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Houses of hope and promise

Ahhh, spring! After that glorious week of warmth Oregon experienced way back in February, the groundwork was laid.



Leigh Geschwill
OAN PRESIDENT

We knew that the gray doldrums of winter would clear off sooner or later. In their place comes renewal. New signs of life. Bright spring greens. Color! And what expresses this rejoicing in the new and now like a greenhouse full of plants?

In the scope of history, the desire for something new and different isn't really new at all. The ancient Romans made early attempts at hastening spring. They achieved this through cold-frame systems. These initial "hot houses" were rustic, using oiled clothes or transparent stone for glazing, but they got the job done. Roman gardeners were able to wheel carts of cucumber-like melons in and out of cold frames so that the Emperor Tiberius could have something tasty to eat during the winter and early spring.

During the 13th century, more active types of greenhouses came along. These provided some ability to moderate temperatures, expanding the ability to grow plants out of season — and even out of climate. Italians wanted to grow, in their "giardini botanici," exotic houseplants brought back from world travels.

Meanwhile, across the globe, Koreans were growing mandarins in greenhouses that had underfloor heating to extend their harvest season.

Modern greenhouses came into being during the 17th and 18th centuries with the advent of commercial glazing. They appeared in Leiden, Holland, and elsewhere in Europe. Corresponding with the Age of Enlightenment, they housed collections of plants from all parts of the world, both for tropical fruit production and medicinal exploration.

Even our first president, George Washington, installed a greenhouse at Mount Vernon. He wanted to have fresh tropical fruits and plants to delight his guests.

Our modern greenhouses offer these same things. In the acres of structures that exist across Oregon, we can grow plants that otherwise would be impossible in our climate. They include tropical plants, early vegetable starts and instant color for your patio.

Today's greenhouse operator keeps these items flowing four seasons a year. There is always a new crop and another holiday. Not to mention color, fragrance and edibles!

Because of the nature of our work, greenhouse growers have a special outlook. We know that time marches on, along with the plants we grow. Yet, we hold hope and promise for what is to come. This optimism gives us the sense that all will be well with the world.

However, we are not giddy schoolchildren in June, running forth into the great unknown. Growers plan and forecast, prepare and monitor. We watch progress and we direct it. Every day, every week, every month of the year.

Sometimes our plans are thwarted. Bad weather brews up storms, and pests and pathogens come knocking at our doors. The unforeseeable can happen, and often does.

So we correct and modify our plans. We make changes and adjustments. Sometimes we must discontinue a plant in favor of something new. The work always continues though.

Even as you receive this issue of *Digger*, many of us in the greenhouse industry will be heading to the California Spring Trials. There we will get a preview of all that is new and exciting for the spring of 2017. It is the beginning of another cycle of seasons.

So as you page through this greenhouse-oriented issue of *Digger*, remember the joy and beauty made possible by those lovely structures. Ponder the perseverance, tenacity and sometimes tenderness of the growers. Think of the enthusiasm of people who sell you these plants, and how their excitement builds yours. It is truly a wonderful industry of people, and I am happy to count myself among their numbers. ☺