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Take advantage of it all

I love this time of the year! Summer is in full swing. The days are long, the kids are out of school, it hardly ever rains and it's warm out.



Mark Bigej
OAN PRESIDENT

August is one of my favorite months of the year in Oregon. Business on the retail end of things really slows down, which is bad for the bottom line, but a good opportunity to enjoy the last bit of summer.

It also makes it the perfect time to send a big group of our "Purple People" — what we call our Al's Garden & Home employees, who dress in purple shirts — to the Farwest Show!

The Farwest Show has become a tradition for me. As a kid growing up in the industry, I remember going to the show every year with my dad, Jack Bigej.

It didn't take too many years to figure out that if I wanted to see the whole floor I should try to do that on my own. If I tagged along with Dad, I would wind up stopping to talk to people every 20 feet.

I'm convinced, to this day, that Dad has not walked the entire floor in just one day — ever! Where else can you go and see so many friends in the industry in one place at one time?

In fairness to my dad, these days I do my own fair share of stopping and talking, but then, the goal really is to interact with people, not cover the huge floor quickly.

The Farwest Show offers so many things to our business every year. As a company, we try to take full advantage of the show.

Our retail buyers go to talk to vendors and look for new products. Our marketing team goes to search out new trends, get new ideas for promotions, and listen to speakers at the seminars. Our visual merchandisers walk the floor for inspiration.

Our growers look for new plants to grow, search out the latest trends in containers and check out the latest in mechanization that can help make our operation more efficient.

I like taking our store managers through the show so they can see what's new in the industry and get ideas for their stores.

Of course, everyone who goes to the show makes sure they stop by the New Varieties Showcase. It's always exciting to see what's new that we can offer our customers — not to mention the fact that most of us are unrepentant plant geeks.

The fact is, I get the opportunity to see many shows throughout the year, whether it's other trade shows like IGC or Cultivate, distributor shows or even hardware shows. None are as exciting to me as our own Farwest Show.

No matter what show I go to, when it comes to plants, there is NO COMPARISON to the Farwest Show. The selection and quality of Farwest exhibitors and growers is second to none.

No matter how many times we go to the show, it seems like we always find a grower or plant we haven't seen before. A couple years ago, Dad went to the show only to find a treasure of a nursery that we didn't know existed — and it was only five miles from our store! They are an important vendor for us now.

You just never know what you're going to find, no matter how many times you walk the show floor. The Farwest Show is truly "Far From Ordinary." I encourage you all to attend. I'll be there! ©