to supervise loading. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Securing loads

The next big concern for freight brokers, as well as nurseries, involves properly securing loads with load locks, straps and other devices.

"Usually, when we are delivering to independent stores and retailers, the product is floor loaded, and we require four load locks and a picture of the load secured before they leave a site," Bissell said. "If the material is ever on rolling racks, we would need a trailer with E-Track, and then that driver would need at least 12 straps to better secure the load."

"Securing the load is a huge process," Nelson said. "We know that the truck leaving our docks will be traveling potentially several thousands of miles to its destination and we just really want to make sure that the load is secured."

Frederick said K&M requires its carriers carry a minimum of four load locks, in part to accommodate partial load drops. "I have a rate confirmation that says you have to have a clean trailer and minimum four load locks," he said.

Load security also involves proper loading procedure. Nelson said his load supervisors start with heavier material if possible and add lighter material toward the end of the loading process.

"There is a bit of an art to loading a truck, and our crews are trained how to put that jigsaw puzzle together so that the load rides the safest," Nelson said.

Nelson added that Bountiful Farms assigns a load manager for each truck, and the nursery has instituted multiple safety features for the loading process, including using articulating loaders with reverse beepers and keeping well-lit machines on the docks. And loading supervisors at »


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Safe passage



Above and below: Tracking is a big part of intermodal shipping at Independent Dispatch Inc. In the screen capture below, the company always knows where the containers are when they're on the railroad, whether they're moving, where in the shipping process they are. The tracker also indicates when doors have been opened or closed and the temperature inside the container. PHOTOS COURTESY OF INDEPENDENT DISPATCH INC.

Bountiful Farms bring years of experience and training into the process.

"There is a bunch of training that goes into the communication with the individual running the loader with the ground crew who are loading and unloading the pallets onto the semis," Nelson said.

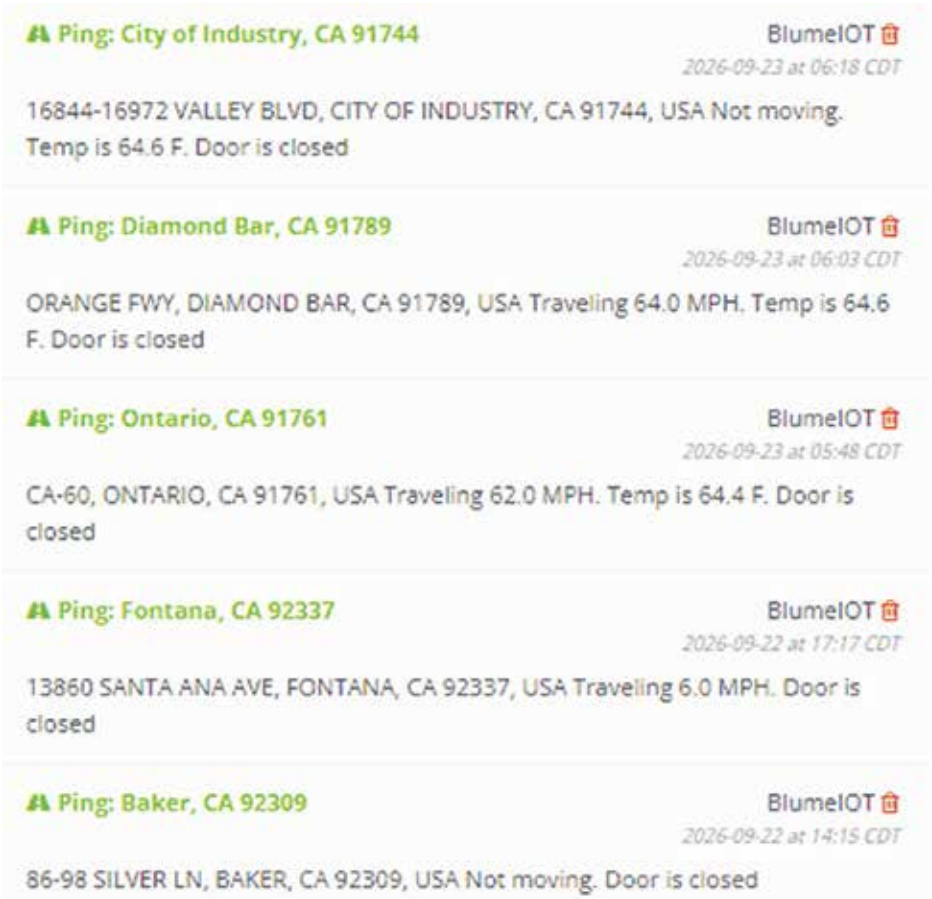
Safety flags

The nursery also places safety flags in front of each semi at its loading dock and instructs drivers not to depart until that flag is removed.

"That way we don't have a truck driver mistakenly pull away from our docks thinking that his load is full," Nelson said. "There can at times be 20 trucks at our docks, and if you're just yelling or whistling and saying, 'Hey, you're good to go' two different drivers could take that information and mistakenly both leave."

Bountiful Farms also stays on top of shipments during transit with a monitoring system that allows the nursery to track the location and temperature of a load.

"We basically have live data as to where our load is and what the temperatures are so we can have that as an insur-



ance to make sure that the driver is where he says he is and that the reefer was set to what we asked it to be set at," Nelson said.

Freight brokers also regularly track loads as a means to protect shipments from damage and to help ensure time schedules are met. "If there is a delay, mechanical issue, weather problem or any other unexpected situation, we want to know about it as soon as possible so we can communicate with the customer and work with the carrier to address it," Bissell said.

Jim Bambach of **Independent Dispatch Inc.** (Portland, Oregon) noted that tracking loads is also a big part of intermodal shipping.

