

Digger

APRIL 2018

Efficient LED lighting

PAGE 23

Small, colorful yards

PAGE 17

H-2A for nurseries

PAGE 27

The Greenhouse Issue

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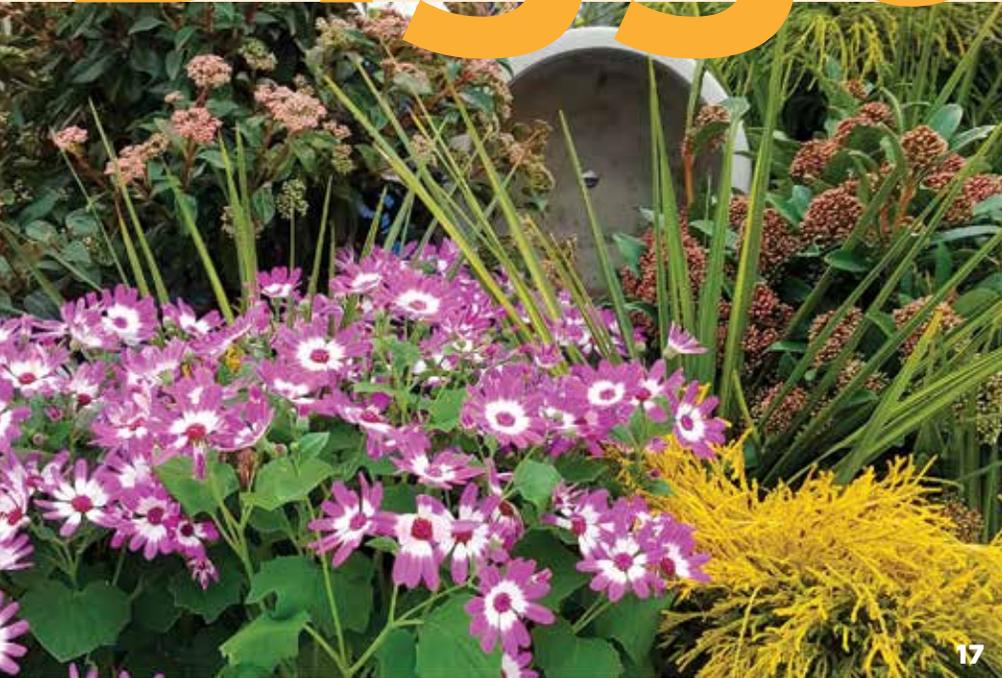


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April 2018 Vol. 62 No. 4

Digger



The Greenhouse Issue

17 Small, tall and packed together

The trend toward smaller spaces drives intensive use of perennials and grasses.

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LEDs are helping nurseries gain all kinds of new efficiencies.

27 H-2A for nurseries

The guest worker program offers a labor option, but has its challenges.

33 Flora at your fingertips

Revised, rebranded OregonFlora has new and expanded plant information.

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On the cover: LED lights are installed at Iwasaki Bros., Hillsboro, Oregon. Photo provided by Gloeckner & Company Inc. **On this page:** (Left) Grasses serve as a great option for small outdoor spaces and (right) add a layer of height when paired with other perennials, as shown at Al's Garden & Home in Sherwood, Oregon. Photos by Dawn Hummel.



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**An adventure
worth taking**

**On a recent weekend, I did
something I don't do enough — I went
to a retail garden center.**

You see, as a nurseryman, the honest truth is that by Sunday, I usually feel like I've seen enough plants. I can't wait to go out into the woods for a run, clean the house, putter around in the garage or maybe even go wine tasting. I feel like I'd rather do anything but go look at more pretty little plants all lined up in rows waiting to be sold.

However, on a Sunday in late March, that is exactly what I did — and it was incredible!

On a slightly brisk but dry morning, my wife Kattie, 3-year-old daughter Alyce and I arrived just a half-hour after the garden center had opened.

We noticed quite a few cars already parked in front. This told us we were not going to be alone, even though it was quite early in the spring season.

As we walked through the gates and grabbed our little red wagons — we needed two because Alyce insisted on pulling her own — we began to witness something I wasn't expecting.

We saw not only great selections of plants carefully curated for our region and the early spring season, but something else more subtle: There were a dozen families, many closely resembling our own, meandering about in a way that resembled an adventuresome stroll through the park. It didn't look like "shopping" in the typical sense of the word.

The kids were frolicking about smelling the flowers, touching the pokey plants and threatening to break the statuary. Meanwhile, the parents were undoubtedly deliberating whether they needed shade-loving perennials for that empty back corner (the original reason we set out on such a mission), or succulents for the pots (we got a few of those, too) or if the front yard was big enough for two more fruit trees (almost).

There wasn't even the slightest resemblance to one of those warehouse superstores with everyone gazing about like zombies, steadily herding one another like cattle through all the plastic stuff. People seemed so relaxed. I think it's because they were looking at real living things — things that can bring such genuine joy (and function!) to their homes, or better yet, their busy lives.

We picked out a few ferns, a couple heucheras, some small shrubs, and an olive tree. We also got a small turtle statue that Alyce carried with her for the next 12 hours despite the fact that it weighed at least a third of her body weight.

