Digger

DECEMBER 2026





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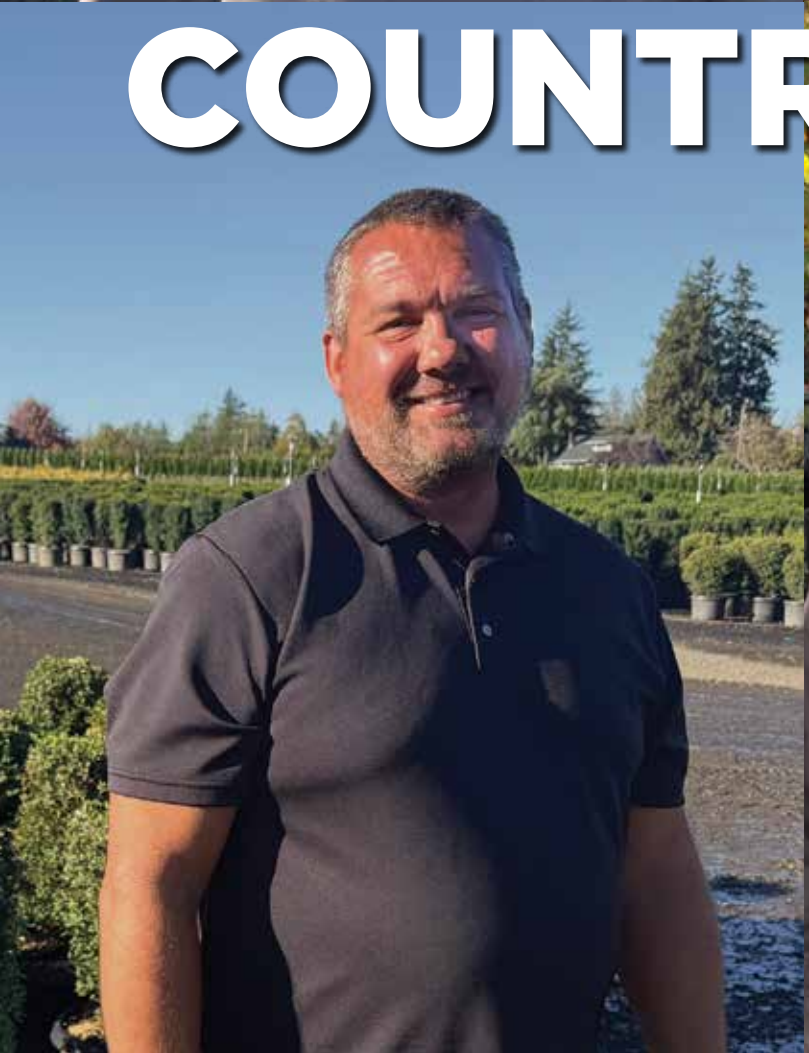

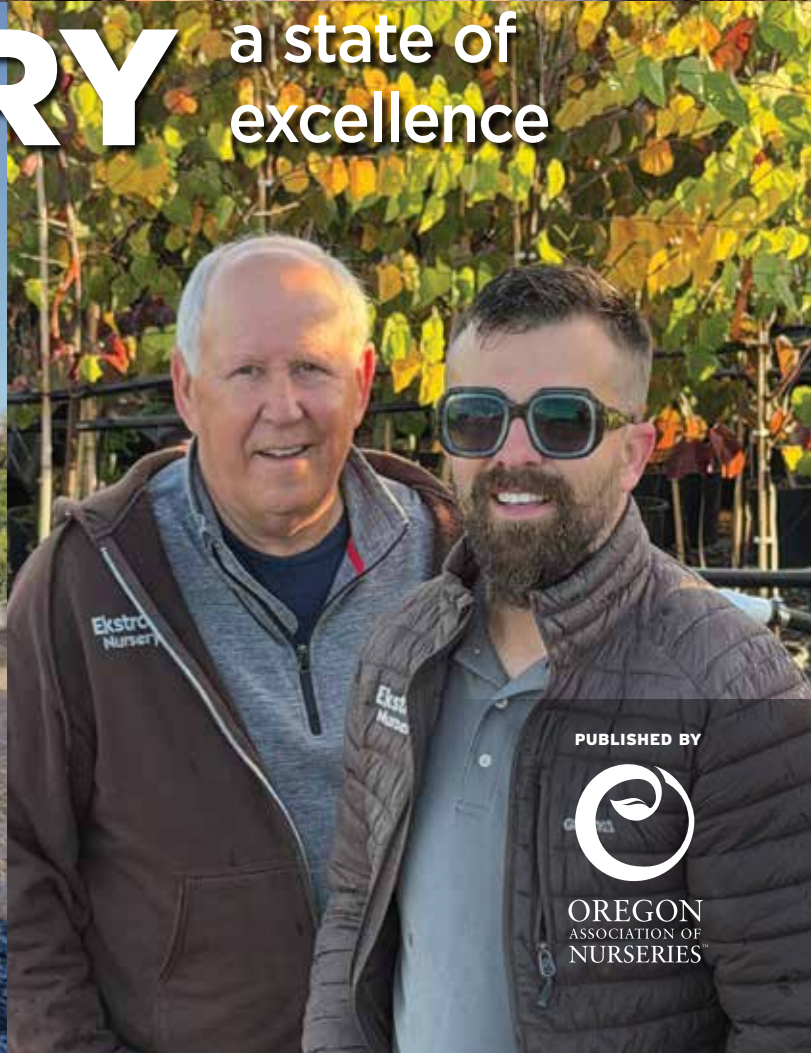

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December 2026 Vol. 70 No. 12

Digger





9-12 Honoring the best at Convention
The Oregon Association of Nurseries recognized members who have made key contributions to the industry.

COLUMNS

7 President's Message
46 Director's Desk

DEPARTMENTS

8 Calendar
13 Northwest News
37 Classifieds
41 Growing Knowledge
45 Digger Marketplace

20 Welcome
Meet the people and the stories behind four of Oregon's finest wholesale growers.

21 Ekstrom Nursery
Scott Ekstrom helps carry on three generations of success at the Gresham, Oregon nursery.

25 Eshraghi Nuseries
Linda Eshraghi has earned a strong reputation for beautiful Japanese maples and grafted conifers.

29 Sobella Nursery
Chad Sobella has turned his passion for tracking down unusual and unique conifers into his nursery's focus.

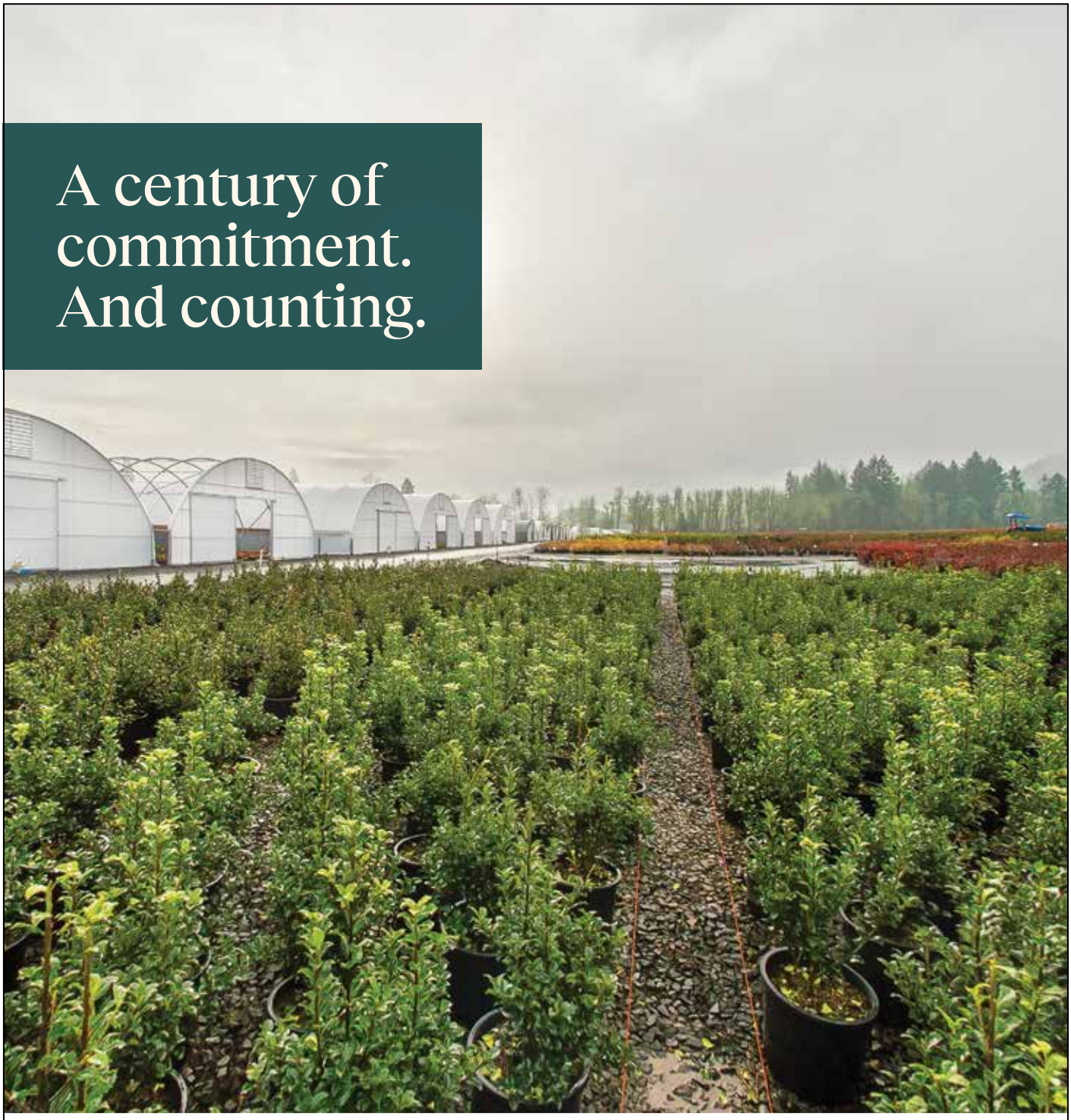
33 Western Evergreen
Jason Hupp has built a reputation for trialing and introducing unique, unusal and amazing conifers.

Printed in Oregon on domestic recycled paper when available.

On the cover: Clockwise from top left: Jason Hupp, owner of Western Evergreen; Linda Eshraghi, owner of Eshraghi Nurseries; Don and Scott Ekstrom, owners of Ekstrom Nursery; Dan Sobella, owner of Sobella Nursery. PHOTOS BY VIC PANICHKUL

On this page: Left: Eshraghi Nurseries has grown to encompass more than 200 acres as well as two retail garden centers.

Right: OAN members honored with awards gather at the OAN Convention at Sunriver Resort. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



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SUBSCRIPTION AND CHANGE OF ADDRESS Circulation is controlled. Domestic subscriptions are complimentary to qualified U.S. nursery industry members. Non-qualified U.S. subscriptions are $42. Qualified foreign subscriptions are $35 to Canada; $45 to Mexico; and $80 for all other countries. Single copy rate is $6 while supplies last. Notify OAN Publications of change of address. Please allow 3-4 weeks for address change.

Postmaster: Change of address correction requested to above address.

ADVERTISING Contact OAN Publications at ads@oan.org for display and classified advertising rates. Deadlines are the 1st of the month preceding the month of publication.

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A year of challenges but also successes

As the countdown to Christmas is here, it is always nice to take a step back and look at the year behind us, as well as the year ahead.



Darcy Ruef

You can't look at 2026 without looking at what happened in 2025. The Oregon economy was headed in the direction of a recession. It was a difficult year for families. Food was expensive, electricity went up, insurance costs rose, and both health care and housing were more expensive.

As a result, more of us based our spending decisions on needs, rather than wants.

Housing and business construction are main drivers of nursery sales. With interest rates staying high, and housing costs rising higher than ever, we have seen a slowdown in the housing market. This in turn affects nursery sales.

As an Oregon business in 2026, my business (**Al's Garden & Home**) started looking at efficiencies in tasks and using tools to make our employees' jobs easier.

As a grower-retailer, we renewed our customer focus. Our typical customers have nice houses, but with small yards. We asked ourselves important strategic questions: What will our new customers come to our stores looking for? What is the trend or style they will like? How are we going to adapt our business to fit their needs?

But despite the economic challenges, not all of 2026 was bad. We also need to look at what we accomplished as the Oregon Association of Nurseries. We successfully, on several fronts, defended an important and economically vital industry.