"We always know where the containers are when they're on the railroad, whether they're moving, where in the shipping process they are. We can also tell whether the doors have been opened or closed, which adds an additional layer of oversight during transit. And if there are ever any sort of delays, if we see anything that doesn't seem right, we reach out to the railroad and work within their system to try to identify what is happening and to address it with them so the container is not delayed any longer than is necessary," Bambach said.

Communication is key

Whether shipping by rail, intermodal or truck, good communication throughout the process is a key for ensuring products arrive safely at their destination, according to brokers and shippers. Bambach said he starts communicating with carriers early in the process, before the shipping season begins. "We sort of do a pre-season reset, and just reiterate to them our expectations to get off on the right foot," he said.

West Coast Logistics communicates with carriers at the start of the delivery process and throughout delivery, Bissell said. "We make sure the carrier understands the pickup and delivery requirements and any special handling requirements." The company talks to drivers at least twice a day during transit, he added.

Ultimately, Bissell said his job is getting the right carrier and the right »

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equipment with the right shipment and then staying involved throughout transit until the bill of lading is signed. "From a liability standpoint, good carrier selection, proper documentation, clear instructions, shipment tracking and consistent communication are all important," he said.

Frederick echoed that, noting that attention to detail is invaluable in mitigating issues that can arise at multiple points in the shipping process and ensuring products arrive safely and undamaged at their destination.

"Those mistakes can really affect the supply chain and have the potential to damage relationships, and relationships are really important in this business," Frederick said. "So, if we can avoid that, we will."

Mitch Lies is a freelance writer covering agricultural issues based in Salem Oregon. He can be reached at **MitchLies@Comcast.net**.



Mauricio de Jesus Rosendo pulls conifers off a pallet at Bountiful Farms. For load stability, larger plant material is loaded first, followed by smaller plants. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

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Knowing opportunities and risks

Farwest keynote speaker Charlie Hall urges businesses to make decisions with their best available information

Economist Charlie Hall, Ph.D., urged green industry businesses to make their best possible strategic decisions with the information they have, rather than be paralyzed with the what-ifs. PHOTO BY MAX STEIN

BY CURT KIPP

It's an uncertain world out there, economically speaking — even with the growth the nursery industry has seen in the post-pandemic years.

But noted economist Charlie Hall, Ph.D., urged green industry businesses to make their best possible strategic decisions with the information they have, rather than be paralyzed with the what-ifs. And that goes for production levels, pricing, capital investments, or anything else.

"In the midst of uncertainty, we tend to wait on some strategic decisions," Hall said in his Farwest Show keynote speech, which took place in August. "One of my stances here today is that there are enough opportunities in the marketplace right now that you don't want to wait in capturing some of those strategic opportunities."

The keys are managing working capital well, operating efficiently, operating with strong pricing discipline, and maintaining focus on the value proposition one's company offers, Hall said.

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Get Hall's PowerPoint

Hall's PowerPoint from Farwest can be downloaded at **TinyURL.com/HallKeynote**.

Hall, the Ellison Chair of International Floriculture at Texas A&M University and chief economist for AmericanHort, drew a key contrast between assessing risks and uncertainties. Risks are known, but uncertainties can't be predicted.

"We tend to use those interchangeably, but risk is basically those things that you can pretty well gauge the odds of happening," Hall said. "[With] uncertainty, you don't have a clue."

Recent uncertainties, according to Hall, have included tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration, as well as the Iran war and resulting Strait of Hormuz closure, which have driven fuel prices skyward.

Leaders who postpone decisions due to risk can forget that indecision also has its cost. Those who study, set a personal deadline, and then act are most likely to be rewarded, he said.

It's important to keep awareness of which decisions can be adjusted most easily. For example, pricing that proves to be too aggressive based on customer response can be pulled back.

But Hall said that based on the past several years, growers who increased prices saw greater income, while those who held back just ended up sharing their margins with their customers. "If you're not seeing an increase in net profit from where we were in 2019, there's some things going on," he said with a characteristic bit of understatement.

A sustained strong market for plants

Overall, the post-COVID market for plant products from 2020–2026 has »

Knowing opportunities and risks



Charlie Hall's keynote address at the Farwest Show drew a packed audience. PHOTO BY MAX STEIN

remained strong, Hall said. He displayed a chart showing the trend line over time. Plant sales grew slowly from 2016–2019, then shot up from 2020–2022 with people spending more of their time, and their discretionary income, at home. Since then, there have been periods of growth and decline, and some plateaus. Overall, sales growth has continued, but at a more modest pace.

"You can see that in 2023, 38% [of growers] said that they were growing more than 10%, and only 12% [said this] in 2026," Hall noted.

Still, 97% of growers reported in 2026 that their sales were higher than in 2019, and 59% of them reported they were up more than 25%.

Hall pointed out that growth in sales does not necessarily mean growth in units shipped. The number of growers shipping more units has consistently trailed the number of growers with greater income. This is because sales growth has been led by price increases.

"The higher plateau looks like the new normal," Hall noted on a slide. "The question is no longer 'Are we going back?" — it's 'What do we do from here?'"



Charlie Hall pointed out that growth in sales does not necessarily mean growth in units shipped. This is because sales growth has been led by price increases. PHOTO BY MAX STEIN

The growers with greatest success have raised prices enough to cover the increased cost of their inputs.

"Since 2019, if you've not raised your price by as much as 23%, you have not kept up with the inflationary pressure on inputs, and you've been sharing your margin with your customers," Hall said.

He added that the need to increase prices to keep up with inflation, cover costs and protect margins has only continued in 2026.

"There's another 3.6% of inflationary pressure on inputs because of tariffs, because of Iran, and so forth, that you're gonna have to cover this year," Hall said. "And some are telling me, 'I don't think I've got the runway to raise price another 3.6%.' Well, I just told you if that's the case, you're gonna be sharing margin with your customer. You may have to eat some of it. But my contention is when you're trying to weigh whether or not you have that runway to raise price, and you're thinking, 'I can't raise price anymore, my customers will go somewhere else,' my only response is, 'How do you know?'"