We took them home. Then we soaked up some sun as we mixed the plants into our landscape. They added just the new touch we needed to make our yard feel a little bit more like us.

We talked about the olive tree growing big enough to pick olives from. Maybe someday we could all sit underneath it on a hot afternoon. And after most of the plants were planted, I plopped down on the bench that had once sat all alone in a bare spot under a cluster of birch trees. I was surrounded by the colors and textures of new plants. It felt so much more comfortable, and I swear my beverage tasted better (no joke!).

The adventure was fun and the rewards were incredible. I think I know what I'll be doing on another weekend soon! ☺



Josh Zielinski
OAN PRESIDENT

**It didn't look like
"shopping" in the typical
sense of the word.**



Calendar

Get the word out about your event! Email details to calendar@oan.org by the 10th day of the month to be included in the next issue of *Digger*.

APRIL 2

oan NURSERY GUIDE

Listings are due for the 2018-19 OAN Nursery Guide. This 360-plus-page book is the gold standard for finding the plants, products and services you want to buy — and letting people know what you want to sell. Only OAN members may submit listings, and each member receives one free listing. To submit listings, log on to www.NurseryGuide.com. If you need your username, password or other assistance, call 503-682-5089 or email nurseryguide@oan.org. For display advertising, contact Blair Thompson, OAN advertising manager, at 503-682-5089 or ads@oan.org.

APRIL 7

SPRING GARDENPALOOZA

More than 40 local nurseries and garden art vendors will showcase thousands of plants, tools and outdoor décor at the Spring Gardenpalooza, a one-day gardening event. Festivities will take place at Fir Point Farms, located just south of Portland in Aurora, Oregon, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, April 7. Admission is free. For information about exhibiting, contact Therese Gustin at 503-793-6804 or gardenpalooza@comcast.net

APRIL 14

HORTLANDIA

The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon sponsors this annual plant and art sale at the Portland Expo Center (2060 N Marine Drive). Vendors from Canada to California will offer the latest plant introductions alongside old favorites. Admission is free. For more information, log on to www.hardyplantsociety.org

APRIL 14-19

CALIFORNIA SPRING TRAILS

Many leading plant breeders, growers and suppliers will showcase their newest annuals, perennials, ornamentals, grasses and vegetables at various locations across California. Attendees will get an early look at the latest plant introductions, packaging products and merchandising programs, while learning directly from producers about the recommended growing and retail strategies. Visit springtrials.americanhort.org for more information and to register.

APRIL 15

ONF SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DEADLINE EXTENDED

Do you know any high school, college or graduate students who are considering a career as a nursery or landscape professional? If so, tell them April 15 is the last day to apply for one of the 19 different Oregon Nurseries Foundation scholarships. Awards range



APRIL 28-29

OREGON AG FEST

Ag Fest is a family event that shows more than 20,000 visitors an appreciation of where their food, fiber and flora come from. The two-day ag-stravaganza takes place at the Oregon State Fairgrounds (2330 17th St. N.E., Salem). Log on to www.oragfest.com for more information. Ag Fest also features the OAN potting station where kids have the opportunity to pot and take home a plant, all thanks to generous donations from Bailey Nurseries, Al's Garden & Home, Heritage Seedlings & Liners, Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas, Kraemer's Nursery, St. Christopher Nursery and Phillips' Soil Products Inc. In addition, the annual Horticultural Outreach and Program Support (HoPS) plant sale will take place. The program, coordinated by Val Tancredi, raises funds for the FFA Chapters and the OAN Willamette Chapter's educational fund. Plant donations and volunteers are welcome! For more information, please contact chair Val Tancredi (503-585-1765 or valjtan@gmail.com).

from \$500 to \$1,500, and are sponsored by individuals and OAN chapters. For more information, go to www.oan.org/onf, or contact Stephanie Weihrauch at 503-582-2001 or onf@oan.org.

Keep an eye out for time and details in *Member Update*.

MAY 5-6

SPRING GARDEN FAIR

The Clackamas County Master Gardeners will present their 34th annual fair at the Clackamas County Event Center (694 NE Fourth Ave., Canby). The event will feature more than 200 vendors, 10-Minute University™ Classes, free pH soil testing and an "ask an OSU Master Gardener" feature. Admission is \$5; kids under 16 are free. Go online to www.springgardenfair.org for more details.

MAY 22

YOUNG GROWER SOCIAL

The OAN Mt. Hood Chapter is hosting a social get-together for nursery professionals 40 and younger starting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 22. The event is open to all chapters. The event is at Oregon City Brewing Co. (1401 Washington St., Oregon City, Oregon). Visit the OAN website at www.oan.org/event/younggrower to learn more.

MAY 16

oan OPEN HOUSE

Learn more about the terrific programs and benefits that are available to OAN members, including Legal Access, health coverage, Trucks to Trade Shows, fuel discounts, credit card processing, discounted Farwest Show booths, OAN advertising, and much more!

