

2015-2016 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Welcome to Nursery Country

The New Year brings a new season of winter trade shows. It's a time for OAN members to go out and "spread the good news" about the selection, quality and customer service that make Oregon nursery products some of the best in the nation.



Leigh Geschwill
OAN PRESIDENT

But what inspires us to grow these great products? As it turns out, our history goes all the way back to the days of the Oregon Trail. In 1847, Alfred Luelling and William Meek brought tree selections with them over the rugged plains to start their nursery here in the Willamette Valley. More nurseries soon followed suit, with the addition of fruit trees and ornamental shrubs. These original Oregon nurserymen saw the rich soil and plentiful water in the Willamette Valley and surely believed they were in heaven.

Oregonians of today would agree. Our outdoor spaces are majestic — tall trees, sweeping canyons, breathtaking scenery. I, myself, am blessed to live on a farm and nursery where I can watch the sun rise over the Cascade Mountains (including Mt. Hood) and set over the Coast Range. Being surrounded by this diverse and beautiful environment inspires us to grow a wide range of plant material.

Oregon gardeners are likewise inspired by it. They demand that we give them more — more color selections, more types, more sizes to fit their landscapes.

But what good is all that plant material if it does not have quality attached to it? We can attain that quality thanks in part to a supportive environment. It goes all the way back to the 1880s, when Oregon Agricultural College (today Oregon State University) saw the blossoming nursery industry and introduced horticulture as a field of study. They built their first research greenhouse in 1890. All of this educational activity and interest in research, coupled with increasing business activity, helped see us to our first organization of nurserymen in the state, the Oregon Nurserymen's Association, in 1893. Over time things evolved and our modern OAN was founded in 1933.

One of the association's early activities was to form the Nursery Advisory Board to communicate with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. We continue to work with ODA very closely. They conduct nursery inspections; actively help identify new pest, disease and invasive species issues; and work with us to create and implement best management practices for our growers. Meanwhile, OSU researchers continue to work on varietal improvements and innovations, growing techniques and natural resource management strategies.

In Oregon, our shared goal is to have sustainably produced green goods that will perform in the ground for years to come. It is not enough to just grow a plant — we want to grow it well and have the ability to stand behind our claims. And that's why the final factor in Oregon's nursery success is the people.

Oregonians are known for being independent minded, even quirky. Most of our ancestors left their original homeland, then left the safety of the Eastern U.S. to travel out into the wild unknown. Our independence shows with our forward thinking. We were the first state to introduce a bottle refund bill to keep trash out of our natural environment, and we allow our citizens to directly engage in the political process through our ballot initiatives.

We're also like that on a personal level. We mix and mingle with friends and strangers, neighbors and visitors. We love to share good food and drink with those around us. You'll always find a spot to sit at our tables. Our political spectrum in the state runs the entire gamut. We believe in treating people well no matter who they are.

Those of you lucky enough to visit Oregon know what I am talking about. For the rest of you — our plants will have to tell our story. ©