A future housing boom

Hall expects demand for plants to spike up again once more people start purchasing homes, which the numbers say will happen at some point.

"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."

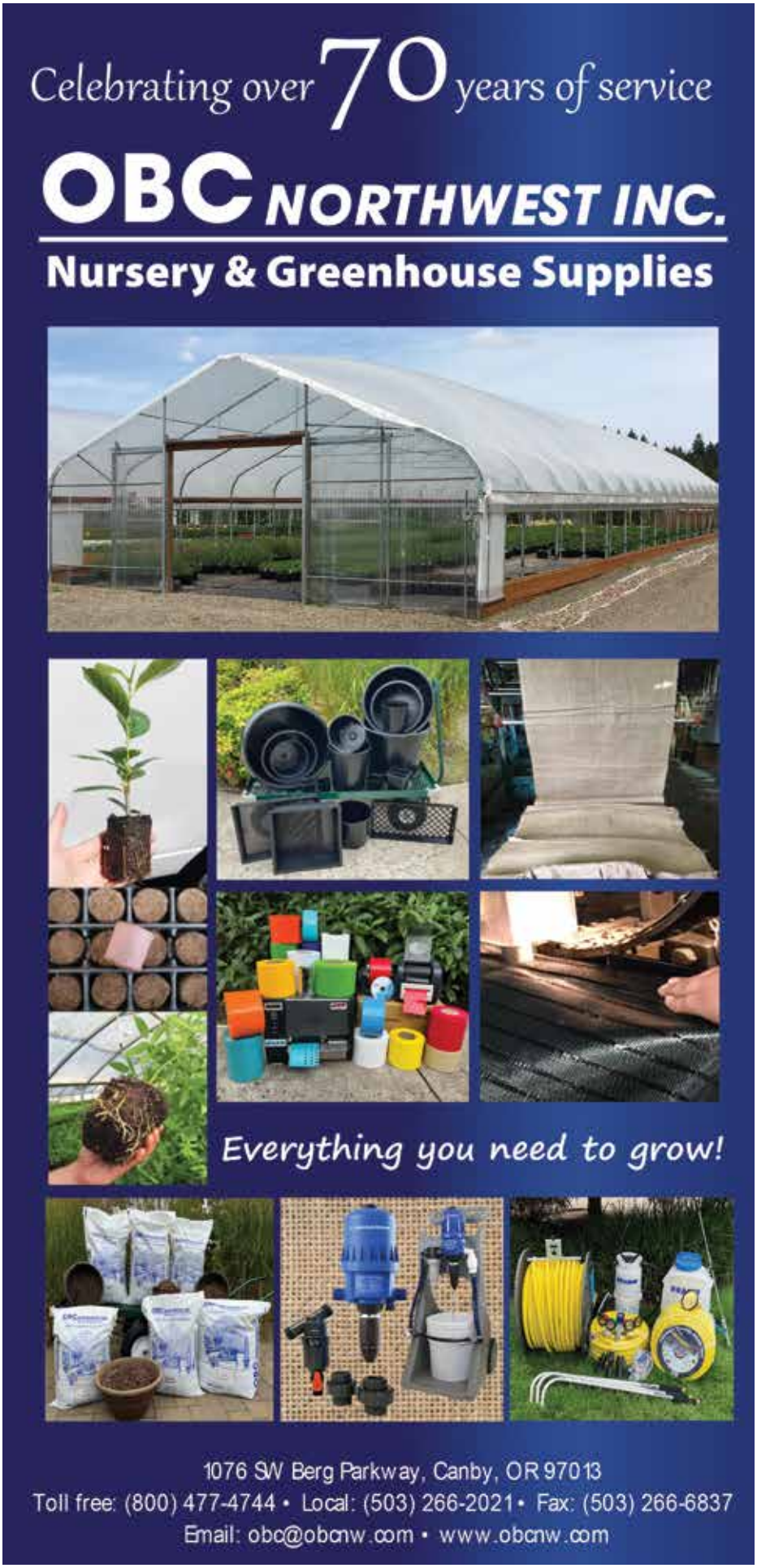
Green products, he said, continue to be strong performers for big box stores like Lowe's, Home Depot and Walmart.

"Particularly for Lowe's and Home Depot, there are no other departments in the entire store that even come close to what indoor and outdoor garden generate," he said. "We are driving people to their stores. We are driving most of their increases in revenue."

However, he did caution that strong spending has persisted in spite of the lowest consumer mood in seven decades. "We don't spend based on how we feel," he said. "There's a correlation, but it's not a strong correlation. That's the irony, is that sometimes we spend to make ourselves feel mo' better. And we see it in the numbers."

Factors unique to the Northwest

Hall noted that based on sales figures from retailers, the Pacific Northwest is underperforming compared to other »



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Knowing opportunities and risks

regions of the country. Sales figures are lower and the average ticket is lower.

At the same time, shipping costs are high with the Strait of Hormuz remaining closed due to the war between the United States and Iran. The federal government forecasted that diesel would sell for $3.50 per gallon in 2026. Instead, the U.S. national average was $5.26 per gallon as of August 10, the West Coast average excluding California was $5.53, and the California average was $6.62.

"Diesel prices are only a portion of freight, but you can see the freight rates, diesel prices going up," Hall said. "And here in Oregon, right, you're in a situation where you're paying a premium above most other regions of the country. And, the only state that's paying more is California."

Closing points

Hall's major takeaways were as follows:

The new baseline. The sales levels post 2020 formed a higher plateau that serves as the new baseline. "You're not in a downturn, you're on a plateau," he stated on a slide.