JUNE 7

DUFFERS CLASSIC

Save the date for the 28th annual golf tourney, which will tee off at the Stone Creek Golf Club in Oregon City, Oregon. A benefit for the Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee, the event is a great way to reconnect with friends while supporting a strong nursery industry voice in Salem and Washington D.C. Sponsorships available. Check the OAN website, www.oan.org/duffers for updates.

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and his daughter Elizabeth
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Northwest News

OAN members and chapters are encouraged to send in relevant news items, such as new hires, new products, acquisitions, honors received and past or upcoming events. Email news@oan.org.

Simplot

Willamette Valley nursery store under Simplot Turf & Horticulture ownership

A new sign is going up on a storefront in Hubbard, Oregon. Simplot Partners opened February 27, 2018 in the former Nursery Connection LLC store.

The J.R. Simplot Company of Boise, Idaho has expanded their distribution capacity in the Pacific Northwest nursery market by purchasing assets of the store in the Willamette Valley.

The sales and support team have remained on staff under the continued leadership of Mike Vandecoevering. Simplot Partners prides themselves on a strong foundation of expertise, service and experience.

The store will offer plant nutrients, plant protection, nursery containers, specialty products and maintenance options that are useful to Oregon's growing needs. Simplot Partners will also carry product offering such as GALXeOne™ product, a controlled release polymer coated fertilizer for turf and nursery applications.

For more information, visit www.simplot.com



Nurseries can play a positive role in combatting climate change by supplying the plant material used in remediation projects and landscaping, such as this project along Interstate 5 near Salem, Oregon.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

LEGISLATURE PROTECTS DRIVING PRIVILEGES FOR DREAMERS

The Oregon Legislature, with OAN's support, has passed House Bill 4111, which provides certainty for Dreamers by allowing them to renew driver's licenses for two years, even if their legal status expires due to the Trump Administration's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The bill also makes Oregon's driver's licenses compliant with the federal Real ID standard, and thus airport ready.

Dreamers are immigrants raised but not born in the United States, who applied for protected status under the DACA program. The program was set to expire March 5 but is currently in limbo due to a legal case. Immigrants who have had temporary protected status (TPS), which the federal government provides to refugees from dangerous or disaster-stricken places, will also be able to extend their licenses under this new law. There are an estimated 11,000 DACA recipients and 1,000 TPS recipients in Oregon.

"DACA and TPS holders have demonstrated good faith when each applicant applied for relief from the federal government," stated a floor letter signed by OAN, Oregon Farm Bureau, the immigrant rights organization Causa and the SEIU labor union. "Each applicant went through a rigorous and extensive screening process track-

ing a person's identity by fingerprinting and a thorough background check conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Gov. Kate Brown is expected to sign the new law, though it then may be challenged via ballot referendum.

LEGISLATURE CREATES CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

The Oregon Legislature wrapped up its short 2018 session Saturday, March 3, and in a major victory for nurseries, legislators opted in the end not to move ahead with a "cap and trade" proposal intended to address climate change.

The OAN argued that the bill was too far-reaching to pass in a short session without further input. Instead of pushing it through, House Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney announced the creation of a Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction to examine the issue and create a proposal for the 2019 Legislature to consider.

"We urged the Legislature not to rush ahead on this proposal and they have wisely decided to study it carefully," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. "Agriculture and the nursery industry need to be a stakeholder at the table, so that climate goals are addressed but at the same time ag is supported and given opportunities to provide solutions to those issues. When it comes

InstantHedge offers prepackaged hedge units that come in several options and sizes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF INSTANTHEDGE



to creating a program to address all of that, it's important to take time, avoid unintended consequences and get the details right."

LEGISLATURE APPROVES BILL REMOVING TAX BREAK

The Oregon Legislature has given final approval to Senate Bill 1528, which eliminates a state small business tax cut implemented a few years ago. Although the bill was intended to counteract the new federal 20 percent deduction for small pass-through entities, some businesses will see a net increase in taxes paid.

The OAN opposed the bill, as did most business organizations. It moves on to Gov. Kate Brown's desk for her signature. She has not decided whether she will sign it.

According to OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone, the bill was the one major

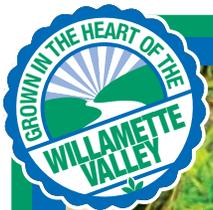
disappointment for OAN to come out of the 2018 session. "It is disappointing that the Senate and House majorities dismissed the nursery and greenhouse industry's concerns over SB 1528," he said. "We want a balanced tax system that pays for services and programs Oregonians need. However, it is bad judgment to assume, grotesquely, that everyone benefited from the Trump tax plan."

Stone added that the federal tax reform included tax increases as well as decreases. "SB 1528 selectively disconnects from the decreases but ignores the increases," he said. "Some of our members will pay higher taxes

under the new federal tax reform, with net impacts of \$20,000 or more. The OAN engages the Legislature to craft sensible policy and to resolve problems. This only works when both sides listen to one another. SB 1528 was a failure of diplomacy and common sense."