As of the most recent year tallied, Oregon booked $1.3 billion in nursery sales annually. Some 75% of our material is shipped to other states, meaning we bring close to $1 billion in revenue back to the Oregon economy each year.

Taking it further, we employ 10,423 workers each year. Our businesses provide $370,077 yearly (give or take) for industry-funded research.

Did you know that our plants provide clean water, clean air, increased property values, stress reduction, crime prevention, improved public safety, better human health and better neighborhoods?

Research has shown that our products do all of that, and we are friends and colleagues on top of it. This year's Convention, held last month at Sunriver, only helped further the feeling of community.

The awards were all well-earned and celebrated. The announcements have been made, and are covered starting on Page 9 of this issue, but I think the awards deserve another mention.

Among my favorite were the Honorary Life memberships. Listening to all they've done is amazing. Congratulations to David and Kristin VanHoose, Pete and Wendy Brentano and Jerry and Roberta Simnitt! (I'm quite sure none of them are old enough for this award!)

A special award, The Clayton W. Hannon Distinguished Service Award, went to Patrick Newton for fighting for us on the Japanese beetle from day one of his presidency.

Bill Patterson took home the OAN Outstanding Service Award, the Emerging Leader Award went to Elizabeth Brentano, and the Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Allied Trades Award went to the folks at Marion Ag Service Inc. Thank you for all you do!

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and many blessings to you and your families. In the January issue of Digger, we can talk about what 2027 will bring!

Darcy Ruef

DEC

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*.

DECEMBER 1

OAN OPEN HOUSE

Get into the holiday spirit at Little Prince of Oregon Nursery Inc. in Aurora, Oregon for Oregon Association of Nurseries' next Open House. Enjoy an afternoon of good company, light bites and beverages while catching up with friends and making new connections. Drop in between 3:30–5:30 p.m. at Little Prince, 15868 NE Eilers Road. Take a tour of the production and shipping areas at the nursery, get information about prebooking Hellebores, plus there may be a chance to take home some extra mistletoe! 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. Questions? Contact the OAN office at 503-682-5089 or **Info@OAN.org**. RSVP at **OAN.org/Events**.

DECEMBER 8

TRUCKS TO TRADE SHOW TO MANTS

December 8 is the deadline to register for the Winter Trucks to Trade Shows program serving the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) January 13–15. This member benfit allows OAN members to ship booth material on a partial load basis, saving money. The cost is $750 per pallet, not including drayage or material handling fees. Such fees are determined and billed directly by show management and/or the show decorator. Prices are based on last year's participation and are subject to change if fewer nurseries participate or if fuel surcharges or trucking costs increase. Shipments may be canceled if minimum participation requirements are not met. A minimum of 13 confirmed pallets is required by the deadline in order for OAN to proceed with the shipment. The OAN also offers pallets to other industry trade shows, such as those in Denver, Utah and Idaho. Fees and deadlines vary. For more information or to reserve your spot, go to **OAN.org/T2Ts**. Questions? Contact Jaime O'Brien at **JOBrien@OAN.org** or 503-582-2010.

DECEMBER 10

MT. HOOD CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

Join the Oregon Association of Nurseries Mt. Hood Chapter for "Eat, Drink and Be Tacky!" a festive evening of delicious food, games and an ugly sweater contest. The event at Heidi's of Gresham, 1230 N.E. Cleveland Ave., begins at 5:30 p.m. with cocktail hour and a no-host bar, followed by dinner at 6 p.m. Enjoy a plated dinner with your choice of prime rib, salmon or turkey. All meals include salad, two sides, bread, ice cream and a non-alcoholic beverage. Wear your brightest, most ridiculous, tackiest holiday sweater and get ready for a little friendly competition, games and holiday fun. Tickets are $50 per adult, children 12 and younger are free. Registration deadline is December 3. Go to **TinyURL.com/MtHoodXmas** to register. Questions? Contact Brooke Jerie at **BrookeJerie@gmail.com.**



PHOTO BY SIM

JANUARY 1, 2027

HORTICULTURAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Do you know a high school, college or graduate student who is considering a career as a nursery or landscape professional? If so, applications are being taken beginning January 1, 2027 for 20 scholarships ranging from $1,000 to $3,000 from the Oregon Nurseries Foundation. The scholarships are sponsored by individual OAN chapters, and its members. April 1, 2027 is the last day to apply. Go to **OAN.org/ONF** for more information, or contact OAN Director of Finance Stephanie Weihrauch at 503-582-2001 or **Scholarships@OAN.org**.

DECEMBER 11

NEXGEN HOLIDAY PARTY

Join NexGen for the "Koi to the World" holiday party on Friday, December 11 from 6–9 p.m. at Hughes Water Gardens, 25289 S.W. Stafford Road in Tualatin. The event includes a potluck dinner so attendees are encouraged to bring your best dish, your worst dish, or nothing at all, said NexGen Event Coordinator Randy Green. There will also be a white elephant gift exchange with a $25 limit. RSVP at **TinyURL.com/NexGenKoi**. Questions? Contact Green at **Randy.Green365@Gmail.com**.

DECEMBER 12

FARWEST SHOW CALL FOR SPEAKERS

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is seeking speaker proposals for the 2027 Farwest Show, set for 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. A committee will review the proposed presenters and topics and make selections based on timeliness, ingenuity and industry relevance.

DECEMBER 16, 17

FREE CPR/FIRST AID CLASSES

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



Several recipients were honored at this year's President's Awards Banquet at the OAN Convention. Back row (l-r): Pete Brentano, Wendy Brentano, Beth Farmer, Brian Newton, JoEllen Newton, Steve Carlson, Roberta Simnitt, Jerry Simnitt, Bill Patterson, Chris Robinson, and Ben Verhoeven. Front row (l-r): Kristin VanHoose, David VanHoose, Elizabeth Brentano, Jaime Newton, Patrick Newton, Jeff Stone and emcee Kyle Fessler. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

OAN honors industry leaders

BY CURT KIPP

The annual Oregon Association of Nurseries Convention is where the industry honors the best of the best — and that's exactly what happened at the 2026 Presidential Awards Banquet, held Saturday, November 7 in the Great Lodge at Sunriver Resort in Central Oregon.

Kyle Fessler of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas**, a past president of OAN in 2020–21, emceed the gathering. "Tonight, we're going to celebrate the family that is our industry and the people in it, who are remarkable in their service," Fessler said.

The award winners were as follows:

OAN Outstanding Service Award — Bill Patterson (Patterson Nursery Sales, Eagle Creek, Oregon). The award recognizes outstanding long-term service to the industry. Patterson recently retired after selling his tree brokering and growing operation, which specialized in specimen material, to Devil Mountain Wholesale Nursery.

Tom Fessler, owner of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas and a past president of the OAN, presented the award. "Bill Patterson has been a pioneer in the industry," he said. "A blend of both buyer and seller, with a unique business model that has touched every corner of the industry."

Emerging Leader of the Year Award — Elizabeth Brentano (Brentano's Tree Farm, St. Paul, Oregon) The award recognizes outstanding service and leadership by someone relatively new to the industry trade. Brentano was recognized for co-founding the NexGen group and serving as president for two years.

Tyler Meskers (**Oregon Flowers Inc.**, Aurora) is a prior recipient of the Emerging Leader of the Year Award and presented it to Brentano. "Elizabeth's growth as a leader was on full display last year during the OAN Advocacy Training, and she subsequently was featured in *Nursery Management* maga- »

zine, March 2025, in their leading Women of Horticulture issue," he said. "Family means everything in this industry, and it is amazing to see how this leader is making a name for herself."

The Member Group of the Year Award — Government Relations Committee, chaired by Chris Robinson (Robinson Nursery Inc.). The award is presented each year to an outstanding committee, chapter or leadership group in the association. The Government Relations Committee was recognized for its work on the Japanese beetle issue this year, in particular.

Rod Park, owner of **Park's Wholesale Nursery** and a past president of the OAN, presented the award. "We never know what will befall us in any given year," he said. "What happens every time is that we fight for the industry. Things were bad, and there was no money to be had for funding the Oregon Department of Agriculture to conduct their Japanese beetle program."

The lack of funding threatened intrastate market access for the majority of Oregon growers. However, the GR Committee successfully fought for the Oregon Legislature to include the funding. "To put it mildly, their efforts saved many of our businesses," Park said.

Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Allied Trades Award — Marion Ag Service Inc., St. Paul, Oregon. The award is presented to an individual, group or company that is a service provider or supplier, and provides outstanding contributions to the nursery industry. Accepting the award on Marion Ag's behalf were owner John Hockett, research agronomist Steve Carlson and Chief Operating Officer Doug Grott.

Noah Fessler of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas**, member at large of the OAN Executive Committee, presented the award. "Marion Ag has been serving farmers, nursery-greenhouse growers and wholesale fertilizer resellers for more than 50 years," he said. "When there is a problem, it is not hard to figure out who to call to get the best advice that is out there …. Everything around us is changing, and I appreciate their laser focus on technical services, soil health and nutrient delivery."

Clayton W. Hannon Distinguished Service Award — Patrick Newton, Powell's Nursery (Gaston, Oregon). The award honors a specific, notable contribution to the nursery and greenhouse industry. In a rare case of a current president receiving the award, Newton was selected for his advocacy work to restore state funding and pursue federal funding for Japanese beetle control and eradication in Oregon.

Kathy LeCompte, owner of Brooks Tree Farm and a past president of the OAN, presented the award. "[No challenges we've faced] was as seemingly hopeless as the situation of Gov. Kotek not funding the Japanese beetle program, and the all-too-real threat of our $1.3 billion industry losing over $800 million due to markets being shut off," she said. "The stress was worthy of night terrors, but Patrick newton stepped up and was a leader in the moment we needed him most …. Patrick was the man in the arena, and we would not be having a fun evening without his direct effort."

Darcy Ruef sworn in along with new OAN Board

BY CURT KIPP

Darcy Ruef — chief financial officer and a co-owner of retailer-grower **Al's Garden & Home** — was sworn in as the new Oregon Association of Nurseries president on November 7. This took place at the association's Annual Meeting, which was part of the annual OAN Convention, held at Sunriver Resort.

Ruef succeeded Patrick Newton of **Powell's Nursery**, who became immediate past president and will remain on the OAN Executive Committee one more year. Serving along with them on that committee will be president-elect Chris Robinson (**Robinson Nursery Inc.**), vice president Jesse Nelson (**Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.**), treasurer Tyler Meskers (**Oregon Flowers Inc.**), secretary Andrea Avila-Aragon (**Smith Gardens**), and, new to the committee, member-at-large Noah Fessler (**Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.**).

Joining them on the larger OAN Board of Directors for 2026–27 are Patrick Peterson (**OHP Inc.**), Greg Elwell, Sam Pohlschneider (**Pohlschneider Nursery**), Jason Burns (**Surface Nursery**), Sam Barkley (**J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.**), Vladimir Lomen (**Sester Farms**), Margie Barnett (**Margie's Farm & Garden**), Barb Iverson (**Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm**) and Josh Cady (**Monrovia Nursery Company**). Barnett (voted in) and Cady (appointed to a vacancy) are new members of the board; the others were already serving.

The association recognized outgoing board members Ben Verhoeven of **Peoria Gardens** and Blake Nelson of **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**, who concluded their board service.



Darcy Ruef was sworn in as OAN president.
PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

Ruef co-owns Al's, along with siblings Mark Bigej and Dorothy Russo, and their mother Deanna Bigej. Mark Bigej is a past OAN president, as was their late father, Jack Bigej. Their grandfather, Al Bigej, founded the business that still bears his name.

Outgoing president honors key contributors

BY CURT KIPP

At the convention, outgoing OAN President Patrick Newton (**Powell's Nursery**, Gaston, Oregon) presented the traditional President's Five Star Performance Awards for key contributions to his year as president. They went to his parents, **Mike and JoEllen Newton**; his brother, **Brian Newton**; his wife, **Jamie Newton;** OAN Director of Marketing and Member Services **Beth Farmer**; and OAN Executive Director **Jeff Stone**.

The outgoing president thanked Mike and JoEllen Newton for inspiring Newton and setting an example has followed in life. His father passed away several years ago, but his mother was present for the banquet along with several family members. "[My parents] mean the world to me," he said. "I wouldn't be here and wouldn't have gotten through this year without them. I talk to my dad every week."

He thanked Farmer for making his goal of visiting 50 nurseries during his year as president a reality, scheduling and coordinating all of the visits. "I could never have pulled that off without you," he said.