Pricing vs. volume. For growers, growth has been price-led, but there's a limit to how this can boost returns. Growers should focus on building back volume.

Margins matter most. Growers that focus on margin do best. Hall noted that 61% of growers increased their profits and 41% decreased theirs, in identical conditions. Those who did well looked at price structure, SKU discipline and pricing courage.

Tariffs are here to stay, for now. The most recent tariffs under Section 301 don't have a sunset, so growers should price them in as a budget assumption. If they go away, that's a bonus.

Plan for sideways. Hall expects growth of 1.5–2% and continued uncertainty. "The fog is the weather now, not a passing front," he stated on a slide.

Curt Kipp is director of communications and publications at the Oregon Association of Nurseries and the editor of Digger. Contact him at 503-582-2008 or **CKipp@OAN.org**.

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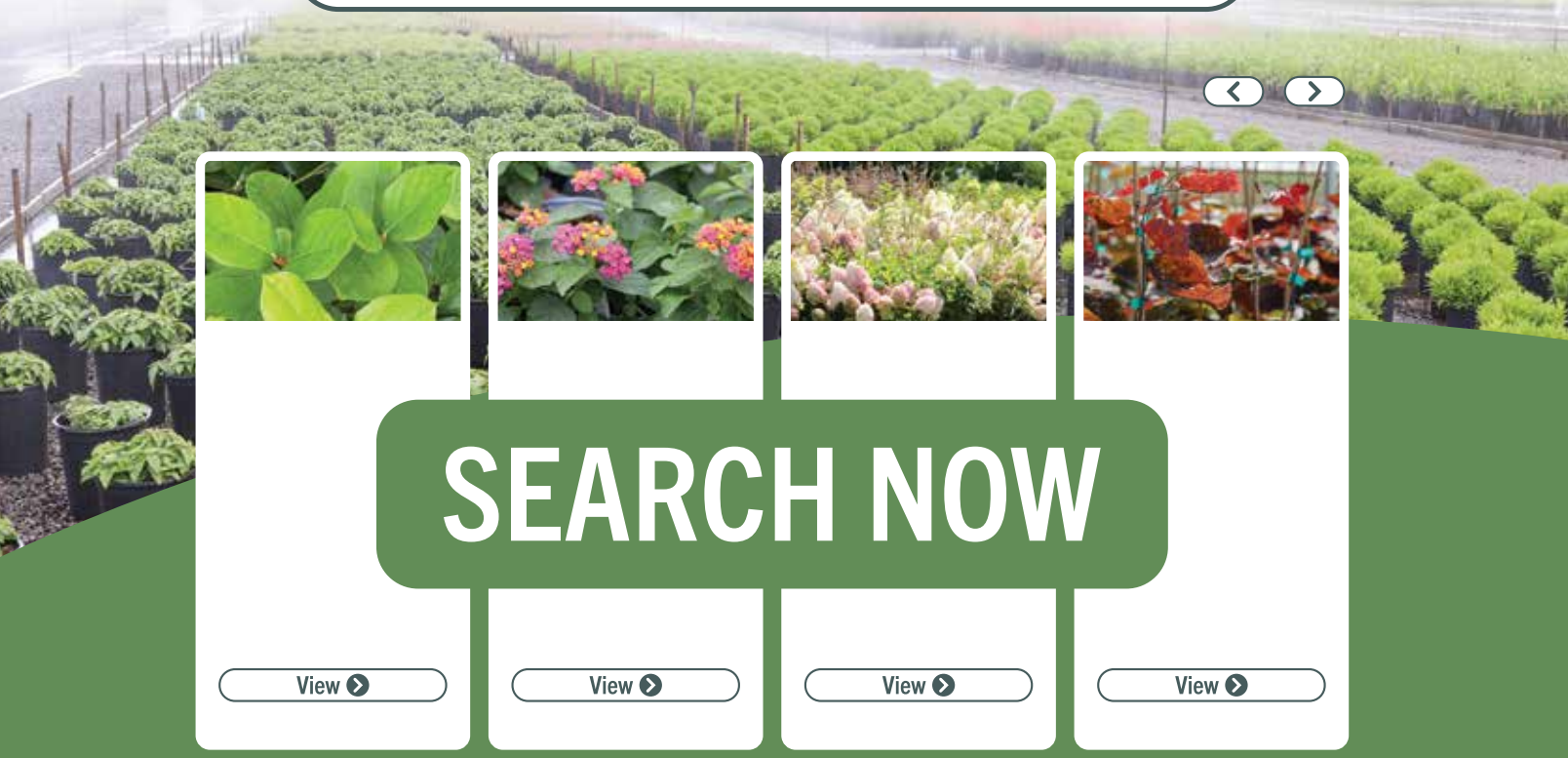
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An ongoing series provided by Oregon State University in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture and in partnership with the Oregon Association of Nurseries

Getting started

IR-4 Environmental Horticulture program can have impact on nursery industry



The IR-4 Environmental Horticulture workshop happens every two years. It's where researchers, stakeholders, and industry representatives get together to prioritize projects for the next two years. PHOTO COURTESY OF IR-4 PROJECT

BY DALILA RENDON

Since 2025, I have served as leader of the IR-4 Pesticide Registration Field Research program at Oregon State University. The program is based at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) in Aurora, Oregon, and runs all the field trials necessary for registering new pesticides in specialty crops.

In recent years, this program has focused mainly on food crops. Since we are surrounded by the nursery industry, however, I wanted to learn more about pest management and product registration for ornamentals.

