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Making things far better

Nursery trade shows are back! Those who predicted the demise of the trade show were proven wrong this past winter by several well-received shows. These shows experienced more visitors as well as a greater number of exhibitors. There's a lesson for us here.

Forty-two years ago, several Oregon growers and OAN members had a vision to create the Farwest Show in the basement of Veterans Memorial Coliseum. From those humble beginnings, our show grew into one of the most prestigious nursery shows in the United States. It has attracted visitors from every region, as well as every continent.

Even today, despite the effects of the recent recession, Farwest is far bigger and far more important than when it started. More importantly, it's ready to start growing again.

Now is the perfect time for us Oregon growers to ensure this happens, and we should. Farwest is the best showcase we have for our great products and nurseries.

The OAN staff and our volunteer show committee know the history and traditions of Farwest, and are diligently preserving and improving the show's status in the nursery industry. A new marketing campaign, "Farwest: Far From Ordinary," has helped create a refreshing buzz that is resonating with current and potential "Farwest Fanatics" (e.g., our exhibitors and attendees).

That's not just a feeling we have. Others see it that way, too. Last year the show added 50 new exhibitors to the show floor, and this year's booth sales are already ahead of last year's pace. What's more, some 12 exhibitors are already returning to Farwest in 2015 after staying on the sidelines the past two years or more.

One of Farwest's most compelling elements this year is hosting the 2015 International Trials Conference in Portland. This biennial conference is a prestigious international event that draws

nursery professionals from around the globe. Along with the development of a new trial garden, hosting this conference furthers Oregon's reputation as a global nursery industry leader.

Additionally, 2015 will be the second year of the highly successful Equipment Innovation Day, which demonstrates the newest technology in a nursery setting.

As always, the Farwest Tours will give visitors the chance to see some of Oregon's finest nurseries, gardens and retail garden centers. They can experience the industry trendsetters and thought leaders at the Farwest Seminars.

Organizers promise a lineup that is innovative, challenging and relevant.

The Farwest Show could not be effective without the OAN members who consistently exhibit and attend. For those who are not currently exhibiting, I urge you to look at the opportunities available.

In my experience as a nursery manager, Farwest generates leads as well as

sales. It also offers great opportunities to network and socialize with customers and fellow nursery professionals in a fun and comfortable environment.

Besides helping our own businesses, Farwest also supports the Oregon Association of Nurseries. Show profits provide resources to the OAN to speak up for our industry when it matters most, and provide beneficial programs to help your bottom line.

Without Farwest, the OAN would have to rely more heavily on membership dues to operate. OAN services and programs would be more limited. Dues would be higher.

By participating in this year's show, you'll benefit your business, your association and your industry. That's far better for everyone. ☺



By Mike Coleman
OAN PRESIDENT