He thanked his brother, Brian, for helping him write his presidential columns in *Digger* magazine. He mentioned that "I said I'll give you a bottle of whiskey a month if you help me write 12 columns," and still owes him a few of the bottles.

He thanked Stone for introducing him to everyone in the room individually the first time he came to an Oregon Association of Nurseries meeting, then later helping him get involved with OAN advocacy efforts, which he has found immensely rewarding. "The advocacy thing is so cool," he said. "It's the best thing that's ever happened to me."

He thanked his wife, Jaime, for providing the love, encouragement and support throughout his year as president and allowing him to contribute extra time without raising any objections. "I love you," he said.

The association recognized and thanked Newton for his year of service.

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Three couples awarded OAN Honorary Life memberships

BY CURT KIPP

At the 2026 OAN Convention, three couples — **David and Kristin VanHoose, Amethyst Hill Nursery and Hydrangeas Plus®** (Aurora, Oregon); **Pete and Wendy Brentano, Brentano's Tree Farm** (St. Paul, Oregon), and **Jerry and Roberta Simnitt, Simnitt Nursery** (Canby, Oregon) — were awarded Honorary Life memberships in the association.

The VanHooses were recognized for their 27 years of nursery ownership, as well as for Kristin's service as OAN president in 2010–11, and their involvement in many other capacities over the years. They purchased the former Bell Family Nursery and grew it into VanHoose Enterprises, which includes the wholesale Amethyst Hill Nursery and the retail Hydrangeas Plus. They specialize in hydrangeas and have one of the largest selections in North America.

The award was presented by Wendy Brentano. "[Kristin's term as OAN president] was defined by strong advocacy for Oregon's nursery sector, proactive policy engagement, and a commitment to supporting both members and the recovering industry from the Great Recession," Brentano said.

David VanHoose stayed on stage to present the next Honorary Life Membership award, which turned out to be for the Brentanos. The two couples have been longtime friends. Each knew ahead of time the other was getting an honorary life award, but neither knew they themselves were also getting one.

The award for the Brentanos was presented for their longtime ownership of Brentano's Tree Farm, for Pete's OAN presidency in 2005–06, and also for their longtime association involvement in many other capacities.



From left: Kyle Fessler, David and Kristin VanHoose, and Wendy Brentano. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



From left: Kyle Fessler, Wendy and Pete Brentano, and David Van Hoose. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



From left: Kyle Fessler, Jerry and Roberta Simnitt, and Amanda Staehely. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

"The legacy of the Brentanos is not in doubt — [daughter] Elizabeth winning the emerging leader award tonight is proof positive of the impact and future impact of this family to the industry," David said. "Pete and Wendy and their entire family are just good people."

OAN past president Amanda Staehely (**Columbia Nursery**), who recently was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives, presented the honorary life award to her parents, Jerry and Roberta Simnitt, who co-own Simnitt Nursery along with her uncle, Jim Simnitt, and Jim's wife, Caroline. The nursery was founded in 1978 by Jim and Jerry's parents, Jerry Sr. and Janice Simnitt. Jerry Simnitt served as OAN president in 2011–12.

"Growing up in a household that was family and faith, politics and potlucks, health challenges and economic stress — it made my parents resilient," Staehely said. "My father's involvement in the OAN and leadership was a direct inspiration for my uncle Jim and myself to get involved in the OAN."

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**.



Tyler Meskers is featured in Greenhouse Management

The November issue of *Greenhouse Management* featured Tyler Meskers, owner of **Oregon Flowers Inc.** (Aurora, Oregon) on the cover. Inside is the story of how the Meskers family immigrated from the Netherlands, moved to Oregon, and created a family of American flower growers.

From raising a family on the farm, to growing the family businesses, Tyler discusses how Oregon Flowers Inc. has grown into the floral powerhouse that it is today by using technology and innovation, as well as a little Dutch touch from the homeland.

The magazine also reveals to readers:

- Every year Tyler travels to the Netherlands to purchase bulbs and see what's new
- The nursery buys its bulbs for the year all at once but keeps a portion frozen overseas to spread out some risk of having it all on site.
- The nursery recycles its growing material by grinding up the plant material left after the blooms are cut, along with the growing material, and then steaming it.
- Freezers and refrigerators are used to simulate winter and spring.
- Bulbs are grown in trays, and placed in greenhouses by robots.



Oregon State University researchers built a robot with UV light technology to treat *Botrytis cinerea*. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

OAN PAST PRESIDENT STAEHELY ELECTED TO OREGON LEGISLATURE

Former Oregon Association of Nurseries president Amanda Staehely has won a two-year term in the Oregon House of Representatives.



Amanda Staehely

Staehely, a Republican, defeated her Democratic opponent, Roy Kaufmann, 63–34%, with Libertarian Patrick Marnell picking up 1%, according to the Oregon Secretary of State's Office. She'll represent District 18, which leans GOP and covers portions of Marion and Clackamas counties. These counties are situated south and southwest of Portland, and both include prime nursery production areas. Nurseries are the top agricultural sector in Oregon.

Staehely, who co-owns **Columbia Nursery LLC** (Canby, Oregon) with her husband, Wayne, campaigned on her understanding of the needs of agriculture and small business owners. She plans to fight for those needs and those of the district in general.

"I'm very excited about the outcome," Staehely said. "The whole reason I went into this is to be a voice for the people in this district and for other Oregonians. I'm excited to be a voice of reason when there are so many harmful policies and regulations being passed, and be a voice of accountability and educate lawmakers on the needs of people in this district, affordability, the needs of agriculture."

According to OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone, Staehely's outstanding performance in OAN leadership roles prepared her to serve in the Oregon Legislature.

"I'm proud of the effort that Amanda put forward," he said. "I was also proud of the campaign [Republican gubernatorial candidate] Christine Drazan ran. We have a lot of work ahead of us in a state that does not understand economic development."

UV LIGHT TECHNOLOGY COULD TRANSFORM BLUEBERRY CULTIVATION

The Oregon State University Blueberry Extension Program is researching far ultravio- »

let light technology that could transform disease management in blueberry cultivation by offering a chemical-free solution to combat *Botrytis cinerea* (grey mold) during the critical bloom period without requiring a dark application window like the UV-C treatments, researcher Wei Yang said.

Working with the USDA and Oregon State's Food Science and Technology department, NWREC is testing the potential of using far-UV to control blueberry diseases such as botrytis. This innovative approach utilizes an autonomous or remote-controlled robotic platform equipped with far-UV lamps and protective shielding designed to deliver a dose of 222 nm light directly to the blueberry plant canopy, Yang said.

While conventional 254 nm UV-C treatments must be applied strictly at night to bypass the pathogen's daylight-driven DNA repair mechanisms, far-UV light bypasses this limitation entirely. It targets and destroys essential fungal proteins rather than just nucleic acids, making its optimal lethality completely independent of external lighting conditions, Yang said. As a result, growers can operate this robotic platform during regular daytime shifts or under any ambient light setting — all while benefiting from increased applicator travel speeds, complete mitigation of chemical residues, and safer integration around both crop tissues and farm personnel.

Announcements

HORT INTELLIGENCE TOOL HELPS NURSERIES CONNECT WITH CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

SmartPlant, a horticultural data company based in Nebraska, has rolled out a new insight tool for growers and garden retailers.

Also called SmartPlant, the tool — or "intelligence layer," as the company calls it — will help growers, retailers, breeders, manufacturers and brands make better business decisions by bringing together fragmented consumer, plant, retail, growers and market data to generate helpful insights.

"The next evolution of horticulture isn't simply about collecting more data; it's about building connected intelligence," company founder and CEO Bert Wahlen stated in a release. "Data can tell a business what happened, and analytics can explain what is happening. But true intelligence reveals why it is happening and what may happen next.

"We have spent years quietly building the data infrastructure, plant taxonomy, and technology needed to give businesses a fundamentally different, predictive view of their markets so they can make better-informed decisions."

A few years ago, SmartPlant rolled out a separate smartphone app for gardeners, called Garden Sage. It provides consumers with a plant identifier, along with information and care solutions, and product information. This app for gardeners is, in turn, generating data and insights on consumer needs, simply based on how consumers are using the app.

With SmartPlant's new business tool, retailers can see shifting local consumer demand and emerging product preferences, while growers can see earlier indicators of changing market needs. This in turn can better inform their seasonal production and crop planning.

Tom Fessler, owner of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.** (Woodburn, Oregon), joined SmartPlant as a board member and is using the technology in his business.

"My whole goal in getting in on the front end of the app is to drive our end consumers to our garden center customers," he said. "We want to educate the end consumers about the plants we grow, and track what is selling in different regions of the country, so we can adjust the product mix to match what consumers want. The additional benefit is a production management tool to help us be a better grower."

Mark Bigej, owner of **Al's Garden & Home**, an Oregon retailer-grower with four retail locations, is excited about how

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the Garden Sage app will help gardeners succeed. He also looks forward to the insights retailers like him will gain from the resulting data.

"We are excited about the ability of customers to use the app to help them keep track of the plants in their yard, including care and culture tips and reminders to help them be successful," he said. "From the app, we are able to gather nationwide trends and types of plants customers are interested in, helping us decide what we should carry to ensure we have what our customers want."

For more information, contact Bert Wahlen at **Bert@SmartPlantHome.com** or call 619-944-6479.

FALL CREEK TEAMS UP WITH ITALIAN BREEDER

Fall Creek® Farm and Nursery Inc. (Lowell, Oregon) announced that it has signed an exclusive propagation and sales agreement with Lucchini Berries SRL for Easy Rose 'ALEL101', a primocane raspberry developed by Elisa and Alessandro Lucchini in Verona, Italy. The partnership follows Fall Creek's June 2026 acquisition of Italian raspberry and blackberry breeder Berryplant and Berrytech and is another step in the company's development of its raspberry and blackberry business.

Easy Rose® 'ALEL101' is now in its fourth year of cultivation and has been evaluated and planted in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Morocco and Egypt. Fall Creek will continue evaluation in additional territories and commercialize the variety in countries where trials are successful.

Easy Rose® 'ALEL101' will complement Fall Creek's existing berry portfolio by providing raspberry growers with greater flexibility across different production systems and growing conditions. It has been evaluated in mild and Mediterranean climates and at higher latitudes, with production extending across the harvest season.

GROWSCAPE TRIALS BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC GROWING CONTAINER

The nursery container maker **Growscape** (Twinsburg, Ohio), successor to The HC Companies, is trialing a next-generation bioplastic horticultural pot called ReTerra, developed through an exclusive partnership with Kaimarra Advanced Materials.

The pot is plantable in soil and will biodegrade once placed in the ground.

ReTerra's development helps meet growers' production needs and explores an alternative to conventional plas- »





tic. Designed to match the appearance, handling and cost-efficiency of plastic, ReTerra is made to perform in commercial growing environments, including integration with existing automation and handling systems.

Commercial field trials in the U.S. and Canada, including the Pacific Northwest, are evaluating container performance in real-world growing conditions, including compatibility with existing production and handling systems, and degradation timelines.

The firm plans to roll the product out to commercial markets in 2027.

MCHUTCHISON ADDS TWO TO SALES, ONE TO LOGISTICS

Colby Burns has joined U.S. horticulture distributor **McHutchison** as a logistics supervisor, the company announced. Burns will be based in the Portland, Oregon, area.

Burns brings extensive nursery industry and logistics experience to the role and will lead McHutchison's logistics team with an initial focus on carrier relationships, shipment coordination, strengthening nursery logistics and overall execution.

Burns' role will also support the continued development of logistics capabilities across the McHutchison brokerage. He was most recently with **Patterson Nursery Sales** in Oregon.

