

A winner on and off the field

Sports metaphors are my specialty. It doesn't matter whether the occasion is an OAN meeting, a church gathering, a barbecue with the neighbors, or just lunch hour at work, heating something up in the office microwave. I am a walking, talking sports metaphor machine.

I have two daughters now in high school sports. We talk often about how you can be a star on the field or court, but a real team is made on the bus. It happens in the unstructured time between games or matches, or during traditional teenage sleepovers.

Our association puts together the largest green trade show in the West. Farwest is a top-tier commercial and educational endeavor that brings together thought leaders and innovators. It offers elite educational opportunities, including tours of some of the greatest nursery operations in the country.

And as with any sporting event, there are certainly stars on the floor of any trade show. They are the clever exhibitors, the innovative operations, the dazzling new plants and the growers at the top of their game.

Farwest manages to attract many of these stars. No doubt about it. But when does a collection of stars become greater than the sum of its parts? What makes Farwest something more than a top-of-the-line green industry showcase of plant material and business-to-business activity?

Several things:

- **Location.** You can see, touch and buy plant material that is largely grown within an hour's drive of the show.

- **The show floor is always buzzing.** We've added on-floor information sessions tailored to various market segments.

- **It's social.** You can meet up for dinner with customers and competitors alike, and enjoy Portland's fantastic restaurant scene. Or, you can even take advantage of a little hop infusion with our beer sherpas at the Farwest Pub Crawl on opening night.

August is awesome in Oregon. Portland is the place to find a unique food cart, discover why we are the center of the beer universe, and see the sights of a very walkable and safe downtown area.

Trade shows and tradition

The 1990s and early 2000s were the high point for trade shows. Oregon, like many other parts of the country, could not grow and sell plants fast enough for customers.

Today, even with a greater number of customers using online methods to secure product, the trade show is still the place you can shake hands, establish relationships and easily get your eyes (and hands) on some top-shelf plants and products.

As a homegrown University of Oregon graduate, I can readily concede that the University of Michigan football program is steeped with tradition, including the best fight song in all of college football.

I've seen the program go up and down over the last several years, but now it is suddenly resurgent. Why? Because the Michigan Wolverines possess great leadership, plus the natural advantages of geography and recruiting of talent, and one of the largest venues in the nation.

The Farwest Show is similar. (Although unfortunately, we don't have a fight song.) It has strong tradition and an amazing geographic area with perfect growing conditions. With the economy still improving, and with plant shortages making it so important to secure your plant supplies for 2017, this year's Farwest Show will be a can't-miss event.

Growing to meet industry needs

Farwest is growing again and I am pleased to see it. We are generating booth and attendance numbers not seen since before the economy hit its rough patch.

New and returning exhibitors have added much depth to the offerings. The New Varieties Showcase is overflowing with new plants this year. The show floor will be full of dynamic offerings, all organized in a way that's easy to navigate.

And I'm not a tech-savvy person, but I can tell you the improved and updated



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Farwest Show app will help customers and exhibitors connect. That's pretty cool.

Every year after the show, we ask exhibitors and attendees a lot of questions so the next year we can deliver the best possible trade show Oregon has to offer. Based on this input, we have put together these features:

- Top-notch, relevant education from the industry's brightest minds and leaders.
- Exciting retail merchandising competitions and free mini-seminars in the Idea Center for Retailers.
- Nursery tours showing you some of the best Oregon growers.
- The Growers Showcase, highlighting pollinators.

We've also injected new life into the show with innovative marketing. Our Farwest Show Fanatic concept, introduced last year, has taken the next logical step by featuring three of our headline seminar presenters.

I never dreamed that respected economist Dr. Charlie Hall would appear on the cover of this magazine with a mohawk and beard made of plants. That one qualifies for an "awesome alert."

Oregon is waiting to host you

The Farwest Show is poised to have a great year. Whether you are traveling three miles to come to the show, or more than 3,000, you will find that the energy, the plant and product offerings, and the educational opportunities are here for you to take advantage of.

Get on the plane, bus or car and experience the best trade show in the West. It's a slam dunk. ☺