INSTANTHEDGE ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF READY-TO-PLANT HEDGES

Brent Markus, owner of Rare Tree Nursery in Silverton, Oregon, has introduced a new line of conveniently pack-



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aged, pre-formed hedges under the brand name InstantHedge. According to Markus, the product gives landscaping professionals a quick solution for planting five-years-mature, 3 to 6 feet tall privacy hedges privacy hedges in a short period. Each hedge has been pruned 3-4 times a year to create a thick wall of foliage.

InstantHedge offers a unit of four trees in a 40-inch long by 16-inch deep biodegradable cardboard box, in which tree roots will grow through the cardboard about a month after planting. End users can plant the entire unit — box and all — in the designated location. Up to 500 feet of trees can be planted in just one day using an excavator. Some 13 evergreen and deciduous tree varieties are available in various heights. Ordering information is online.

For more information their products, visit www.instanthedge.com

USDA ACCEPTING PROPOSALS; AWARDING UP TO \$75,000 IN GRANT FUNDING

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is offering competitive grants for Federal match to develop science, technology and innovative tools that will address natural resource concerns. Previous grant-funded projects have reviewed the best management practices for nurseries in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

State CIG funds supply up to \$75,000 or less and for projects that will take between 1 and three years to complete. Projects may be farm-based, multi-county, small watershed, or Statewide in scope and work with EQIP-eligible producers. Projects should evaluate energy, climate change miti-



gation and adaptation, water quality or quantity, plant health/vigor, soil quality, and wildlife habitat.

Completed application packets must be received by 4 p.m. April 6. Contact the CIG program manager, Loren Unruh, at 503-414-3235 or by email at loren.unruh@or.usda.gov with any questions, or check their website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted.

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A proposed development for Old Town's Post Office site. PHOTO BY WILLIAM KAVEN ARCHITECTURE



680-FOOT-HIGH PORTLAND SKYBRIDGE WITH TREES INSIDE FALLS FROM FAVOR

The City of Portland recently rejected a proposal for an elevated "sky high" park submitted by an architect for redeveloping the 32-acre U.S. Post Office site in downtown Portland. It would have allowed visitors to walk amongst trees as they traverse a 50-foot-high, 236-foot-long enclosed skybridge between two giant towers, some 68 stories above the ground.

While discussing the proposal to *Portland Montly*, architect Daniel Kaven of William Kaven Architecture described the vision for the space. "There would be elevated planters and things to grow trees and lots of plants. The idea is to have an indoor respite from the gray weather, and it's a destination."

The proposal was part of an ongoing trend of finding creative ways to incorporate plants into building designs. It is just one of several ideas that were under consideration as the City of Portland ponders the future of the key piece of downtown real estate next to the Pearl District and Old Town. The city purchased the site at a premium from the federal government so the post office could move out and the city could redevelop the site.

Read more about the proposal at tinyurl.com/yb2vmcpg >>

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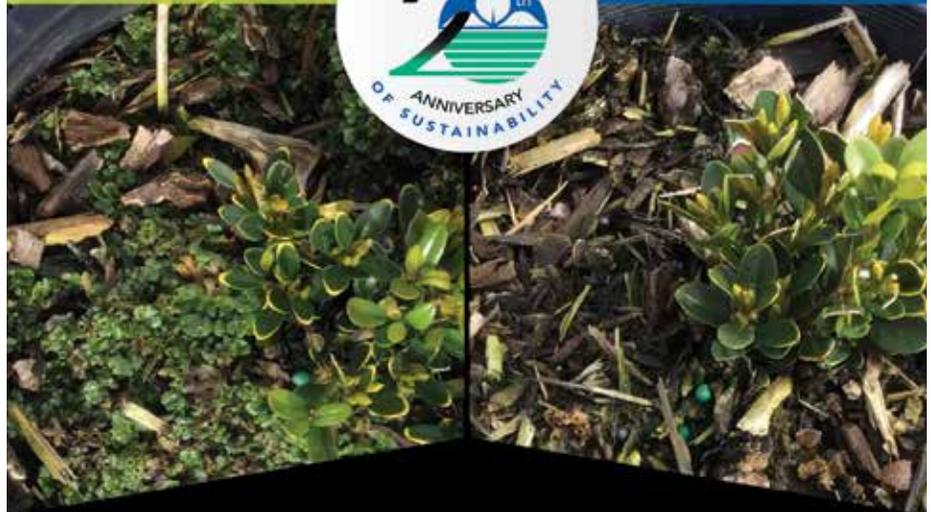


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EHR ADDS SALES AND PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT EXPERT

Eason Horticultural Resources (EHR) is pleased to announce **Roger Kehoe** has accepted the position of Sales and Production Management Expert for their national sales team.



Kehoe has extensive knowledge of product development, plant production, strategic planning, and business development from his previous experience at Costa Farms and Ecke Ranch. He will be available to assist customers all along the East Coast.

EHR is a National Horticulture Broker, servicing the needs of retail garden centers, wholesale greenhouse growers, nurserymen, wholesalers, and landscapers.

SKAGIT HORTICULTURE HIRES REGIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER

Tom Contrisciano

joins the staff of Skagit Horticulture as a regional account manager in the liner division and will contribute his expertise to the GrowProTeam™.