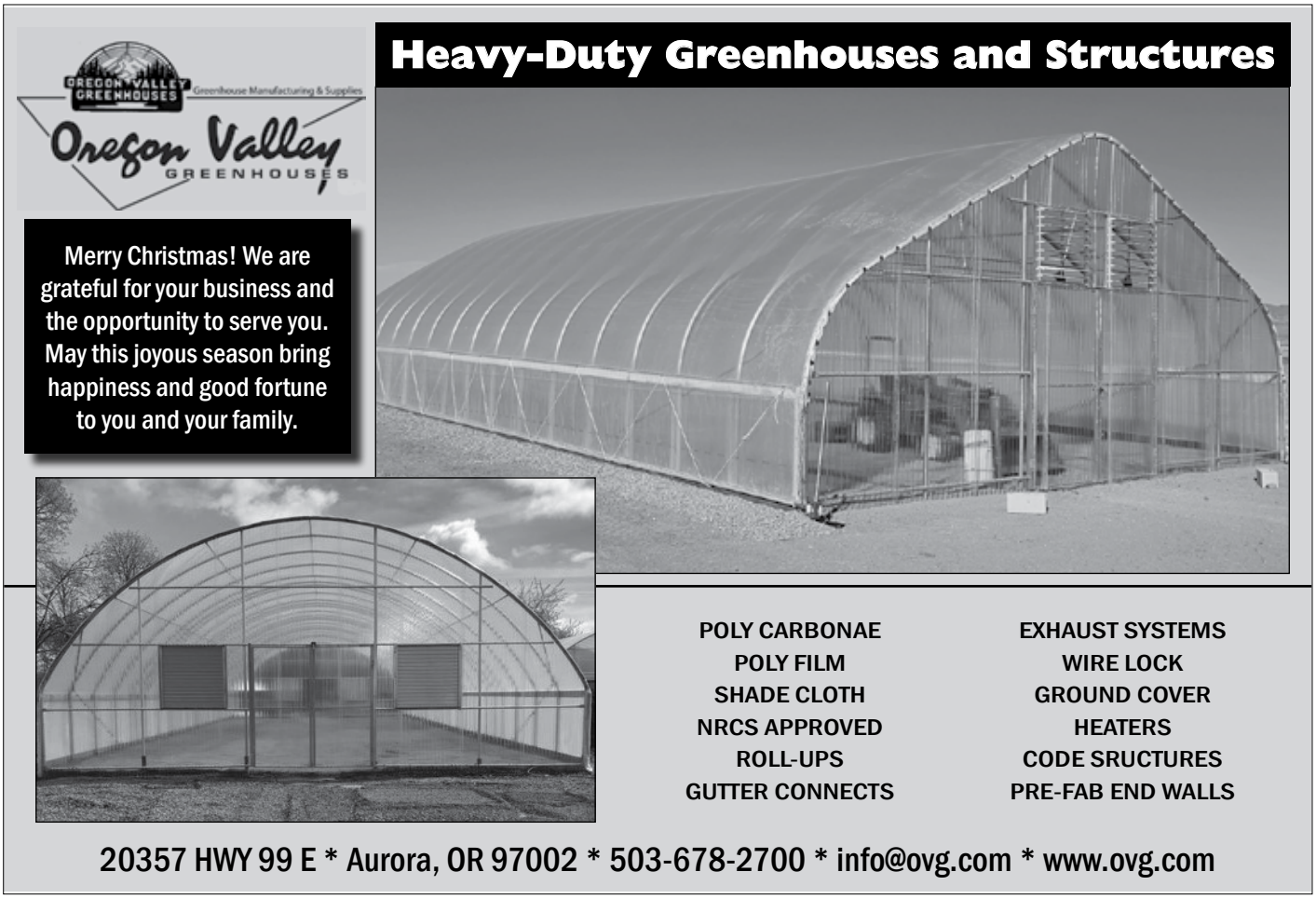
Additionally, Noah Bohmann and Shannon Wehmeyer have joined McHutchison as sales associates.

Bohmann brings 17 years of experience, primarily in retail and commercial greenhouse operations. He previously worked for City Floral Garden Center and Landscaping, SunBlest Gardens and Carlin Horticultural Supplies. Bohmann will be based in his hometown of Antioch, Illinois.

Wehmeyer joins McHutchison with more than 12 years of horticultural industry experience. She previously worked at Magnolia Gardens Nursery, holding positions in sales, customer service, office management and production planning. She will be based in Anderson, Texas.

CORTEVA AGRISCIENCE ADDS TO MARKETING TEAM

Mae Sheaffer has joined **Corteva Agriscience** as strategic marketing communications leader. She previously served as an adviser in poultry marketing at Elanco and held account leadership roles at Inizio Evoke, MicroMass Communications and The Sandbox Agency.



After hours events can bring garden devotees to retailers



Hardy Plant Society of Oregon members shop at an After Hours program. PHOTO BY RUTH CLARK

Most businesses and garden centers are always on the lookout for new ideas to enhance their growth. Oftentimes, just visiting with other similar businesses can spark an idea.

Garden centers, in particular, need to be aware of what the latest garden trends are. Gardeners can be a fickle group, and plant trends can change from year to year. In addition to visiting other garden centers, if there is a large and active garden organization in your area, that could prove to be an excellent source of garden and plant trends.

In the Portland, Oregon, metro area, The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon (HPSO) is just such an organization. With more than 3,000 members that are, for the most part, avid gardeners, it behooves garden centers to be connected to this organization as well as other similar groups.

While the majority of members are in the Portland metro area, there is active participation from members as far north as Vancouver, Washington and as far south as Salem.



Mike Darcy

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

Bringing in potential customers

HPSO offers its members multiple programs. One in particular has been created for social and garden center involvement. It is called the After Hours program. This program has been very well received by both the members and participating garden centers.

As the name implies, the After Hours program allows HPSO members to visit a garden center when it's closed to the general public. The event is free and for members only.

Both HPSO and the garden centers do have some responsibilities. HPSO is responsible for publicity, which is accomplished by sending newsletters and emails to members promoting the event. Members are encouraged to sign up electronically, and HPSO provides a registration table with name tags. The registration provides an approximate guest count, so the garden center can be prepared. Also, if there is something special for members, some garden centers require attendee name tags. »



HPSO members at an After Hours event at Little Prince of Oregon Nursery Inc. PHOTO BY RUTH CLARK

Garden centers must agree to a private time for the event when the business would normally be closed to the general public, and they must have adequate parking. They also have to offer a discount of some kind. This is usually between 10–25% off regular priced plants and/or general merchandise.

The garden center must provide some type of refreshments, which can be anything from bottled water and crackers to mini desserts, ice cream, or more.

This past season, **N&M Nursery** in Hubbard provided a Mexican food truck with tacos, beans, rice, salad and condiments. Beer and soft drinks were also available at no charge. As you can imagine, this was a huge success with attendees. People ate, talked, lingered and bought and bought and bought!

Co-owner Rosie Sullivan, with her husband Sean, wrote, "It is a great social event. We always get new people that have never been to our place before, and I love watching all the HPSO members socialize."

This is also an opportunity for attendees to perhaps meet the owners and the staff and ask questions. Or if the garden center is also a grower, a behind-the-scenes tour of the growing area might be an option.



HPSO members listen to a presentation on conifers at Al's Garden & Home during an After Hours program. PHOTO BY RUTH CLARK

Little Prince of Oregon Nursery Inc. is a wholesale grower. At their After Hours event, they offered a selection of plants for attendees to purchase. They also offered tours of their greenhouses, led by their professional growers. This was very well received because it was an opportunity that is not often available.

Also, this past season, several garden centers set aside an area with chairs and a stage for a presentation by someone renowned in their field. **Al's Garden & Home** in Sherwood, set up just such a

space and had a speaker give a presentation on conifers. Guests were offered special conifers for sale.

Peter Eastman, a tree and shrub buyer for Al's Garden & Home, said, " Events like this have been instrumental in bringing in new and returning customers to our stores throughout 2026."

The After Hours program has been very well received by garden centers because it can bring in a flush of customers in a short period of time. There is always the likelihood that some of these attendees have not visited this particular garden center and perhaps will become future customers.

Replicating the concept

While HPSO is a very active organization with a large membership base, this concept could certainly be carried over to other cities. The limiting criteria would be that it would probably have to be in a city or metro area with multiple independent garden centers. There would also need to be some organization that would be willing to do the organizing. The program is not so rigid that it couldn't be altered to fit the particular needs of a local area.

With any large organization, it can be difficult to provide a venue where members can meet and chat with other members in a relaxed setting. For most gardeners, it is hard to think of anything more relaxing than being in a garden center and looking and talking about plants and meeting and greeting other plant enthusiasts. After Hours provides such a much-needed venue.

The HPSO After Hours committee chairperson, Ruth Clark, writes, "The whole idea for the program is that we benefit the garden business by bringing them customers and exposure, while also benefiting our members with a social event and discounts."

Hopefully this After Hours idea can spread to other communities and be a successful way for garden centers to engage with the gardening public and for the gardeners to socialize with other gardeners and buy more plants!

Happy New Year!





Oregon is NURSERY COUNTRY

Meet four growers who represent the very best

Eshraghi Nurseries in Hillsboro, Oregon has become known for grafted conifers and Japanese maples. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Oregon's nurseries are the engine that drives the state's agricultural economy, contributing $1.3 billion in sales in 2024, the latest figures available. While the state has the ideal climate for dormancy and growth, rainfall for and snowpack for irrigation, quality soil and abundant land, it's the dedication and ingenuity of growers that drive the industry's success.

Meet four nurseries who exemplify the best that the state has to offer when it comes to green goods.

At **Ekstrom Nurseries Inc.** in Gresham, Scott Ekstrom is building on the foundations laid by his dad, Don, and his grandfather, Carl. The family started farming in the early 1900s, growing mostly row crops before switching to nursery crops in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Today, the nursery grows trees and shrubs on 220 acres, amid an urban sprawl that surrounds its operation. It specializes in dogwoods and maples, while maintaining a wide variety of plant material.

Linda Eshraghi started **Eshraghi Nurseries** in 1989 and has since grown it to 500 acres and more than 120 varieties of Japanese maples, plus a Beaverton and Hilllsboro retail nurserery. Linda's early work in propagation established the nursery's reputation for grafted conifers and Japanese maples.

Chad Sobella started **Sobella Nursery** by renting a plot of land with a loading dock from his parents' farm. In the time since, he purchased land for the nursery in Damascas and has established a reputation for being able to find the rare and unusual for his clients. The nursery specializes in conifers, deciduous shrubs, ornamentals, evergreens, Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*), broadleaf evergreens and flowering trees.

Jason Hupp comes from a family of nurserymen and women. So it's no surprise that he eventually opened his own. Nestled in the Eastern foothills of the Willamette Valley near Silverton, **Western Evergreen** specializes in trialing and introducing rare, unusual and amazing grafted conifers. The nursery offers over 400 unique cultivars, with more than 1,400 items in various stages of production. The nursery supplies high-end garden centers from coast to coast.



Scott Ekstrom (right) has taken the reins of Ekstrom Nursery Inc. from his father Don and is the third generation to run it. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUKL

Ekstrom Nursery Inc.

Quality, value, variety and a love of farming are keys for three generations of success

BY MITCH LIES

AT A GLANCE

Founded: 1987
Owners: Scott and Shelby Ekstrom and Don and Rebecca Ekstrom
Known for Dogwoods and maples
Contact: 1600 SE 282nd Ave., Gresham
Email: Ekstrom.nsy@gmail.com
Phone: 503-663-4035
Online: EkstromNursery.com

For **Ekstrom Nursery Inc.**, it all comes down to following the philosophy of Carl Ekstrom, grandfather to today's farm owner Scott Ekstrom, and father to Don Ekstrom, who owned the nursery for many years and still works there.

"Grandpa's philosophy was if your customer makes a dollar, you'll always have a customer," Scott said. "And that's back when the dollar was worth something."

The time-honored tradition has held the Ekstroms in good stead. "We have a lot of loyal customers who have been with us a long time and who still buy from us today," Don said.

The family started farming on its site in Gresham, Oregon, in the early 1900s, growing mostly row crops, including cabbage, potatoes and berries, before switching to nursery crops in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The transition started slowly. "We planted a half-acre of Tam junipers, Ellwoodii cypress and pyramids," Don said. "We would pick up 30, 40 plants and deliver them to the grocery stores for a dollar and a quarter. And it was all B&B. We made burlap sacks out of potato sacks."

Today, the nursery grows trees and shrubs on 220 acres, amid an urban sprawl that surrounds its operation. It specializes in dogwoods and maples, while maintaining a wide variety of plant material.

Its 2026–27 catalog, for example, includes 32 maple varieties, 18 dogwood varieties and 20 magnolias among a total of 190 different offerings. The wide variety helps the nursery meet the needs of small and large customers.

"We have one customer in Washington who takes about five pages of material from us," Scott said. "He gets »

Workers stake newly-planted conifers at Ekstrom Nursery, which encompasses 220 acres. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUKL

five of this, five of that, two of this, three of that. It's a hard order to pull, but we appreciate this long-time customer.

"Most garden centers aren't going to want 50 of anything, unless it's a hedge plant. If you're getting a lace leaf or pink dogwood, then you need one pink dogwood, you need one lace leaf, and that is the kind of product we sell."