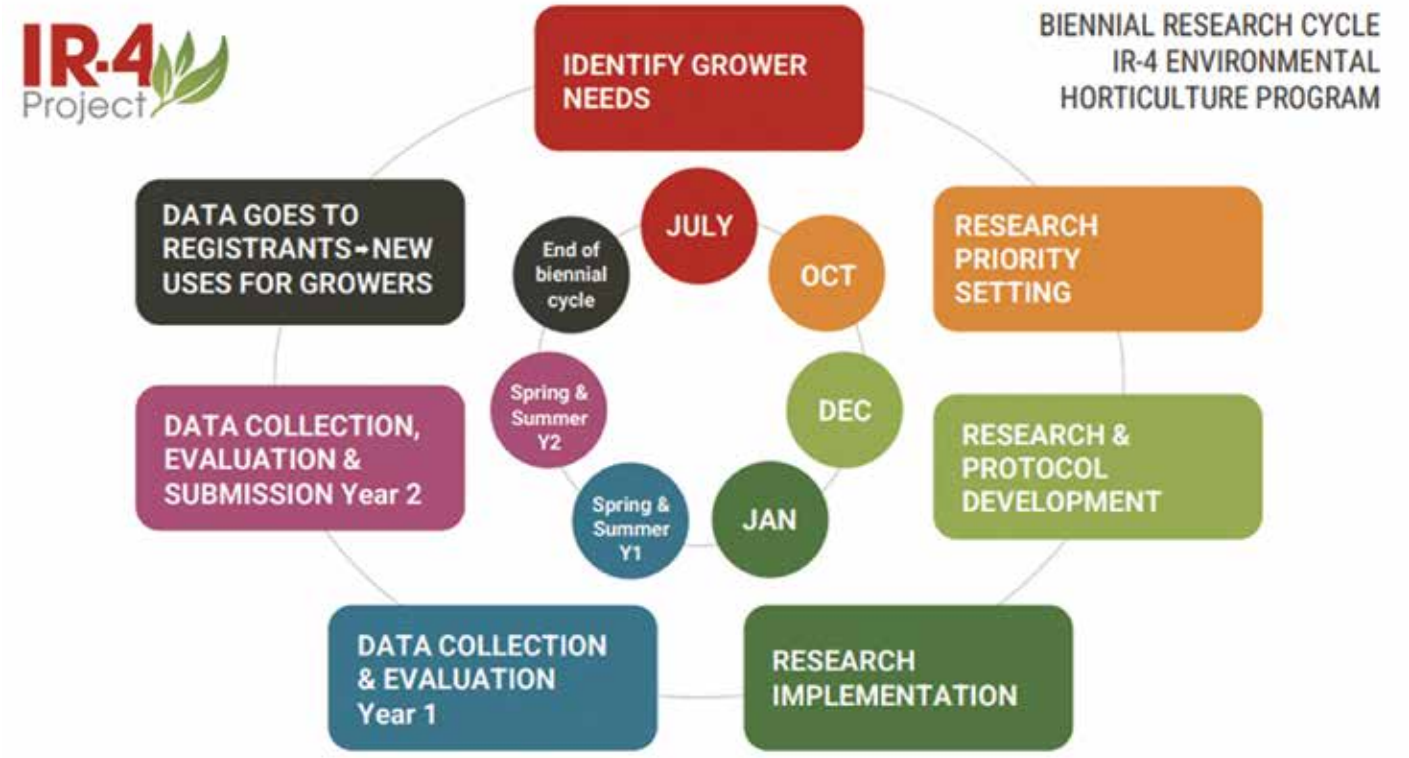
My background and experience are in entomology, so I was also fascinated to learn about plant pathology and weed management issues in the nursery industry. This article outlines my experiences and impressions from my first IR-4 Environmental Horticulture workshop, and the impact it can have on the Oregon nursery industry.

A cycle that's responsive to needs

Unlike the IR-4 Food Use program, which runs on a yearly calendar, the IR-Environmental Horticulture (EH) program has a biennial cycle (Fig. 1).

The IR-4 Environmental Horticulture workshop happens every two years. It's where researchers, stakeholders, and industry representatives get together to prioritize projects for the next two years. The goal is to narrow down and select research projects where one or several pesticide products are tested for efficacy and/or crop safety in various ornamental crops.

The 2025 IR-4 EH workshop took place over two days in October in Kansas City, Missouri, coordinated by a new IR-4 Environmental Horticulture manage- »



The IR-4 Environmental Horticulture workshop happens every two years. The goal is to narrow down and select research projects where one or several pesticide products are tested for efficacy and/or crop safety in various ornamental crops. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF IR-4 PROJECT

ment team. Being just seven months into my new position, I was curious to learn not only how this workshop would be carried out in general, but also to see what changes and improvements the new leadership would bring to the program.

Historically, IR-4 EH has gathered data on pest management needs in two ways: by doing a grower survey, or by soliciting project requests (**TinyURL.com/IR4HortGrowerSurvey**).

With the survey, growers, consultants, or extension agents indicate which pests (weeds, pathogens, or invertebrates) are their primary concern. With the project requests, (mainly) researchers submit nominations for specific pesticide products that they would like to evaluate against specific pests. In the March 2025 issue of *Digger*, Jerry Weiland, Ph.D., from the USDA Agricultural Research Service (Corvallis) wrote about the importance of participating in these surveys to ensure that the pest management needs of the local industry are heard and met (DiggerMagazine.com/Prioritizing-Nursery-Pest-Challenges).

