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# A Farwest Show baby

## It's August. And for Oregon growers and their customers, that means it's time for the Farwest Show!



Leigh Geschwill  
OAN PRESIDENT

My first Farwest Show was not spent in a booth, but out on the show floor. I had signed up for the committee and was assigned to working on the display gardens. Translated, that meant hours of moving pavers, shoveling bark dust and hauling ice.

Despite the backbreaking work, the committee was a great place to connect with fellow growers and suppliers and create lifelong friendships in this industry.

After I spent a year or so on the committee, our company (F & B Farms and Nursery) entered the show in 2003 with our first booth. Our marketing materials were pretty basic and we just packed the booth with plants and color. Despite the simplicity, it worked out and our first show was successful.

At that time, I also earned my Green Coat as a committee member, and did my time walking the show floor.

We laugh about those Green Coats today. They're artifacts of a different fashion era. I think we should take an EPA permit out and have a big bonfire to burn them!

Fortunately, after too many years of service, those coats have been replaced. Committee members will now wear a more stylish (and less brutally warm) grey vest.

But no matter what we're wearing, our message as committee members is the same: we are here to welcome people to Oregon, help folks on the show floor, and make sure they have a good time.

Over the years, our booth developed along with our flyers, catalogs and handouts. We moved up to a better corner location and really hit our stride. Our business was rapidly expanding, and the industry was exploding with new varieties, including our beloved *Calibrachoa*.

Then came baby!

As anything goes when you are trying to plan the perfect time to have a child, particularly in horticulture or agriculture, something is bound to go off schedule. In August of 2005, my daughter Alex was born. I had staff all set to cover the booth, which was fortuitous as I went into labor on Saturday. Sunday morning we were blessed to discover that we were parents of a baby girl.

We exited the show after 2007. The combination of having a toddler, growing staff levels and a tough economy forced us to make choices about time and money, and really focus on the core of our greenhouse operation. We still made time to attend the show, and send our employees to seminars to improve their knowledge. I still worked on the committee and volunteered from time to time when I could as well.

Two years ago, I could see that the show was shaking off its old look and feel and emerging into a new modern age. Events like the Pub Crawl gave the show a new, hip vibe. Last year we took the plunge and dove back into the show. We are glad we did.

The show is still made up of great Oregon growers showcasing our world-class quality, but a new generation of nursery professionals is stepping to the forefront. The Farwest Show gives us, as exhibitors, the tools and apps to interact with the attendees — who end up being our customers — with a new vigor.

For us personally, it is still a stretch to put in the man-hours to pull off the show and cover the workload at home. In fact, it is kind of like having a newborn baby — somehow, you just get it done. And as with a new child, the joys and rewards are immeasurable. ☺