Newer varieties

Within Ekstrom's catalog, one can see many popular varieties, but the nursery also regularly experiments with new varieties. Some of these take off, and some go by the wayside after a growth cycle.

"There are always new varieties we are adding, cutting-edge type things," Don said. "We start out with pretty small numbers, and then we test the market. We'll try to evaluate its popularity based on our customers' ordering. Our motto is quality, value and variety."

Their emphasis on variety also extends to the diversity of markets that it sells into, a strategy that has helped the nursery weather market downturns.

"When the South is in recession and the North is banging, we have North customers," Scott said. "When the North is suffering and the South is banging, we have South customers."

"We've weathered a lot of downturns over many years," Don said.



Ignacio Ruiz loads and stakes newly-potted evergreens. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUKL

The nursery also has a large presence on the West Coast, including in California and British Columbia, and on the East Coast, where it ships to several customers each year, Scott added.



Over the years, the rural farmland near Ekstrom Nursery has been developed, and now the nursery is surrounded by homes.. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Production cycle

Ekstrom's production cycle is primarily based around trees and shrubs that it can produce in three to seven years. "We don't grow the 8-foot, 12-foot tree for 12 years," Scott said. "There is one variety that we could have for eight or nine years, but typically six or seven years is our longest production cycle."

He added that the shorter production cycle fits with the nursery's strategy of delivering plants to retailers that a customer can fit in the back of their car or easily lift into a truck. "The customer doesn't want to come back and grab a 200-pound tree," Scott said. "They want to grab a 50-, 60- or 80-pound tree, not a monster."

The nursery started shifting to containers a dozen years ago, again to accommodate customer needs.

"A lot of our customers want things in containers and now we do thousands of trees in containers," Scott said. "We'll bare-root it, put it in a container and then sell it the next year, hopefully."

He added that other than caring for plants, the process involves minimal touches. "I'll turn a plant, put it in the ground, pop it out of the ground and touch it one more time to ship the pot," Scott said.

Love of farming

While it is hard to quantify the value that a love of farming adds to an opera- »

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tion, the Ekstroms believe that one of the keys to their success is the enjoyment that each generation has brought to the nursery.

Don taught at the local middle school for 10 years from 1974 to 1983, but he worked at the nursery during weekends, Christmas, spring break and summers. He still loves coming to work.

"In 1984, my dad said either you retire from teaching or we're going to hire somebody," Don said. "So I quit teaching and we (his father, Carl, Don and his brother Jim) went from 60 acres to at one point over 300 acres."

Scott, conversely, has always worked on the farm and has long strived to be a better farmer.

"I've been in the nursery since I was 12 years old, stacking and nesting pots, and I knew from the age of 17 that I wanted to be a farmer," Scott said. "Over the last 20 years, I've invested a lot, with going to college, taking ag classes and working on becoming a better farmer."

Among Scott's efforts was a four-and-a-half month stint living in Mexico. He did this to immerse himself in Spanish to better communicate with his work crew. It worked. "There were only five people in the whole town that spoke English, so it was either sink or swim," he said.

In efforts to improve employee relations, the nursery also provides workers a site for a community garden, where they can grow their own fruits and vegetables. The nursery also hosts fun events for workers during holidays. These efforts that have resulted in improved efficiencies on the farm through better worker retention.

"There are multiple guys on the farm that have been with me or been with my dad since I was three years old," said Scott, who is 40.

Scott also brings a do-it-yourself talent to the operation that has helped the farm cut costs and improve efficiencies, including revamping sprayers and tractors to help meet the nursery's unique needs.

And the nursery has benefited from Don's longtime participation in the International Plant Propagators Society (IPPS). "I learned a lot of things from a lot of different people (in the IPPS)," he said. "People were very open about sharing information, and I made some great connections with marvelous people."

Promising future

Looking ahead, the Ekstroms believe that despite some downward market pressures, the nursery industry will continue to thrive into the future. They think the future will particularly favor those operations that produce a wide variety of plants at value.

"Right now, the kinds of houses they're building don't have much room for landscaping," Don said. "So, for the most part, you're looking for columnar trees, you're looking at flowering shrubs and plants, flowering small trees, and medium-sized trees. If you're going to get one tree, you want a beautiful tree."

"And there are still a lot of plants that need to be produced in the field," Scott said, "because they do better in the field. They get caliper and they seem to perform better, because they're going to be in the field eventually. They're going to go back to the field in somebody's yard."

"And so, we're optimistic about the future," Don said. "We always think that people and plants go together. And I think people love flowering plants. There is kind of a spirit of excitement seeing things grow."

"We might need technology in our fast-paced world," Scott added, "but people find peace in the garden. I view that as job security."

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





Linda Eshraghi's nursery has grown to 500 acres and is known for grafted conifers and Japanese maples. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Eshraghi Nurseries

Market demand has led to specialization in grafted conifers and Japanese maples

BY JON BELL

Over the years, thanks to Linda Eshraghi's early work in propagation, **Eshraghi Nurseries** grew and became a specialist in the kinds of grafted conifers and Japanese maples that were popular for home and city landscaping in the '80s.

Back then, homes often had larger yards and people wanted the kinds of trees that Eshraghi produced.

Today, Eshraghi spans 500 acres and produces more than 120 varieties of Japanese maples, along with an array of other maples, including vine, paperbark, full moon and more. Some of the nursery's specialty grafted conifers include *Pinus*, *Cedrus* and *Chamaecyparis*.

Though Eshraghi said she never really started out to specialize in maples and conifers, market demand led her in that direction — and the conditions she created at the nursery provided support. Eshraghi focuses on "cleanliness and orderliness" in everything it does, from grafting and field production to its can yards.

And while the nursery is known for maples and conifers, it does offer other staples like arborvitae, azaleas, hydrangeas and many others. Eshraghi said she's open to adding new plants as well.

"There's always new varieties coming out," she says, "so we're always keeping an eye out for the next new shiny thing."

AT A GLANCE

Founded: 1989
Owner: Linda Eshraghi
Known for: Conifers and a wide range of Japanese and other maples.
Contact: 26985 SW Farmington Rd., Hillsboro
Email: linda@eshraghinursery.com
Online: Eshraghinursery.com
NurseryGuide.com: 148 listings

Getting her start

It was 1978, and Eshraghi was just getting her feet wet in the nursery business.

Twenty-two at the time, Eshraghi had grown up around plants. She had two sets of grandparents. One set, her "city grandparents," had a beautifully landscaped yard and raised roses and African violets. The other were farmers who grew half of what they ate on a two-acre vegetable garden. Their farm also had trees and shrubs of all kinds. It was where Eshraghi first learned about things like crop timing, planting, harvest and food preservation.

"As a child, I loved being there," she said.

That early love for plants led »



Workers at Eshraghi Nurseries man a custom-made planter towed by a tractor. It digs rows in the dirt and allows seated workers to drop plants in them, while others following behind cover them up with soil. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Eshraghi to a summertime job in high school at Oregon Roses, which grew roses and an array of greenery for the floral industry.

"I think that's where I got the bug for all things growing," she said.

That bug stayed with her, and after high school, Eshraghi found herself in 1978 starting a job at Glenn Walters Nursery in Cornelius, a renowned Oregon nursery that flourished for decades under owners Glenn and Viola Walters. At the time, all the women who worked at Glenn Walters worked in propagation, but Eshraghi started out in the field.

"I was sent out to a 300-acre farm with 300 guys," she said. "Oh my gosh, and I was blonde and blue eyes. Tell you what, I caused a bit of a stir with those boys."

Lucky for Eshraghi, she also caught the attention of Viola, who was known for her teaching abilities and trained scores of employees at the nursery. Eshraghi benefitted from that — and it paved the way for a long and fruitful life in the nursery industry.

"Viola would lead me through those fields walking as fast as she could, and I was running behind writing notes," Eshraghi said. "She would be saying, 'I want to do this, I want to do that' and showing me how to do this and how to do that. Eventually I moved up through the nursery and all its departments, and I got to be in propagation. I did not go to school for it. I just learned the hard way. The school of hard knocks with Glenn and Viola."

Getting started

Eshraghi spent about eight years working at Glenn Walters, learning the ins and outs of the business, from planting and digging to loading trucks and propagation. She left and pieced a few endeavors together — her own Christmas-related business, some landscaping, time as an estimator and a shipping season at **Monrovia Nursery Company** — before deciding to start her own nursery.

She started a small nursery products brokerage in Gaston, where she also made cuttings and grafts for other nurseries, before moving to 5 acres on Southwest Farmington Road.

"I just figured, well, why not?" Eshraghi said. "I pulled the trigger."

At first, the nursery didn't start out with any kind of a specialty. That, Eshraghi said, changed pretty quickly.

"My first goal was to grow plants that Linda liked, which I soon found out was the wrong thing to do," Eshraghi said.

What she liked at the time were flowering shrubs, heather and similar plants.

"You have to grow what the people want, not what I want," she said. "So we started to build more of a mix. We'd always been grafting conifers and maples, so that's been a staple all along, but the varieties just kept growing and we kept expanding. It just really wasn't planned. It just morphed into what it is."



Myra Bacerra propagates Japanese maples by grafting. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHUL

Retail realization

Though Eshraghi Nurseries started out as wholesale only, a few years into the endeavor, Eshraghi decided to make the leap into retail as well. The motivation came in part from her earlier connections with Glenn Walters Nursery.

Eshraghi and her team couldn't help but notice that cars seemed to continually come to Eshraghi Nurseries in search of Glenn Walters' retail spot, which was a five-acre plot not far away where excess inventory was sold.

"People were crazy about that place," Eshraghi said. "They were lined up all up and down the highway, hundreds of cars each weekend."

The thing is, the maps Glenn Walters Nursery put out for the retail location routed traffic right alongside Eshraghi Nurseries.

"Their advertising brought people right past my place," Eshraghi said. "At one point, I was like, 'This is just stupid. I guess they want to give us money, so let's do it."

Eshraghi opened Farmington Gardens, a retail garden center, five years after starting her nursery. It did well, in part because people in the area were buying homes with large yards that needed landscaping. Having all the traffic in the area for the Glenn Walters Nursery didn't hurt either.

"Funny enough, when they closed, I don't know how many years after we opened, they had a big auction, and Glenn Walters told my husband, 'You guys put me out of business,'" Eshraghi said. "We didn't. But it is a good story."

Changing times

Over the decades since Eshraghi first opened, times and trends have changed. She said Midwesterners still have bigger yards and like to landscape with the conifers and maples that Eshraghi specializes in. The East Coast and the West Coast, however, are different these days.

"It's very condensed living," Eshraghi said, "and people don't have time to garden, or if they do, it's on a lot smaller scale or else they just don't have the space."

Heeding her own axiom of growing what the customers want, Eshraghi said the nursery has been looking into growing plants that, at their finished size, are smaller. Since COVID, there's also been more of a focus on perennials, which people seem to appreciate. Not everyone's on the hunt for a tree that's going to grow 40 feet tall.

"With perennials, people don't feel like they're spending a fortune for something they might have to dig up in a couple years," Eshraghi said. "It's not as crucial as trying to dig up a big tree or established landscape plant. They're not as expensive as a longer-term shrub or tree, and they give you lots of enjoyment because there's a lot of color."

While Eshraghi has adapted for contemporary market demands, she said the nursery still focuses on its specialties, is always adding new varieties and hasn't cut back on them to make room for other plants.

"Oh gosh, we're not that disciplined yet," she said. "We're still growing. We still have vacant acreage to fill. It'll be filled by the end of next year." »



On the horizon

Getting through the next year will be a bit of a rocky road, not just for Eshraghi but for anyone in the nursery business. Eshraghi said perennial challenges like wages, immigration, overtime and severe weather have only heightened in the past several years.

Costs for everything from fertilizer to pots are currently through the roof, and skyrocketing freight rates chilled both the extended spring and fall shipping seasons this year.

"We expected our spring shipping to run through June, but the last few years, it's just stopped right after Mother's Day," Eshraghi said. "We ship probably 80% of our plant material to the East Coast, and to get a truck from here to there, the rates are close to double as they were before. So some customers just can't afford to bring West Coast material in, so they're sourcing it locally."

Even so, Eshraghi maintains an optimistic tone about her nearly 50 years in Oregon's nursery industry. She appreciates her employees and is grateful for her longtime customers.

"It's a very giving industry," Eshraghi said, "and the people involved are really good people."

Andrea Fields, sales director at Eshraghi, said the nursery's customers and employees are extremely loyal, and there's one primary reason behind that.

"I would attribute that to Linda," she said. "There's the push to always grow really good-quality plants and to treat her employees right. She's a great boss."