Deciding which products to evaluate

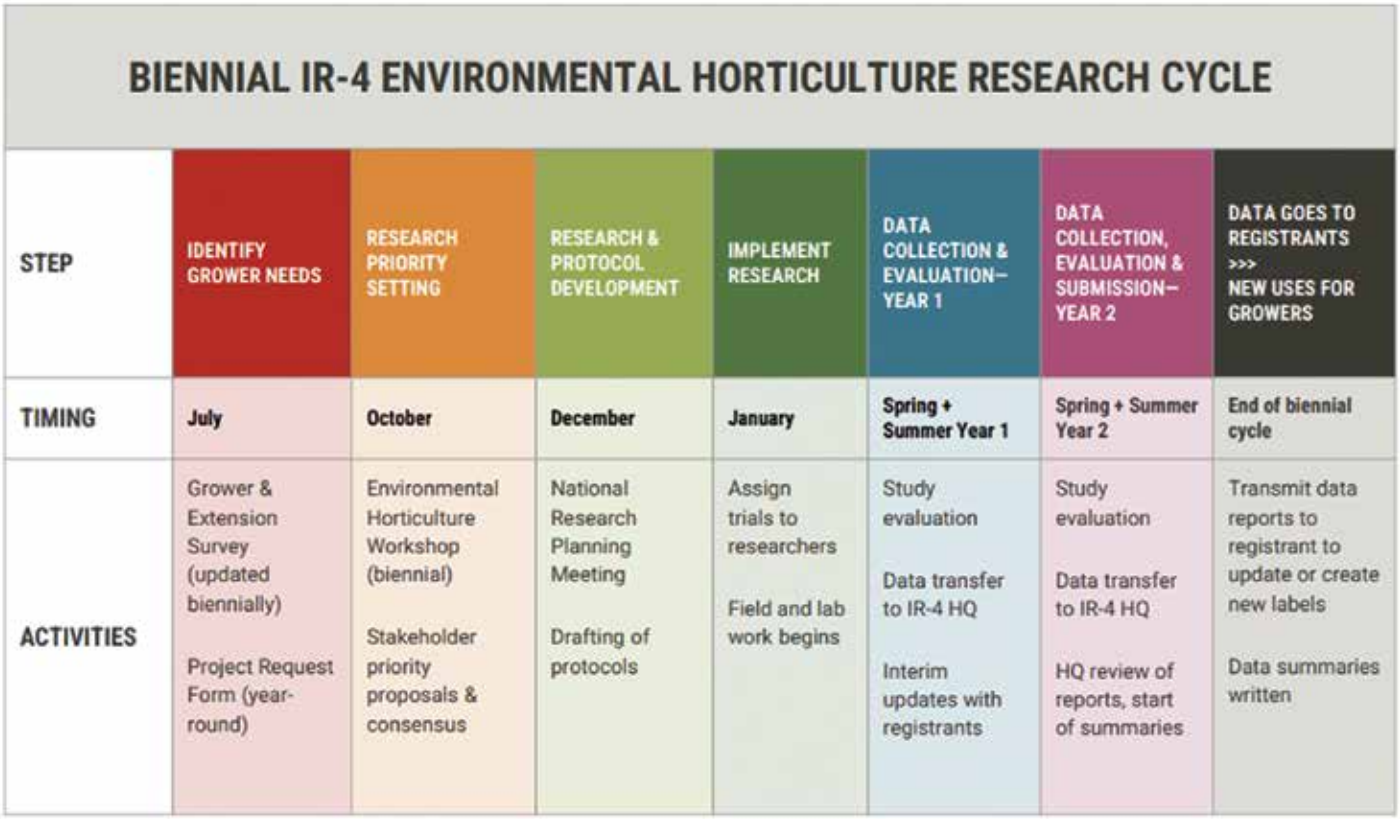
In the past, both the grower surveys and project requests were considered during the process of selecting the final list of IR-4 EH projects. One of the main changes at the 2025 IR-4 EH workshop was to prioritize the data from the grower surveys over the project requests when nominating and selecting projects. The project requests could then be used as a tool to identify potential products to evaluate for the main pest issues stated by the grower survey.

For the grower survey, respondents were asked their top three pest problems per discipline, and then all the answers were given a final weighted ranking.

One of the main questions was, "Consider the plant materials you

Table 7. Weighted Ranking of Insects/Mites

Insect/Mite	Weighted Ranking
Thrips	192
Mites & Spider Mites	117
Scale & Mealybugs	115
Scarabs	87
Aphids	84
Hemiptera	41
Flea beetle / RHFB	41
Diabrotica	36
Leafhopper	29
Lepidopterans	21
Whiteflies	20
Box Tree Moth	13
Symphylans	11
Grasshoppers	11
Ambrosia / Bark beetles	10
Root Aphid	9
Leaf beetle	9
Earwigs	6
Gall wasp	5
Fungus gnats	4
European corn borer	3
Chinch bugs	3
Snails & Slugs	3
Varroa mite	3
True Weevil	3
Springtails	2
Flatheaded borer	2
Spotted lantern fly	2
Adelgid	2
Wireworm	1
Deer	1
Grand Total	886



Researchers, stakeholders, and industry representatives get together at the workshop to prioritize projects. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF IR-4 PROJECT

Table 8. Weighted Ranking of Pathogens

Pathogen	Weighted Ranking
Powdery Mildew	93
Fusarium	65
Botrytis	54
Bacterial Diseases	54
Phytophthora	49
Cercospora Leaf Spot	30
Fireblight	23
Aster Yellows	22
Nematodes	21
Pythium	16
Crown & Root Rots	15
Black Spot	14
Downy mildew	13
Anthracnose	13
Rust	11
Cankers	9
Beech Leaf Disease	9
Pythium / Phytophthora	7
Boxwood dieback	6
Fungal	6
Peony leaf blotch	6
Boxwood blight	6
Crown gall	5
Vascular streak dieback	5
Lethal Bronzing	5
Grand Total	600

grow or maintain. Then, consider situations over the last year where you had difficulty managing diseases, pests, or weeds. For all three areas, list the top three situations where your product arsenal was limited." We were also able to assess pest problems by regions (with Oregon as part of the Western Region), or by type of crop (e.g., cut flowers, shrubs, etc.).