Contrisciano has more than three decades of industry experience in ornamental horticulture. He recently transitioned to Skagit Horticulture from Fluence Bioengineering, a manufacturer of LED horticultural lighting. He has also held positions at Ball Seed, Henry F. Michell Co., Paul Ecke Ranch, and Griffin Greenhouse Supplies.

Contrisciano will work from Pennsylvania to assist growers and distributor customers in the American Northeast and parts of Canada. ©

Don't overlook these late bloomers

DURING THE BUSY SPRING months, when customers are buying nearly everything that is in bloom, they might overlook plants that don't show off their color until late summer.

I have many plants in my garden that are just coming into peak flower in August and September. Whenever we open our garden to guests that late in the season, people see these late bloomers and ask me questions. They aren't sure whether they've seen them before.

Among these plants is *Hibiscus moscheutos*, otherwise known as perennial hibiscus or, more commonly, hardy hibiscus. I would encourage more garden centers to stock them.

This hibiscus should not be mistaken for some of the tropical or semitropical types that are typically seen in Hawaii and Southern California. *Hibiscus moscheutos* or hardy hibiscus is native to the eastern United States. It is grown in gardens throughout the Midwest, where the winter temperatures are much more severe than what we experience in the Pacific Northwest. For gardeners in this part of the country, it is a winter-hardy perennial.

I've known about hardy hibiscus for quite a while, but I didn't grow it in my own garden until just a few years ago. Now, it seems as though I just want to get more!

Spotted in a friend's garden

When touring different summer gardens throughout our area, I had rarely seen one until I visited Doug Barragar's garden in the Raleigh Hills area, southwest of Portland.

Doug gardens on a corner lot and, while driving to his house, I was unfamiliar with the area where he lived. While I was rounding a corner, I knew immediately which garden was his. It was

a show of color we do not often come across in September.

There were roses, hydrangeas, hardy fuchsias, dahlias, lilies and many hardy hibiscuses all in full bloom. If ever there was a traffic stopper, this flower bed was surely it.

The hardy hibiscus blooms were of particular interest to me, as I so rarely see them in a garden or in garden centers. At the time of my visit to Doug's garden, I had visited several garden centers within the previous two weeks without seeing any displays of this plant. Why, I wondered, was it not featured?

It did not take me long to figure out that Doug has an obsession with hardy hibiscus. Actually, I think he also has an obsession with dahlias, hostas, hardy fuchsias, hydrangeas and lilies. (What can be said? Doug is a gardener.)

Doug told me that he has 50 hardy hibiscus plants and that 24 different varieties are represented in his collection. The plants have had no insect or disease problems. The only downside that Doug mentioned is that some of the taller varieties need to be staked.

Some of the tall varieties can reach 5–8 feet in height, but newer varieties are being developed that are smaller and more compact. These new smaller varieties reach the 3–4 foot range. Doug buys varieties with different blooming times so that he has some plants flowering in mid-July and others that will continue through October. Most plants will have flowers 8–12 inches across.

Hardy hibiscus plants do best in a full sun location and will require summer watering. They are not drought tolerant plants.

After a frost, the foliage will begin to die. At this time, Doug cuts the stems back to about 12 inches above the ground. ➤➤



Mike Darcy

Head "plant nerd," longtime speaker, host of gardening shows on radio and TV, and author of the *In the Garden* email newsletter. You can reach Mike, or subscribe to his newsletter, at itmikedarcy@comcast.net.



Hibiscus 'Tie Dye'
PHOTO BY DOUG BARRAGAR

WHAT I'M HEARING

Since these plants tend to be late in sending up new growth, leaving the stems is a good reminder of where they are so they are not dug up with new spring plantings. Once new growth has emerged, the stems tend to grow quite quickly.

Some of the new varieties can also offer an added bonus of maple-like leaves that are very dark, almost maroon in color. This makes a spectacular background for the large flowers. 'Summer Storm' is just such a plant.

Full sun is required to turn the leaves dark. With less sun, they will stay green.

Planning ahead

As a garden center or nursery person, you may wonder why I am writing an article in April for a plant that is not going to be in bloom until July at the ear-



Hibiscus 'Summer Storm'
PHOTO BY DOUG BARRAGAR

liest. The reason is that now is the time to think about ordering hardy hibiscus plants, so that you will have a supply of them when they start flowering.

Imagine a mass display of these plants in full bloom in August and September. I do not think many customers could walk by without selecting one to take home.

Plus, customers are looking for low-maintenance plants. These certainly meet that requirement.

Another factor to consider is that you are probably introducing many customers to a new plant. I believe that once they have one or two, they will be back for more. They may even become obsessive as Doug is! ©

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A stacked arrangement of plants at Al's Garden & Home, Sherwood location, PHOTO BY DAWN HUMMEL

Small, tall and packed together

The trend toward smaller spaces drives intensive use of perennials and grasses

BY DAWN HUMMEL

THE MIDCENTURY RANCH HOUSE with the huge yard is a thing of the past. Replacing it is the tall house with a small yard — and that's changing the shape of home landscaping.

Everywhere across the country, homebuilders are squeezing as many new homes as they can onto shrinking parcels — but one need look no further than the rapidly urbanizing hills near the southwest Portland, Oregon suburbs of Beaverton and Tigard.