Eshraghi is also a boss who's got her eyes on the horizon. She turned 70 this year, and while she's not slowing down, she is prepping for retirement in the next three years.

Although there aren't any Eshraghis who will be taking over the business, she said she has been working toward an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, which will essentially sell the business to employees, making them owners. This plan will keep the upper management team in place to "refine, reset and realign the company so that it lives another 40-plus years."

As for Eshraghi, she sees her eventual retirement as a time to travel and enjoy her grandsons, who are currently 1 and 4. She also doesn't completely write off starting another new business, maybe even something else involving plants.

"I just have a passion for plants," Eshraghi said. "There's never a dull moment. If there's a dull moment, wait for the other shoe to fall. Always. It keeps you on your feet. That's why I'm so happy at 70."

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**.



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According to Chad Sobella, garden centers, rewholesalers, and high-end landscapers from across the country come to Sobella Nursery with an idea of what they're looking for and he finds it. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Sobella Nursery

A knack for finding unique plants from A to Z

BY EMILY HOARD

Chad Sobella is known for tracking down unique plants for his customers.

To do this, he developed a wide network of sources throughout his life. First, he grew up in a nursery family, then he worked at another nursery, and finally, he started his own growing and evolving business, **Sobella Nursery**.

The nursery specializes in conifers, deciduous shrubs, ornamentals, evergreens, Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*), broadleaf evergreens and flowering trees.

"We have a great A to Z list from *Abies* to *Zelkova* with unique plants and commodity items all at one nursery," Sobella said.

Sobella said his nursery is known for the brokerage side of finding material. Garden centers, re-wholesalers and high-end landscapers from across the country come to Sobella with an idea of what they're looking for.

According to Daniel Kunkel, who works in sales at the nursery, long-term business relationships are often born from these inquiries.

"Chad and I will track that down and provide them with that needed plant," he said. "That opens up an entire catalog of what we do here and what we can bring »

AT A GLANCE

Founded: 2011
Owner: Chad Sobella
Known for: The brokerage side of his business, finding unusual and unique plants.
Contact: 10906 SE 232nd Ave., Damascus.
Phone: 503-828-7026
Email: Chad@sobellanursery.com
Online: sobellanursery.com
NurseryGuide.com: 279 listings



Chad Sobella at the nursery with his aughter, Camryn, and sidekick, Chase. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL



Trinidad Ramos trims boxwoods at Sobella Nursery. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

in. We build an interesting client base from that. Then they put in bigger and better orders when they see what we can do."

Lesa Stanley has done administrative work at Sobella for about four years, handling orders and paperwork. She said that Sobella gets many new customers from positive referrals from previous customers. They'll notice high-quality plants and ask where they came from.

"The quality gets them coming back," Stanley said.

Growing a reputation for quality

Sobella grew up working for his family's farm. He left the family farm in 2004 to work for **Patterson Nursery Sales** in Eagle Creek, Oregon, which was chiefly known for growing and brokering specimen trees. (Patterson was purchased by, and became part of, Devil Mountain Wholesale Nursery earlier this year.)

In 2011, he decided to start his own nursery. "I got tired of the grind, and I was a family guy, so I wanted my own hours," Sobella said.

He rented some land with a loading dock from his parents' business.

"I started making cold calls and taking pictures of plants and started offering those plants to those customers during the cold calls," Sobella said. "I offered my service of finding unique and different things. And it slowly grew into what it is today."

After a few years, Sobella Nursery grew out of the rented Sobella Farms space. About 10 years ago, Sobella bought his own 40-acre property in Damascus and moved the operation there.

Over the last two years, the nursery has seen an upswing in sales, Kunkel said. He has worked at Sobella Nursery for that long, after spending five years at **Eshraghi Nurseries LLC**.

"I brought business with me from other nurseries I've been at before," Kunkel said. "Working at Sobella, I work with my crews and office staff but also 25 different nurseries that we contract with or pull in from other nurseries. My understanding and networking have greatly improved."

Kunkel said he's learned about the strengths and weaknesses of the nurseries he works with.

"Chad's and my job is to understand that and be prepared for it and get ahead of certain issues," Kunkel said. "There are guys that know us so well, and we have a great relationship. It's almost automatic that they know what we need and they work to get it for us.

"The partnerships have developed and reinvigorated my interest in nursery work."

Kunkel works on procuring plant material within an ever-changing market. He said Sobella Nursery has the opportunity to bring in new plants that are out of the ordinary.

For Stanley, the nursery's variety and quality of the plants stands out, as well as the customer service.

"We are always willing to help in any way as far as shipping and getting things organized for the customer," she said. "That is what brings them back and keeps them staying."

Sobella said he sees the success of his nursery in its growth, in the quality of all the local Oregon growers he works with as vendors, and in his staff of four people in the office and 25 outside.

Employee retention is also a marker of success. "We have folks who have been here 10 years, all the way to me at two years," Kunkel said. "People stick around, it's a good environment."

According to Stanley, Sobella prioritizes good customer relationships. "He's always willing to work with the customer, making things right how we need to, so it's been a great place to work for sure," Stanley said.

The nursery's plant list is ever-changing, offering interesting opportunities for

staff to learn about new plants. Some of what they source comes from other Oregon nurseries. "There's always something to learn here, and new growers that keep things going," Kunkel said.

Challenges

Sobella said every year is a little different. While the nursery has faced labor issues at times in the past, that's not an issue at the moment.

Stanley said the main challenge right now comes from high gas prices.

"When gas prices go up, that affects the shipping, so now customers are a little more willing to wait it out," Stanley said. "We do our best to check with each one of our sources for who can give the best pricing at the time. It's a matter of talking to each broker and seeing what they can do and what timeframe is better. It changes daily, so they'll say, 'Oh, just wait a week,' and it makes a difference."

In addition to the rising shipping costs, Kunkel said the labor costs and plant healthcare costs like fertilizer are also high.

"Our rising costs mean rising costs for our consumer," Kunkel said. "Most nurseries have taken a slower approach to stocking their yards, with just enough of what they need to sell, because there's not as large of a demand from the consumer."

He said it's a question of balancing plant love with plant cost. He said Sobella works to put out the best quality products possible, to keep the end consumers happy.

"We keep it free of disease and put our best foot forward and hope for the end consumer to be satisfied and build more orders," Kunkel said.

For the future, Sobella plans to just keep moving forward and just keep working.

Stanley added that the nursery plans to keep growing its customer base in different areas.

"Once you establish a new customer, they tell all their sources, so you get that tree limb of each customer you can reach and they'll reach all their customers as well," Stanley said.

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Looking ahead

Kunkel said the future is very bright for Sobella.

"We've got a good team here and things are on the uptick so we'll see more success, more stability and growing to whatever we decide to do," Kunkel said. He said he visits customers and sees the challenges they face and how to work with them.

He likewise encourages customers to visit Sobella to see how they're operating.

"Relationships based on trust and knowledge are where our success is going to lie," Kunkel said. "We'll keep doing what we're doing, and success will follow."

Emily Hoard is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master's degree in multimedia journalism. You can reach her at **HoardE123@Gmail.com**



Nelson Arango organizes an order in preparation for shipment. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

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When Jason Hupp started Western Evergreen, he had no itention of it becoming known for specialty-grafted conifers. But after 25 years of development, rare specialty conifers have become Western Evergreen's everyday offering. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

Western Evergreen

Nursery builds a reputation on trialing and introducing rare and amazing conifers

BY JOSH LAPOINT

AT A GLANCE

Founded: 2001
Owners: Jason Hupp and Steffanie Hupp
Known for: Specialty grafted conifers
Email: info@WesternEvergreen.com
Phone: 503-873-0119
Online: WesternEvergreen.com
NurseryGuide.com: 80 listings

Nestled in the hills of Silverton, Oregon, **Western Evergreen** specializes in selecting, trialing, and introducing rare, unusual and amazing grafted conifers. Founded by Jason and Steffanie Hupp in 2001, the nursery offers over 400 unique cultivars, with more than 1,400 items in various stages of production. The nursery supplies high-end garden centers from coast to coast.

Early lessons

Jason was 15 and his brother was 14 when their father, Don Hupp, passed away, leaving them 40 acres of Christmas trees. Much of the land was leased to another grower, but Jason began planting some of the empty acreage at age 16.

As he found his footing, his grandparents, Delbert and Barbara Hupp, founders of **Drakes Crossing Nursery**, also in Silverton, helped shape his work ethic. His uncle Jan Hupp, the current owner of Drakes Crossing, became a father figure after Don's passing. His aunt Kathy LeCompte, owner of **Brooks Tree Farm** in Brooks, Oregon, also offered guidance.

"All of them did a lot to encourage me and help me make wise choices at a young age," Jason said.

At 17, Jason sold the Toyota »



One of Hupp's unique pines, *Pinus strobiformis* [Snow Dragon] will be coming to market soon. PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTERN EVERGREEN



Teo Panzo stakes and ties young evergreens at Western Evergreen in Silverton, Oregon. PHOTO BY VIC PANICHKUL

pickup he had inherited from his father, gathered his savings, and boarded a Greyhound bus to San Diego with Steffanie, then his girlfriend, to buy a used BMW he had dreamed of owning.

His grandfather offered a wry observation: "You're going to have fun hauling fertilizer around with that."

A few weeks later, Jason sold the BMW and bought another pickup. Looking back, he acknowledged it "was the smarter choice, being 17 and having a small farm that was inherited."

Getting started

High school sweethearts Jason and Steffanie founded Western Evergreen in 2001 while engaged. That first year, they potted about 300 Colorado blue spruce and Austrian pine seedlings that they sourced from Drakes Crossing. Their initial planting was limited by the reach of a single sprinkler fed by their house well.

Jason sold the trees through newspaper classified ads and delivered them personally to local homeowners and also at farmers markets.

As he started growing nursery stock, Jason thought, "If I'm growing nursery stock, I should have things people use in landscapes," and started driving around neighborhoods to see what was being planted. He saw weeping Norway spruce and weeping blue atlas cedars in the new subdivisions and wondered how they were grown. That was the beginning of his lifelong passion for grafted conifers.

"I had started potting up understock," Jason said. "I had people who really needed understock and so I'd sell some as the seedling and then graft on some." This strategy enabled him to turn a profit while starting his production plan. He would even trade seedling deliveries to wholesale growers for nursery tours.

"The Oregon Association of Nurseries members did a lot to help me," Jason said. "They'd give me a tour and let me pick their brain. There were no trade secrets, just good advice and helpful encouragement."

After high school, Jason studied agriculture at Chemeketa Community College, but he credits other nurseries with providing much of his knowledge.

"I only did a few terms at Chemeketa, but stopped when I realized I could learn more from experience than in a classroom," Jason said. "I had a giant textbook on grafting with T-budding, chip budding, etc., but it's really about getting out there and doing it with people. I went to R&R Nursery and they said, 'You should come out this weekend, and we'll show you how,' so I worked for a couple hours with them, and they showed me how to graft ornamentals close to the ground."

Growth trajectory

Western Evergreen started to take off through marketing to local OAN members and Jason's consistent efforts to build relationships in the industry. "I eventually graduated from farmers markets and classified ads to a mailing list, which was all OAN members," Jason recalled. "I had a single sheet of thick paper with my availability on the front and back in small type, tri-folded, so I could put a stamp on it and mail it out to 100+ nurseries."

In 2013, Jason and Steffanie attended the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) while Steffanie was pregnant with their youngest son, Cameron. The show introduced them to new garden center buyers and remains a



Another upcoming introduction is *Pinus pungens* [Fort Knox], a golden cultivar of Table Mountain pine. PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTERN EVERGREEN

core part of their marketing plan.

New introductions

The Hupp family has a long history of selecting interesting, unique plants.

Jason's grandmother, Barbara, founded Drakes Crossing with his grandfather. She did a lot of the selections in the seedbed and was the one to identify *Acer palmatum* 'Hupp's Dwarf', a slow-growing, compact Japanese maple cultivar. She also selected *Thuja plicata* 'Whipcord' from a seedling bed of arborvitae, which Iseli Nursery was able to introduce to the market.

"With the conifer world," Jason said, "the possibilities are endless. When you go through millions of plants, it's surprising if you don't find something interesting."

When he founded Western Evergreen, he had no intention of being a specialty grafted conifer grower. "The nursery just kind of evolved the way it did on its own," Jason said. "Business is like that. It isn't necessarily pushed in a certain direction; it just grows in the direction it wants to go."