One thing to consider is that the overall national needs may not address the specific needs of the Western Region, and that the overall needs of the Western Region may not reflect the needs of Oregon growers.

The survey tables show the national and regional answers to the top pests. Some pests that are consistently challenging, both nationally and regionally, include thrips, powdery mildew, and runner/vine weeds. In contrast, some pests that ranked high (top 5) in the Western Region that were not ranked as high nationally include root aphids, fire blights, and mugworts.

When a pest is selected as a national or regional priority, it increases the likelihood that effective products will be evaluated and registered for ornamental crops.

Low participation of a particular region or sector means that their needs may get diluted by the needs expressed by more active survey participants. This may be the case with the Western Region, which had the lowest response rate of all the U.S. regions, with a total of 62 responses out of 335 participants (19%).

Likewise, some types of operations or crops may be underrepresented. For example, the vast majority of respondents represented greenhouse operations (200 responses), and listed cut flowers as their main crop (196 responses). While it may be that this is a true representative slice of the market, it may also be that these responses represent the most active stakeholders. »

Grower input at this stage helps ensure that future registrations align with real-world nursery production challenges.

(For online readers, the summary of the 2025 Grower Survey can be accessed at **TinyURL.com/IR4GrowerSurvey**, and the specific project requests are available at **TinyURL.com/IR4ProjectRequests**).

Focusing on priority projects

The initial goal was to select a total of 10 national priority projects (balanced per discipline; weed science, plant pathology, and entomology), plus two regional priorities regardless of discipline (Northeast, North Central, Western, and Southern regions). In the past, the projects were also equally divided into crop safety and efficacy.

After reviewing all the top pest issues according to the grower survey, we broke into regional groups (in my case the Western Region), where we discussed whether the top pests from the national survey were a local issue and we should pursue prioritizing them for projects.

After discussion with our regional groups, we reconvened with the whole group, and we started evaluating the top pests by discipline. The weed scientists were quick and organized to select their national project priorities:

- **Pre-emergent herbicide crop** safety in hydrangeas.
- **Early post-emergent herbicide** efficacy in Christmas trees.
- **Pre-emergent herbicide efficacy** and crop safety in transplant cut flowers.
- **Perennial weed herbicide** efficacy in cut peonies.

As the discussion flowed, some aspects of project selection became more flexible and fluid – for instance, initially half of the projects were to be allocated to evaluate pesticide efficacy and half to crop safety, but several attendees and stakeholders pointed out that they already assess crop safety when doing efficacy trials, so in some cases they can be combined and priority be given to the efficacy trials.

The rest of the national priorities arose as the coordinators of the different regions consulted with one another if a top pest was an issue only specific to one area, or if it was a more widespread problem. This was the best way to allocate finite resources to ensure that most pest needs are addressed. From these discussions, the national priorities (top pests that were issues in at least two regions) for plant pathology and entomology were selected:

Plant pathology national priorities:

- ***Phytopythium* fungicide efficacy.**
- ***Phytophthora* fungicide efficacy.**
- ***Botrytis* efficacy.**
- **Entomology national priorities:**
- **Thrips insecticide efficacy.**
- **Red-headed flea beetle** insecticide efficacy in container nurseries.
- **Root aphid insecticide** efficacy.

The plant pathology projects, unlike the weed science projects, did not have a designated crop, because the crops affected may vary among regions.

Table 9. Weighted Ranking of Weeds

Weed	Weighted Ranking
Ragweed*	67
Runner / Vine weeds	67
Grasses	56
Summer annual weeds	53
Thistle	51
Nutsedge & Sedges	48
Horseweed* / Marestail*	46
Summer Annual Grasses	40
Lambsquarters*	39
Rhizomatous / Stoloniferous grass	25
Mugwort / Alligator weed / Wild chrysanthemum / Horsenettle / Nightshades	23
Liverwort	21
Winter Annual Broadleaf	21
Palmer amaranth	20

*Indicates specific mention of resistance found

Western	Powdery Mildew	19
	Fusarium	18
	Botrytis	11
	Fireblight	8
	Bacterial Diseases	7

Western	Thrips	41
	Mites & Spider Mites	28
	Aphids	25
	Diabrotica	11
	Root Aphid	9

Western	Thistle	22
	Runner / Vine weeds (mile-a-minute, buttercup, creeping charlie, morning glory/bindweed, etc)	19
	Grasses	12
	Mugwort / Alligator weed / Wild chrysanthemum / Horsenettle / Nightshades	9
	Nutsedge & Sedges	8

For example, I was aware that *Phytophthora* is an issue for Christmas tree growers in the Pacific Northwest, but nursery growers in other regions may experience problems with *Phytophthora* in different crops such as potted plants. The advantage of selecting *Phytophthora* as a national priority is that each region will have the resources to develop a protocol that fits their crop of interest.

A similar discussion arose with the entomology projects. All regions agreed that thrips were a main pest, but each region had a different species or crop to prioritize. For instance, the main thrips species in the west is the Western flower thrips, while in the Southeast, chili thrips and the newly invasive *parvispinus* thrips are the main concern.

Addressing what fell below radar

After the national priorities were selected, each region now had the opportunity to nominate their own regional projects in any of the disciplines. This provides the opportunity to solve local problems that might fall under the radar when assessing national grower's surveys. Because more projects (four) were selected for weed science as a national priority, entomology and plant pathology were the focus for selecting regional projects.

For the Western Region, the two regional priorities selected were both in entomology, to evaluate products for efficacy against symphylans (which can clog irrigation systems in nurseries) and scale (affecting mainly woody ornamentals). The Western region encompasses 13 states, so the needs are very diverse, but in the end, I hope that the results of this priority setting workshop will benefit the Oregon nursery industry. These priorities ultimately determine which pesticide products may become labeled for ornamental use in the next several years.