Massive Mountainside High School opened its doors last fall, taking the place of sprawling apple orchards. Former agricultural land that once grew acres of blueberries, hazelnuts and azaleas is now filled with condominiums, three-story skinny homes and McMansions. Spaced less than two feet apart, they often lack backyards, and their ever-shrinking front yards are often managed by a homeowners' association.

It's the same story in other cities. Whether driven by rule-making, land availability or other factors, developers are building homes taller and closer together, essentially changing the character of single-family neighborhoods and landscapes.

The typical approach to newly installed landscapes has been to leave spacing between shrubs, grasses and perennials. This results in expansive open areas where weeds can take hold. But for these densely packed homes, there's a more logical approach: layering plants and filling up small spaces.

Landscape designer Vanessa Gardner Nagel, Seasons Garden Design owner and author of *Understanding Garden Design: The*

Complete Handbook for Aspiring Designers, is based out of Vancouver, Washington. She has used the layering approach on several projects.

“By covering the ground with perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees in dense plantings, (you can) minimize weeds,” she said.

Low maintenance and no maintenance

There are several ways to plant densely. One approach is to adopt the relatively new concept of “plant communities.” The idea falls somewhere between traditional landscaping — using plants available in the trade, and natural landscaping — that makes use of prescribed natives for a specific area.

A plant community makes use of plants that naturally live in harmony, but arranges them more formally than one would see in nature. Nagel expects to see this concept gain traction, as botanists learn more about how plants work together.

According to Nagel, more and more homeowners prefer landscapes mixing natives and edibles with grasses and perennials. For example, she has used *Pycnanthemum* interspersed with broccoli and low groundcover sedge *Carex siderosticha* ‘Variegata’.



PATH

Designers and homeowners alike use grasses and perennials to remind them where bulbs are hiding. “*Carex* ‘Frosty Curls’ reminds me where my *Eucomis* ‘Sparkling Burgundy’ are situated,” Nagel said.

For her clients, *Bouteloua gracilis* ‘Blonde Ambition’ was wildly popular last year. She thinks *Molinias* and *Seslerias* are becoming more popular as low-growing groundcovers among perennials like hardy geraniums.

Containers for small spaces

In small yards, intensive container gardens are an appealing option. Dee Montpetit, outside sales manager at AW Pottery Northwest, recommends planting a single grass in a statement container. *Uncinia rubra* ‘Firedance’, Red Head Fountain Grass



(*Pennisetum alopecuroides*), or Japanese Forest Grass (*Hakonechloa macra* ‘Beni Kaze’) were all listed in the *Great Plant Picks Best Plants for Containers* poster released at the 2018 Northwest Flower and Garden Festival in Seattle.

Also attending the festival was Butchart Gardens, the famous botanical destination in Victoria, B.C., Canada.

They displayed stunning silver and chocolate combinations for containers or small landscape beds at its booth.

The garden’s landscape designer commingled Silver Leaf *Astelia chathamica* ‘Silver Shadow’, ruby-leaved evergreen shrub, *Lophomyrtus ralphii* ‘Kathryn’, *Helleborus x ballardiae* and *Heuchera d.* ‘Black Ice’.

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RAISED BED

Nagel's new favorite vessel combination includes *Helleborus*, *Mahonia* 'Soft Caress', *Heuchera*, *Viola*, *Euphorbia* 'Ascot Rainbow' and *Carex* 'Everillo'. She adores commingling *Hebe* 'Karo Golden Eck', blue fescue grass, velvety gray-green *Salvia pachphylla*, with a skirt of black mondo grass and *Epilobium latifolia* 'Calistoga'.

Bobbie Schwartz, is a perennial expert, designer, and author of the new book *Garden Renovation: Transform Your Yard Into the Garden of Your Dreams*. She loves blending *Koeleria glauca* 'Tiny Tot', a cultivar of blue hair grass known for short foliage with *Sedum* 'Angelina' and *Sempervivums* for drought-resistant container arrangements.

Hardiness matters

For a successful landscape in a small yard, every plant must earn its space, and that means testing and trialing is important for growers, designers and homeowners alike.

Phil Thornburg, the owner of design firm Winterbloom Inc. who has been featured in more than six regional and national magazines, tests plants for three years before using them in his clients' landscapes. "We only use plants that last up to 10 years in our clients' landscapes," he said.

Schwartz agreed. "I am very reluctant to plant anything I've haven't trialed," she said. "When and if I do, I always let the client know that I've read about it but have not trialed it."

Nagel also agreed. "As a designer and as an industry, it's important for us to trial new plants thoroughly before putting >>



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them on the market or in clients' gardens," she said.

Designers become frustrated when breeders and wholesale nurseries push new varieties out and expect them, their clients, and the consumers to be the guinea pigs.

The most challenging plants for designers are the latest *Heuchera* varieties. Gushing over new colors and textures, most designers trial and test named varieties, seeking cultivars that can survive rough-and-tumble living in multi-use gardens.