Two introductions are coming to market from Western Evergreen in the next couple of years. *Pinus strobiformis* [Snow Dragon] — the name is provisional while patents are worked out — is a southwestern white pine with striking green-yellow-green needles reminiscent of dragon's eye pine. Its southwestern white pine characteristics allow it to grow in colder regions than some other pines.

Pinus pungens [Fort Knox], also provisionally named, is a strong-growing, golden cultivar of Table Mountain pine, a species native to the Appalachian Mountains. Aptly named, its needles are almost luminescent, and it thrives in full sun.

Some of the selections also carry personal meaning. *Abies procera* 'DelBar Cascade', with its form reminiscent of a weeping sequoia, honors his grandparents, Delbert and Barbara Hupp.

Other introductions carry that family tradition forward. The golden *Pinus strobiformis* 'Winter Sun Raye' carries part of Steffanie's middle name. Two selections bear their sons' names. *Picea sitchensis* 'Kaleb Hupp' is a miniature Sitka spruce with tiny needles and upward-arching branches, while *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Cameron's Golden Charm' is a narrow, upright Lawson cypress with soft golden branches. Their daughter Chloe is represented by *Pinus strobus* 'Blue Clovers', an eastern white pine with striking silvery-blue needles.

A garden-worthy collection

After 25 years of development, rare specialty conifers have become Western Evergreen's everyday offering. Meanwhile, they still keep common items like globe blue spruce and 'Vanderwolf's Pyramid' as novelty items, with 100 or so in production each year.

Western Evergreen's customers have come to rely on Jason and the team to fill a distinct niche in their retail product mix, with most products offered in retail-friendly sizes ranging from #1 to #10 containers.

Over time, they have phased out older cultivars like *Pinus strobus* 'Fastigiata' in favor of better performers like *Pinus strobus* 'Stowe Pillar', which is tighter and handles a snow load better. He looks for better cold hardiness, disease resistance, and varieties that have desirable traits such as a dwarf growth habit or fuller branching.

"There are so many things out there, so you have to find the thing that's dif- »

ferent and garden-worthy," Jason said.

Each new introduction has to look good and perform at a high level for many years for Western Evergreen to offer it to their customers. Selecting interesting cultivars is a years-long labor of love.

"Anything that's weird or different, I'll save it," Jason said. "Years later, I'll come by and see what it's looking like and if it still has promise. We take a few cuttings, give it a provisional name and number, then take grafts and plant them out to to see what they're doing. A lot of times, I've grafted something for 10–12 years before selling a single plant."

Customers first

The theme of Western Evergreen is that anything worth doing is worth taking the time to do right, and they carry that same care to their relationships with customers.

"We focus a lot on making things easier for the retailer," Jason said. "We have a low minimum order of $1,000 and are happy to do pre-priced custom tags free of charge. We concentrate on making sure every plant looks good for retail."

Western Evergreen prides itself on offering live availability on their website, as opposed to a booking list without quantities where a customer might get allocated down on their order. If the item is available, it's because they physically walked the farm, took inventory, and decided it was good quality to sell.

Future plans

While some nurseries focus on expansion, Western Evergreen has reached the perfect size for Jason's vision for the company. Their focus now is on continuous refinement. "I want to have my product line dialed in," Jason said, "so I'm on a perfect rotation with enough, but not too much." They're focused on fine-tuning their processes to be efficient and produce the highest-quality trees possible.

The teenager who once traded his pickup and savings for a BMW now has a clear vision of what he wants to grow and why. His father's acreage helped him get started, and his family's guidance helped him make the most of that opportunity.

Today, Jason takes a patient, deliberate approach to selecting and trialing conifers, sometimes spending more than a decade evaluating a selection before offering a single plant for sale. For Jason, the next chapter of Western Evergreen is measured in better plants and better growing practices, rather than more acres.

Joshua LaPoint owns Standard Nursery and has a passion for writing as well as plants. Contact him at **Josh@StandardNurseryCompany.com**.



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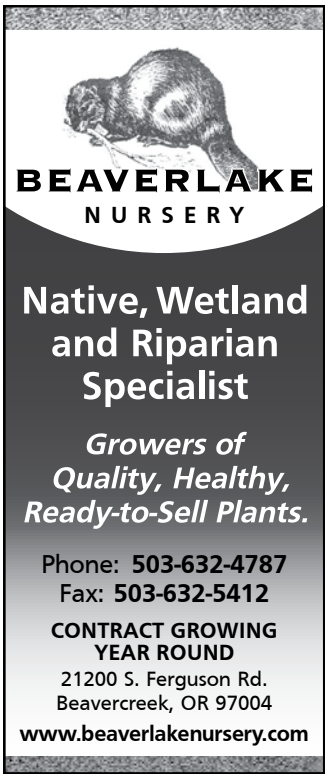



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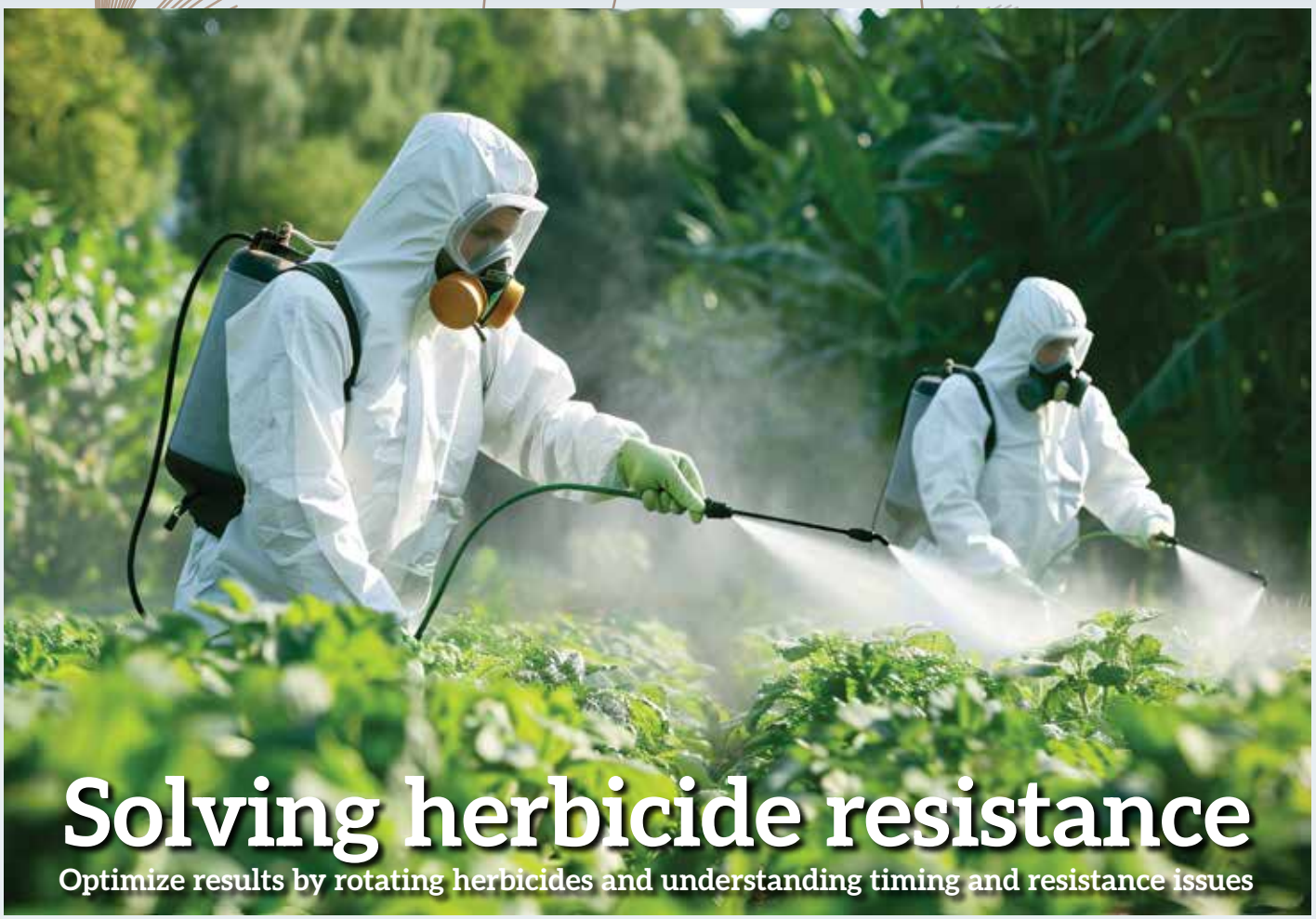

Solving herbicide resistance

Optimize results by rotating herbicides and understanding timing and resistance issues

Herbicide resistant weeds reduce agricultural revenue by increasing herbicide use. PHOTO BY NATALI ALBA

BY AARON BECERRA-ALVAREZ, THOMAS A. JIMA AND SILVIA I. RONDON

Annual losses from herbicide resistance are estimated to exceed billions globally. Herbicide-resistant weeds reduce agricultural revenue by increasing herbicide use, resulting in greater environmental herbicide load and higher input costs.

By avoiding or reducing resistance, growers can enhance stewardship, reduce herbicide use in the environment, enable a more sustainable and economically viable approach to pest management, and foster more resilient communities. However, growers can only do this by accessing the right information as to how it's done.

For instance, weeds can become resistant to herbicides through repeated use of products with the same mode of action. Because of genetic variation within a population, small numbers of resistant weeds survive, and these can grow into large populations resistant to specific modes of action (Figure 1).

If no other suitable herbicide products are used, these resistant populations can thrive and, over time, spread to new areas, rendering a once-useful herbicide ineffective (Figure 1). At least 539 weed species have been reported and identified as herbicide-resistant (Heap 2025). Nearly 91 cases of herbicide resistance have been reported in the Pacific Northwest (Becerra-Alvarez and Ribeiro 2026).

The nursery industry is not immune to herbicide resistance. However, a lack of resources to identify and report resistant populations may lead to an underestimation of resistance cases. To date, 17 cases of herbicide-resistant weeds have been recorded in nursery production worldwide (Table 1; Heap 2025). One case was recorded in the Pacific Northwest.

Common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) was found to be resistant to triazine herbicides like simazine and atrazine. The triazine herbicides (Group 5) were commonly used as pre-emergence and »

post-emergence several times a year in nurseries, hence, the continuous use inadvertently selected for resistant populations.

It is no surprise that most of the recorded resistant species were resistant to triazine herbicides since it was the most widely used herbicide in nurseries (Table 1). More recently, glyphosate (Group 9) resistant species have been also observed in nursery production systems (Table 1).

Current herbicide use in container-nursery production has shifted to granular pre-emergence herbicides like dinitroanilines Group 3 (pendimethalin, trifluralin, and others), and PPO-inhibitors Group 14 (oxyfluorfen, oxadiazon, and flumioxazin), and isoxaben Group 29 (Derr et al. 2020). However, recent field observation suggests there is reduced efficacy from pre-emergence herbicides despite no recorded resistant cases (Derr et al. 2020). The use of mulches and hand weeding may control weed escapes, thereby reducing the impact of potential herbicide-resistant weeds.

Additionally, a recent meta-analysis of nursery-industry weed management found that interest in nursery weed control has shifted over the past 2–3 decades (1995–2021) from a chemical-dominant approach to a chemical coexistence with non-chemical techniques (Yu and Marble 2022), which strengthens the integrated pest management approach. Notably, the lack of new herbicide modes of action identified in recent years has posed an additional challenge for developing new herbicides for use in rotational programs (Duke 2012). Rotation of pesticide modes of action has been recognized as a tool to help prevent and/or reduce/delay resistance.

The impact of herbicide-resistant weeds is also concerning when weed species from neighboring fields move into nursery production areas. Agronomic crop production typically has greater instances of herbicide-resistance due to greater selection pressure from herbicide use (Becerra-Alvarez and Ribeiro 2026).