What's next? In cooperation with

registrants (pesticide manufacturers), IR-4 EH leadership is screening potential products that would be a good fit to evaluate in each of the priority projects, and drafting the protocols for each trial (Fig. 2). Concurrently, the regional leaders are reaching out to researchers to assign who can run each of the trials, ideally in a local crop of importance. The researchers are then responsible for performing the field trials following the protocols to evaluate for efficacy and/or crop safety, collecting the data, and writing the final reports.

One thing to point out is that, unlike for food use crops, product registrations for ornamentals do not require residues analyses. Once all the field trials are completed and the data from all regions is collected, IR-4 submits the reports to the manufacturers so that they can request registration of the products evaluated that showed good efficacy without injuring the crops.

As a newbie in this program, my whole impression of the IR-4 EH workshop was strongly positive. I will admit — I wish I had been better prepared to give specific insights about the pest management problems faced by the Oregon nursery industry, but it is a learning process that will help me become a more efficient advocate.

It was also fascinating to learn about problems in other regions that we would not even consider here. This is why is so important to fill the grower's surveys! Make sure that the local needs of your region are seen and addressed.

I would like to encourage more industry representatives and stakeholders to attend in person the IR-4 Environmental Horticulture workshop in the future. It truly makes an impact to have your input in the room! It makes the difference between having one project discarded or not. In the end, we do it for the growers, and to ensure that the ornamental industry continues to thrive. ©

Dalila Rendon is assistant professor in the Department of Horticulture at Oregon State University. She specializes in IR-4 field pesticide research and pest managment in specialty crops. She can be contacted at **Dalila.Rendon@OregonState.edu.**







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OAN Convention signals the sprint into 2027



Jeff Stone

Sunriver Resort in beautiful Central Oregon will be the gathering place of friends, our talented leaders and volunteers, and where we swear in Darcy Ruef, Al's Garden & Home, as our new president.

Conventions are a turning point of the association's yearly cycle. We take stock of the past year and highlight those who have stood out. We issue a myriad of awards, hold discussions that shape the priorities of the association, and tackle head-on the issues that confront Oregon's largest agricultural sector.

Digging into the issues

Since the COVID pandemic, our chapters have struggled not only with their identities, but their ability to serve members. Hoping things get better is not a strategy.

The OAN board has given the green light for the membership to examine and implement realignment of our chapter borders. The concept is to go from nine chapters to four. This change will not cancel long-established and well-attended events. The association needs to meet the needs of the membership, and we feel a reset will do just that.

Our convention keynote speaker, Matt Mika, has a unique and powerful story of survival. The senior vice president of government affairs and chief advocacy officer at AmericanHort was among the victims of a shooting at a congressional baseball practice in Virginia. He will share his very personal and compelling first-person account.

Seven states now have packaging extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws: Maine, Oregon, Colorado, California, Minnesota, Maryland and Washington. Together they cover about one in five Americans, and any horticulture business that ships plants into them may owe registration, reporting, and fees on the pots, trays, tags, sleeves and cartons that go out the door. Only Oregon (since July 2025) and Colorado (since January 2026) are invoicing producers today.

The key point for growers: these laws follow the product, not the business address. Product changes hands many times in our industry. As we learned at the Plastics Roundtable at the Farwest Show, there is very little awareness and understanding of the fiscal ramifications of the EPR law. It will not be confined to the seven states as the nursery industry is a national commodity. Oregon has been a leader on a national conversation, and the issue will be brought to you —front and center.

As always, we will have a legislative panel made up of bipartisan elected leaders, along with Matt Mika from AmericanHort, myself, and wholesale grower Amanda Staehely (Columbia Nursery), who by then will hopefully be the newly elected state representative from Oregon House District 18.

Issues at the federal level (trade and tariffs, labor reform, farm bill) and the state (agricultural overtime, commercial activities tax, land use, EPR and climate policy) will be brought to your feet for your engagement.

Why does this matter?

It is a common question. What does it matter if I get involved? Does my vote make a difference? That answer is an unqualified yes.

At the beginning of last month, eight major farm groups (including OAN) inked an editorial challenging both federal and state policies that are making it more difficult to compete. The editorial said, in part:

Many of the challenges facing Oregon agriculture today are not beyond anyone's control. They are the result of policy choices in Washington, D.C., and Salem, and our government has the power to change course or make different decisions. Agriculture has also absorbed costs and uncertainty from federal trade policy. Tariffs increase the cost of production, while retaliation and anti-American purchasing sentiment threaten markets farmers have spent years building. At the same time, the administration deserves credit when it gets things right. Efforts to make the H-2A program more workable, updates to Endangered Species Act regulations, and improvements to grazing management on federal lands matter to Oregon's family farms and ranches.

Unfortunately, the problems coming from Washington are landing on an industry already struggling under costs imposed in Salem. Oregon cannot blame Washington D.C. for problems created here at home. Before adding another mandate, regulation or tax, state leaders need to consider what happens when those costs land on the same farm, in the same year, alongside higher fuel prices and uncertain markets. The status quo is untenable.

Oregon agriculture needs stability and common sense from Washington and real regulatory relief from Salem. We need a governor willing to stand up to the Administration when federal policy hurts Oregon, support the Administration when federal policy helps Oregon, and lead the fight to address the out-of-control costs and regulations our own state government constantly imposes.

Focused and ready to go

Your association is laser focused on being a fierce advocate for the industry — both in Salem and Washington DC. This is a critical election and time in the nursery industry where decisions made will have a lasting impact. We are up for the challenge.

Over the last decade the OAN has trained members to be platoons of on the ground advocates. But this is all for nothing unless you vote and make your voice heard. Regardless of one's personal political view, get out and vote. ©




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