



- **ABOUT:**
Wholesale B&B grower of Japanese maples, conifers and common evergreens.
- **PRESIDENT:**
Loy Russell
- **OTHER KEY PERSONNEL:**
Kyle Russell, sales manager; **Jerrid Russell**, production manager
- **EMPLOYEES:**
15 full-time, increasing to 30 for peak season
- **CONTACT:**
📍 22241 Boones Ferry Road NE, Aurora, OR 97002-9455
☎ 503-678-2536
✉ russellsnursery@gmail.com
- **ONLINE:**
www.russellsnursery.com
- **TRADE SHOWS:**
MGIX (Midwest Green Industry Experience, Columbus) , Utah Green Industry Conference and Trade Show, Nor Cal Landscape & Nursery Show, Farwest Show, others
- NurseryGuide.com 🌿

Page 15: Family members involved in Russell's Nursery include Loy, Kyle, Jerrid and Ken. This page and opposite: The unique or rare conifers grown at Russell's benefit from Willamette loam soil. The nursery isn't far from the confluence of the Willamette, Pudding and Molalla rivers. PHOTOS BY CURT KIPP

Russell's Nursery

Founded: 1981 by Loy and Wayne Russell

AT RUSSELL'S NURSERY, EVERYTHING is propagated on site, grown in native Willamette River sandy loam soil, and dug by hand.

That takes time. It's a deliberate choice by owner, founder and president Loy Russell, and one of the reasons he believes the nursery has survived numerous economic ups and downs over the past 37 years: investment in the product.

"You've got to have a good product or people aren't going to buy from you," he said.

The nursery grows Japanese maples and common evergreens, but is best known for its deep selection of grafted conifers, many of which are rare and unique.

"Conifers are a foundation for every garden," said sales manager Kyle Russell, one of Loy's two sons who are involved in the family business. "There are so many companion plants that go with them."

The nursery seeks out conifer selections that are not widely available and does its best to get them into production. The year-round beauty and low maintenance costs appeal to customers. The evergreens and Japanese maples they grow also boast year-round interest.

"We propagate our own plants and grow everything from start to finish here," said production manager Jerrid Russell, Loy's other son who is involved in the business.

This puts the nursery in the best position to supply customers with consistency and accuracy, Loy said.

Key to the nursery's quality is the native flood plain soil, near where the Pudding River flows into the Willamette. "We have superb ground," Loy said. "This is some of the only true Willamette loam soil there is."

The material is dug generally in winter, wrapped in burlap, some placed in a container with media and fertilizer, and held till spring when it is shipped. The nursery offers potting as a unique solution to help deal with some of the after care challenges of B&B material. It also makes for better merchandising.

The nursery's customers are divided between the landscape industry and retailers, and they

are located all across the country — from the Intermountain region, to the Midwest, and on to the East Coast.

Customer service and communication are prioritized, and as a result, the nursery has numerous longtime customers who reorder every year. "What you need is a relationship, where the customer comes back year after year," Loy said.

A lifetime of farming

Nursery founder Loy Russell grew up on the farm his grandfather, Ward, founded in 1937. His father, Wayne, took it over in 1955, and Loy remembers working from a young age.

"We farmed all of our life," Loy said. "In high school, you could get early release back then, and so I came home early and farmed."

With the intent of farming vegetable row crops, as his father and grandfather did, Loy purchased 28 acres from his grandparents in 1978. However, a family friend, Eldon Evans of Evans Farms, soon advised him that nursery crops could be more profitable than row crops.

In 1980, Loy put up greenhouses on the property with help from his father. He propagated his first crop of rhododendrons in 1981, marking the official establishment of Russell's Nursery.

Winter propagation allowed him to still spend time on his food crops the rest of the year. He chose rhododendrons as his first nursery offering because they could be sold sooner than other woody plants that he considered.

"After that, we expanded and started growing conifers," Loy said.

Loy made the early decision to grow Japanese maples, conifers and evergreens, even though others advised against taking all of that on. "So many people said, 'You can't do all of those,'" he said. "Most people only raised one crop."

To gain the knowledge he needed, he drew upon friends and industry veterans. "My education was, I went around and talked to the oldest people in the nursery trade and learned from them," Loy said.

Among others, Chuck Schlechter of Van Veen Nursery taught him about rhodies, Steve Germany of Steve Germany Nursery Inc. taught him about





conifer grafting, and Art Wright of Wright Nursery taught him about propagation in general.

Expansion came soon. Loy rented ground from his father along Airport Road near Aurora, and as business grew, he filled up all 70 acres with plants.

He then started renting another 73 acres from an immediate neighbor, clearing it of hazelnut trees so he could grow more plants. That brought his land in production to 173 acres. He purchased that land in 2000.

The next step was to lease 60 acres from a friend down the road.

As growth continued, his sons Jerrid and Kyle were coming of age. The boys both graduated North Marion High School in the year 2000 and went to work. “Kyle and I just both wanted to do it,” Jerrid said.

“We all get along,” Kyle said. “It’s good to work with each other.”

The boys gained experience while the nursery enjoyed strong growth throughout the early aughts. “They went to school together,” Loy said. “They always ran around together. They had the same buddies, and now they work together.”

Kyle has even served in volunteer roles in the industry, currently holding the office of treasurer in the American Conifer Society, Western Region.

A test of survival

The recession that started in 2008 tested the nursery’s mettle, as it did for many growers in Oregon and elsewhere. When the housing bubble ruptured, housing starts screeched to a halt. No new houses meant far less landscaping activity, and less demand for landscaping material.

“With the economic downturn, a lot of wholesalers were down,” Loy said.

The Russells had to let workers go, but they were determined not to shortchange the material they were growing for future buyers. “We had to go out there and work more hours, because we didn’t have the help to do it,” Loy said.

Eventually things turned around.

“We hit our goals faster than we thought we would,” Loy said. “The recession was tough, but we’re still here.”

And the Russells plan to stick around for the long haul. With Jerrid and Kyle involved in the business, and Loy’s brother Ken and nephew Kody also working there, the business remains a family affair — one that isn’t going away anytime soon.

“Once it’s in your blood, it’s always in your blood,” Loy said. “You know what I mean?” ☺

Need Poly Film? T&R’s Got You Covered!

Ginegar’s Advanced 5-Layer Poly Film Technology for Greenhouse Covers:

- Reduces dust on greenhouse covers
- Blocks IR to prevent heat loss
- Reduces frost damage
- Saves heating costs
- Maintains higher foliage temperatures and drier plants



Your area representative:
Courtney Lewis-Borts
503-951-3929

courtney.lewis@trlcompany.com

Ginegar Plastics now joins the T&R family of products



Outdoor nursery containers



Greenhouse film covers



Fill trays, handlers, inserts and flats, eco friendly products, and thermoformed pots



Polyethylene films



Greenhouse containers, baskets and trays



Landscape fabric, shade cloth, and frost protection



Thermoformed and injection molded trays, packs, flats, pots and hanging baskets



Propagation trays



T&R Company

Trust & Reliability for Over 40 Years

www.trlcompany.com