"The more exotic colors and leaf patterned varieties look good and perform well in pots and baskets, but cannot handle living in the ground," Thornburg said. "When planted during a mild winter, heucheras grow really big and push things out of their way. During a cold winter snap, they either disappear or end up severely damaged, resulting in our team needing to utilize several plants to replace one."

"Tissue culture cultivars are fine," Schwartz said. "With *Heuchera*, I tend to use only those cultivars that have *villosa* in them because they are stronger than other species."

Nagel and Thornburg agreed heucheras shine in containers. "I've had better success with heucherellas in the ground. If deer find them, they seem to like them as long as the leaves are young," Nagel said.

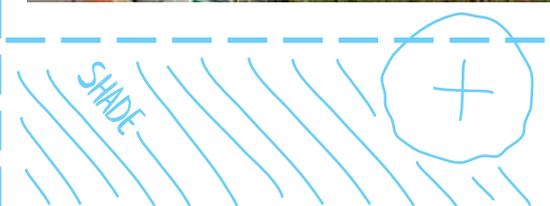
Putting it all together

Homeowner preferences vary, even when they have a small space to work with. Some of them just want to "plant stuff and let it grow," Thornburg said, while others are very specific.

"Today we are working with a client who wants 50 percent boxwoods," he said.

Designers, on the other hand, have favorites. And when it comes to small spaces, those preferences are carefully chosen. "Grasses and perennials are probably 75 percent of the plants in my designs," Schwartz said. "I spec 75 percent perennials and 25 percent grasses, always making sure that their cultural requirements are similar."

"All of my designs contain grasses and



Helictotrichon, *Perovskia*, *Pennisetum*, *Panicum* 'Northwind', *Ajanía pacificum*, and *Sedum* 'Angelina' grow in a xeriscape which was designed for a physically impaired client who did not want to install irrigation.

PHOTO BY BOBBIE SCHWARTZ



Plant and containers in front of Al's Garden & Home, Sherwood location. PHOTO BY DAWN HUMMEL

PATIO



perennials, occasionally as much as 80 percent of a design," Nagel said. "They are a very important ecological component."

Landscape designers work with contractors and plant brokers to find the best match for the project, client and design. "We do not push any particular kind of plant over others," Thornburg said. "We avoid plants which are invasive or have death wishes."

Blooming Nursery, a wholesale nursery in Cornelius, Oregon, sends hot sheets of plants that are looking great featuring weekly lists of what's available. Their sales reps visit independent garden centers to showcase plants that may be a novel idea for their buyers.

Blooming recently launched a new mobile app for landscape designers and brokers who can quickly build quotes on

demand. Grace Dinsdale, president of the nursery, invested in the software so their customers can scope out inventory and prices in real time.

Favorite combinations

Asking designers what their favorite perennial and grass combination is akin to asking a parent who their favorite child is.

Schwartz has a long list. For rain gardens, she leans towards *Eragrostis spectabilis*, *Sesleria autumnalis*, and *Lobelia cardinalis*. She saw this combination used in an Annapolis suburb rain garden where storm-water runoff is a huge problem. "Keeping it from draining into the Chesapeake Bay tributary on which this home is located was critical," she said.

For vertical gardens, Schwartz loves the combination of *Perovskia* and *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' at the St. Louis World's >>

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Small, tall and packed together

EverColor *Carex* 'Everilo' used in a spring container piece.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERCOLOR



Fair Pavilion. “It is designed the traditional way with blocks of color, Schwartz said. “If it were being designed today, the plants would weave in and out of each other.”

Schwartz loves the inflorescence of *Molinia caerulea* ‘Skyracer’ in front of *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* ‘Henry Eilers’. “Although the *Molinia* is taller when in bloom, the foliage is only two feet high,” she said. She plants it at the front front of borders and *Rudbeckia* in the back as it crests five feet tall — even before it blooms.

For a partially physically impaired client who did not want to install irrigation, Schwartz co-mingled *Helictotrichon*, *Perovskia*, *Pennisetum*, *Panicum* ‘Northwind’, *Ajania pacificum*, and *Sedum* ‘Angelina’ for the perfect xeriscape design.

The favorite grass used by all three designers were an even tie between black mondo grass *Ophiopogon* ‘Nigrescens’ and

EverColor *Carex* ‘Everilo’. It keeps its color even in heavy shade but can also take a fair amount of sun.

Thornburg relies on black mondo grass where a grassy texture is essential in the landscape. “It’s tough, likes wet winters and smiles at the cold,” he said.

Nagel agreed. “Black mondo grass is the James Bond plant-tuxedo refined,”

Thornburg is fond of any of the pseudo grasses, *Carex* in particular, mixed with euphorbias. *Carex testaceae* and *Euphorbia rigida* make a good combination. *Calamagrostis* ‘Karl Forester’ goes well in a combination with any variety of *Rudbeckia* or *Echinacea* as a surrounding sweep.

In the landscape, Schwartz loves mixing blue switch grass *Panicum virgatum* ‘Northwind’ with *Helenium* ‘Mardi Gras’, *Eupatorium fistulosum* or *E. purpureum*, and *Verbena bonariensis*. “This is a late

summer combination, although the *Verbena* will start blooming when it gets hot”, Schwartz said. “All varieties are tall, so I place them at the back of a border or as part of a stylized prairie/meadow design.”