In locations with diverse crop production like in Oregon's Willamette Valley, the movement of herbicide-resistant weeds from agronomic crops to vegetable crops has been observed. Herbicide-resistant

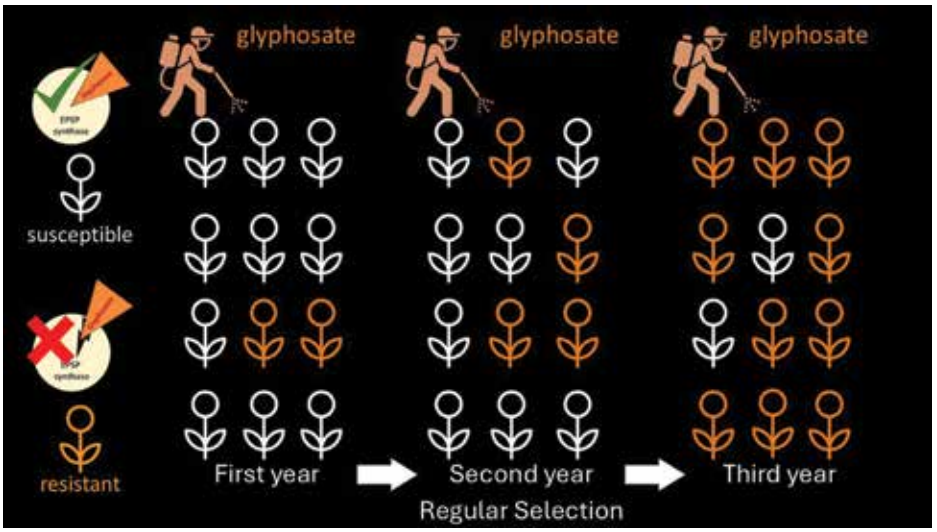

Figure 1. Development of herbicide resistance through repeated glyphosate applications. Initially, most weeds are susceptible to glyphosate, but a small proportion may carry genetic traits that confer resistance. Repeated applications of glyphosate (Group 9) kill susceptible plants while resistant individuals survive and reproduce. Over successive generations, resistant plants become more common in the population, reducing the effectiveness of glyphosate for weed control. GRAPHIC BY THOMAS A. JIMA AND AARON BECERRA-ALVAREZ.

Italian ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*) and annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is causing management challenges throughout different production systems in the Willamette Valley (personal observation, Becerra-Alvarez).

Therefore, due to the proximity of nursery production fields in the region, it would not be surprising to detect resistant weeds in nurseries' container- or field- production areas (Derr et al. 2020). The introduction of herbicide-resistant weed species from neighboring fields could present management challenges in gravel and roadways surrounding nursery production areas.

This can be especially concerning glyphosate-resistant weeds because glyphosate is a common tool for controlling weeds on gravel and near roadways. It is important to follow proper equipment sanitation practices moving from field to field especially if you are a diverse crop producer to prevent the spread of weed seeds.

Scouting, monitoring, and good recordkeeping can be useful IPM practices to manage and understand weed population changes. If resistance is suspected, you can reach out to OSU Extension personnel to help confirm or understand the problem.

Herbicide modes of action available in nursery production

There are three instances when herbicides can be used for weed control in nursery production.

In the first instance, herbicides can be used in field nursery crops at pre-plant during seed bed preparation with the use of broad-spectrum post-emergent herbicide like glyphosate or soil fumigants. The second time for weed control with herbicides is with the use of pre-emergence herbicides to control emerging weed seedlings before they establish. Finally, post-emergence herbicides should be the last tool for controlling weed escapes.

For an effective herbicide application, proper timing, correct application rates, and selecting the right herbicide for the prevailing weed species are important factors to consider. Herbicides are characterized as broadleaf weed control or grass weed control.

The Group 14 herbicides, PPO-inhibitors, like flumioxazin, oxadiazon, and oxyfluorfen provide excellent broadleaf weed control.

The Group 3 herbicides such as pendimethalin, trifluralin, and prodiamine tend to be effective as pre-emergence

Herbicide-resistant weeds on nursery crops

Table 1. Herbicide-resistant weeds recorded internationally on nursery crops as reported by Heap (2025).

Year	Species	Common name	Country (State)	Mode of action	
1970	*Senecio vulgaris*	Common groundsel	United States (WA)	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1975	*Chenopodium album*	Common lambsquarters	United States (MI)	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1980	*Epilobium ciliatum*	Fringed willowherb	Belgium	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1981	*Poa annua*	Annual bluegrass	Belgium	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1982	*Senecio vulgaris*	Common groundsel	Belgium	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1982	*Conyza canadensis*	Horseweed	Switzerland	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1987	*Conyza canadensis*	Horseweed	Czech Republic	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1989	*Conyza canadensis*	Horseweed	Belgium	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1990	*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*	Common ragweed	United States (MI)	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1996	*Senecio vulgaris*	Common groundsel	Norway	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1996	*Poa annua*	Annual bluegrass	Norway	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
1998	*Conyza canadensis*	Horseweed	Belgium	Group 22	PS I-inhibitor
1998	*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*	Common ragweed	United States (MI)	Group 2	ALS-inhibitor
2001	*Amaranthus powellii*	Powell amaranth	United States (MI)	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
2004	*Abutilon theophrasti*	Velvetleaf	United States (MI)	Group 5	PS II-inhibitor
2007	*Conyza canadensis*	Horseweed	United States (MI)	Group 9	EPSP-inhibitor
2019	*Eleusine indica*	Goosegrass	Italy	Group 9	EPSP-inhibitor

mainly on grass weeds and activity on small-seeded broadleaf weeds.

Similarly, the Group 15 herbicides like dimethenamid-p, s-metolachlor, and have effective control on grasses and small-seeded broadleaf weeds. Only s-metolachlor has effective activity on sedges like yellow nutsedge.

The Group 29 herbicides such as isoxaben, dichlobenil, and indaziflam are also available with excellent broadleaf weed control with extended soil residual activity. Indaziflam is recommended only in established plants, as crop injury can occur if the crop is small or recently transplanted.

Many products come in pre-mixtures with different modes of action. The herbicide mixtures are useful for a broader weed control spectrum, and useful for resistance management.

Mulching is also an important pre-emergence weed control tool available in nursery production, especially in container-grown crops. Mulches can be hazelnut shells, sawdust, coco-fiber disks, geotextile disks, or plastic disks placed on the soil surface with about 0.5 inches in thickness to prevent weed germination.

It is also important to note that



mulches can also impact herbicide effectiveness by binding the products and reducing weed control. However, both these tools can be used in conjunction to achieve season long weed control throughout the stage of the crop.

The post-emergence options for weed control are mainly grass weed herbicides. Group 1 herbicides, ACCase-inhibitors, like clethodim, and sethoxydim target only grasses.

Field grown nursery crops have more post-emergence options like bentazon (Group 6), clopyralid (Group 4), and sulfosulfuron (Group 2) which provide effective broadleaf weed control; however, restricted to certain crops. Directed or spot sprays of post-emergence herbicides can reduce crop injury potential.

Additional products that can be used in spot spray applications include glyphosate (Group 9) and organic herbicides (Group 26 or unknown) like acetic acid, citric acid, pelargonic acid, caprylic and capric acid, and ammonium nonanoate.

The use of hand weeding is also an important post-emergence weed control tool that when available can be used effectively after herbicide use to control weed escapes and prevent further weed seed contaminations when removed before flowering.

See the PNW Weed Handbook chapter on Nursey, Greenhouse, and Bulb Crops for detail on herbicide use, available products, and application rates (Becerra-Alvarez and Moretti 2026).



Figure 2. These QR codes will provide access to the Pesticide Resistance PACE online course series developed by the Oregon IPM Center. ODA and CCA Credits are offered and a nominal fee applies. PHOTOS COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERISTY

Future strategies

Herbicide resistance is a problem without borders, affecting growers across the spectrum of agricultural commodities in the United States. Given the breadth of commodities grown in the West, including the nursery industry, the region's diverse geography, and its pronounced climatic variability, well-informed and trained IPM practitioners are uniquely positioned to develop broadly applicable training on pesticide resistance.

The use of non-chemical IPM strategies constitutes a cohesive, sustainable approach that mitigates the risk of herbicide resistance. Development of a robust IPM system to combat pesticide resistance that employs both chemical and non-chemical-based strategies can also contribute to successfully managing pest issues; the preventative approaches to IPM-based management (e.g., scouting, crop rotation, field sanitation) are equally applicable to pesticide resistance of insects and diseases, and general management of a variety of pest problems.

Pesticide resistance resources

The Oregon Integrated Pest Management Center (Oregon IPM Center), in partnership with colleagues at Oregon State University, has developed a suite of in-person and web-based pesticide resistance management workshops and online modules available to all agricultural industries. Overreliance on pesticides has led to the emergence of pesticide-resistant pest species.

With an intended audience of agricultural professionals, the objective of creating in-person and web-based material are to improve knowledge of identifying resistance, to improve knowledge of resistant pest species in agricultural systems, and to empower agricultural professionals to transfer resistance management knowledge.

If you are interested in learning more about our online course series, visit the Professional and Continuing Education Program (PACE). Our team has devel-

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Each series provides valuable information to help you navigate potential pesticide resistance issues and develop long-term, sustainable pest management programs. Any questions, contact Thomas Jima at **Thomas.Jima@OregonState.edu**. ©

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Rural America tires of waiting its turn



Jeff Stone

Like most of America, I'm still processing the stunning November election results.

Oregon voters chose to increase the supermajorities of the Democrats in power and reelect our Democratic governor. Congress underwent, as AmericanHort's Senior Vice President Matt Mika said, a "blue-nami."

There are a lot of reasons for these developments, and our industry will figure out the rules of the game and get to work. Underneath it all, however, is that rural America — farmers — are no longer waiting to make their voices heard. The state and the nation should listen carefully.

Not-so-surprising election

With rural areas growing, and farmers facing increasing economic stress, the nation witnessed one of the more historic repudiations of tariff-driven economic policy in recent memory.

Since 2000, 12 of the last 14 federal election cycles have effectively been "change elections," resulting either in a transfer of Congressional control or a change in presidential party leadership. Americans clearly remain dissatisfied with the status quo.

But nowhere is that dissatisfaction more pronounced than in rural America.

For decades, politicians of both parties have appeared every four years, attend county fairs, promise broadband expansion, pledge support for agriculture, and then largely disappear after elections.

Rural voters increasingly recognize this pattern. They are tired of being treated as campaign props rather than long-term partners in national development.

The 'majority minority' is here

Immigration, internal migration, demographic shifts, and changing economic realities have reshaped large portions of rural America.

The nation's demographic future is already visible in many rural counties. While the United States is projected to become majority-minority around 2046, hundreds of rural communities crossed that threshold years ago.

Don't make farming harder

The economic foundation of rural life has also changed dramatically.

Agriculture remains central to many communities, but farming itself has become more difficult and more expensive. Consolidation has reduced the number of family farms. Input costs for fuel, fertilizer, equipment, labor, and insurance have risen substantially. Commodity prices fluctuate wildly, based on global markets over which local farmers have little control.

Tariffs have produced unintended consequences for many agricultural producers. Retaliatory measures from trading partners have reduced export opportunities for crops and livestock products, placing pressure on already thin margins. While government assistance programs helped offset some losses, many producers concluded that they would rather keep stable markets than rely upon federal compensation checks to survive.

That frustration extends well beyond farming. Rural economies today depend on a diverse mix of industries, including manufacturing, logistics, energy production, healthcare, tourism, food processing, and small business entrepreneurship.

Residents increasingly evaluate economic policy through practical outcomes rather than partisan loyalty. They want affordable energy, reliable labor markets, accessible healthcare, functioning schools, and economic opportunities that allow their children to remain in their communities.

This evolving demographic landscape is also reshaping political engagement. Rural voters are no longer a monolithic bloc. As former House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-Massachusetts) was fond of saying, "All politics is local." Meanwhile, the internal Bill Clinton campaign mantra of the 1990s — "It's the economy, stupid" — still gets echoed to this day.

When local and economic factors collide, and the election cycle becomes a referendum on current leaders, you get what we got on November 3 — both locally and nationally.

As a result, political parties can no longer rely on outdated strategies.

Rural voters are demonstrating a willingness to change allegiances when they feel ignored, whether on trade policy, healthcare access, farm profitability, infrastructure investment, or workforce development.

Stand up and be heard

That lesson should not be lost on either party. Rural Americans are not demanding special treatment. They are demanding sustained attention.

They want policy discussions that extend beyond election season. They want leaders who understand that rural economies are interconnected with national prosperity. They want investments in roads, water systems, broadband, education, and healthcare that allow their communities to compete in the 21st century.

Perhaps most importantly, they want recognition that rural America is not standing still. It is changing economically, demographically, and politically.

The future of rural America will be more diverse than in its past. It will be driven by a broader range of industries than agriculture alone. And it will reward political leaders who engage with communities year-round rather than showing up every few years seeking votes.

The political message emerging from rural America is not simply a rejection of one policy or one party. It is a demand to be seen, heard, and valued. We have big issues facing the nursery industry and be assured, your voice will be heard and valued.



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