

**2016-2017  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Mark Bigej**  
PRESIDENT  
mbigej@als-gardencenter.com  
Al's Garden & Home  
1220 N. Pacific Hwy.  
Woodburn, OR 97071-3616  
503-981-1245  
FAX 503-982-4608

**Josh Zielinski**  
PRESIDENT-ELECT  
josh@alphannursery.com  
Alpha Nursery  
5050 Hazelgreen Rd. N.E.  
Salem, OR 97305-3519  
503-390-1286  
FAX 503-390-2639

**Jim Simnitt**  
VICE PRESIDENT  
simnittnsy@canby.com  
Simnitt Nursery  
138 NE 22nd Ave.  
Canby, OR 97013  
503-266-9640  
FAX 503-263-6330

**Mike Hiller**  
TREASURER  
mike@kniusa.com  
Kraemer's Nursery Inc.  
P.O. Box 930  
Mt. Angel, OR 97362  
503-845-2283  
FAX 503-845-6557

**Leigh Geschwill**  
PAST PRESIDENT  
farmerswife@fandbfarms.com  
F & B Farms & Nursery  
10498 Geschwill Lane N.E.  
Woodburn, OR 97071-9149  
503-830-1388  
FAX 866-608-3709

**Kyle Fessler**  
SECRETARY  
kyle@stchristophernursery.com  
St. Christopher Nursery LLC  
12936 Portland Rd. N.E.  
Gervais, OR 97026  
503-580-4470  
FAX 503-792-3902

**Wes Bailey**  
MEMBER AT LARGE  
wes.bailey@smithgardens.com  
Smith Gardens Inc.  
23150 Boones Ferry Road N.E.  
Aurora, OR 97002-9461  
503-678-5373  
FAX 503-678-4264

**STATE BOARD  
REPRESENTATIVES**

**CENTRAL OREGON CHAPTER**  
**Gary S. English**  
gary@landsystemsnursery.com  
Landsystems Nursery  
541-382-7646

**CHRISTMAS TREE CHAPTER**  
vacant

**CLACKAMAS CHAPTER**  
**Tom Brewer**  
tbrewer@hc-companies.com  
**Amanda Staehely**  
amandastaehely@gmail.com  
The HC Companies, ProCal  
503-686-8448  
Columbia Nursery  
503-810-2598

**EMERALD EMPIRE CHAPTER**  
**Tamara Clift**  
tamaragreg@msn.com  
McKenzie River Nursery  
541-747-2767

**GREENHOUSE CHAPTER**  
**Mark Leichty**  
mark@littleprinceoforegon.com  
**Andrea Avila-Aragon**  
andrea.avila-aragon@smithgardens.com  
Little Prince of Oregon Nursery  
503-678-5687  
Smith Gardens  
503-678-5373

**MT. HOOD CHAPTER**  
**Anthony Kinen**  
akinen5@gmail.com  
**Sam Barkley**  
samb@jfschmidt.com  
Kinen's Big & Phat  
Special Plants  
503-866-3627  
J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.  
503-663-4128

**RETAIL CHAPTER**  
**Lisa Barnett**  
lbarnett@wilco.coop  
Silverton Wilco Farm  
503-873-8318

**SUNSET CHAPTER**  
**Ron Kinney**  
rkinney@monrovia.com  
**Clayton Moore Jr.**  
orders@naplants.com  
Monrovia  
503-868-7941  
North American Plants Inc.  
503-474-1852

**WILLAMETTE CHAPTER**  
**John Maurer**  
info@evergreengrowers.com  
**Robert Van Klaveren**  
vansnursery@aol.com  
Evergreen Growers Supply  
503-908-1946  
Van's Nursery  
503-463-4507

# A year of growth

## In-depth involvement in the OAN leads to lessons that will serve for a lifetime



**Mark Bigej  
OAN PRESIDENT**

My how the time has flown! I can't believe I'm writing my final President's Message for *Digger*. What a fun and eventful year it has been. I want to thank all of our OAN members for allowing me the honor of representing you.

My year as president began at the OAN Convention in Sunriver last November. It was great to see so many familiar faces as we gathered to celebrate another year in the industry and look ahead to 2017. The social and conversation time with members was a true pleasure, and something I look forward to again this year.

Our next social event was the OAN Hall of Fame banquet on February 22. We inducted Glenn and Viola Walters, Bruce Usrey, Ray Klupenger, Dick Joyce and Jack Bigej. It was both inspiring and humbling to hear what these titans have done for our industry.

This year was also memorable for giving me an in-depth lesson in politics.

In January, the OAN had an Advocacy Training Session for members. We learned about the legislative process in Oregon and what each of us could do to help further our cause and protect our industry. The day was capped off with each of us giving practice testimony before a mock committee, so we would feel comfortable should the need arise.

The practice came in handy, as I soon had the honor of testifying in Salem on behalf of our industry, side by side with Leigh Geschwill.

On February 14, it was Legislative Day for Members. I joined together with 20 devoted OAN members as we went down to the State Capitol. Several senators and representatives heard us discuss the issues most important to our industry.

It was enlightening to see all of the work our association does on the state's political front. OAN members, our Executive Director and our lobbyists work hard to protect the interests of our industry. Despite the impending peril that lurked in proposed legislation this year, our advocates were able to minimize the impact on our members, and were even able to get some helpful legislation passed! I will never again take for granted all of the work that goes on behind the scenes that enables our industry to remain viable.

The same can be said for the work the association does on a national level. On the OAN's annual trip to the nation's capital in May, we met with Senators, Representatives, the House and Senate agriculture committees and the USDA to share our perspective on issues. It was evident that even back in Washington, D.C., the OAN is well respected.

As August rolled around, it was once again great to see the familiar and new faces of our industry at the Farwest Show. The show was a buzz of uplifting energy and conversations. Coupled with the news from the Oregon Department of Agriculture that nursery and greenhouse products are once again the state's No. 1 agricultural commodity, there was a definite feeling that business is heading in the right direction again.

All these great experiences were possible thanks to a conversation I had with Jerry Simnitt in 2011. As the OAN's president-elect at the time, he asked me to serve as the Member at Large on the Executive Committee. I took a chance and said yes.

My in depth involvement in the OAN the last seven years has been an amazing journey. I have learned more than I ever anticipated. I have been told that the more involved you get, the more you grow from the experience. It was definitely true for me.

Now it is time for Josh Zielinski to serve as president. Like me, he will be a second-generation president following in his father's footsteps. Josh will bring a lot to his year as president, and I look forward to serving alongside him.

I encourage all of you to step out and get involved with this great organization! You will get back more than you can imagine. ©