Nagel prefers *Bouteloua* ‘Blonde Ambition’ and *Yucca filamentosa* ‘Bright Edge’ for sunny, dry sites. On the flipside, for sunny and moist sites, she combines *Molinia caerulea* ‘Variegata’, *Sanguisorba* ‘Korean Snow’ and *Iris siberica*. For moist and well-drained part shade combinations, she likes to feature *Hakonechloa macra* ‘Albo Striata’, *Brunnera m.* ‘Variegata’, *Helleborus Winter Jewels* ‘White Pearl’ and *Fuchsia* ‘Hawkshead’.

Designs of the future

As with any design, the regional and local conditions are important to consider. “It’s important to consider what works in the Pacific Northwest as opposed to Europe, East Coast, or Midwest prairie,” Nagel said. “What we see others doing doesn’t necessarily apply to us. Our approach should be an interpretation that suits our climate and growing conditions.”

Designers, breeders, wholesale and retail nurseries all need to apply their collective creativity with regards to homeowners and shrinking footprints. Intensive plantings mixing grasses, perennials, shrubs, edibles, mini-me trees and conifers are the wave of the garden future. Increased demands for xeriscape designs to avoid irrigation cost and awareness of the environment and rain will become more prevalent. ☺

Dawn Hummel is the owner of BeeDazzled Media LLC, a firm specializing in marketing for small B2B horticulture and floriculture customers. Hummel has more than 20 years of experience in retail garden centers and wholesale nurseries. She can be reached at dhummel@beedazzledmedia.com, 503-784-0691 or www.beedazzlemedia.com.

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LED lights provide light to a seasonally dark Pacific Northwest nursery owned by Iwasaki Bros. Inc. in Hillsboro, Oregon. PHOTO COURTESY OF GLOECKNER

An illuminating trend

LEDs are helping nurseries gain all kinds of new efficiencies

BY JON BELL

A MID-JANUARY MORNING in Hillsboro, Oregon: It's gray, it's drizzly and, most depressingly, it's dark.

Dark enough that 10:30 in the morning feels like dusk, which at this time of year comes far too early for most; dark enough that the region would be lucky to get even a fraction of the light required for optimal personal outlook or — for those in the nursery business — growing healthy, happy plants.

“You want something like 10 moles of light per day to produce a nice cutting,” said Kathleen Baughman, operations manager at Iwasaki Bros. Inc. wholesale greenhouses, using a standard industry term for measuring light. “Here, even on bright sunny days, you only get four moles of light. And on stormy days like today? We won't get to a mole. It's just really difficult. The rosemary and thyme, they just kind of sit here and pout.”

Of course, in this day and age — and for decades, really — the nursery industry has been able to harness the growing power of artificial light to help boost its pouty plants during the dark days of the year. High-pressure sodium (HPS) lights have been the go-to for decades, but light emitting diodes — LEDs for short — also started to emerge as far back as the 1980s.

More recently, however, LEDs have become even more innovative, offering consistent and specific lighting that is

helping growers produce high-quality plants, often over a shorter timespan and with greater efficiency and return on investment than ever before. Throw in generous incentives from the likes of the Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO) that help offset the costs of converting to LEDs, and the future's looking bright for Oregon nurseries.

“It's really exciting,” said Ben Verhoeven, president and general manager of Peoria Gardens, a wholesale bedding plant nursery in Albany, Oregon that recently illuminated about a quarter of its greenhouse propagation area with new LEDs. “It's something new that we're throwing into the mix that we are confident will keep us growing and improving and learning and, hopefully, keeping the doors open for a long, long time.”

Seeing the light

Verhoeven is a second-generation nursery pro whose father, Tom, founded Peoria Gardens in 1983. The nursery grows annuals, perennials and vegetables, as well as succulents, herbs and an assortment of premiums across about 10 acres of land, including five acres that are in greenhouses.

Years ago, Peoria Gardens used some HPS lights to kick its plants into gear, but for about the past 8–10 years, the nursery >>

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An illuminating trend



has relied on little more than natural light. For a nursery located in western Oregon, it's difficult to make that work.

"The old system could be summed up as such — however much light we could eke out of an Oregon wintertime, which is practically nothing," Verhoeven said. But, the longer a plant sits in the greenhouse growing, he added, the more expensive it is to the business.

Last summer, Verhoeven attended the industry's annual Cultivate conference in Ohio. There, he caught testimony from another Oregon nursery, Iwasaki Bros., about their experience with LED lighting. He was, so to speak, enlightened by what he heard.

"They are growing the same plants in the same market," Verhoeven said. "Hearing them talk about their results was pretty telling."

Iwasaki Bros. has about 19 acres of grow space at its nursery in Hillsboro, about 17 of which are in greenhouses. The nursery is one of the largest wholesale growers of bedding plants in the Northwest, producing most of its own plants through seeding and unrooted cuttings.

Baughman said the nursery used HPS lights for many years to ensure plants were getting the light they needed. But while HPS worked well for Iwasaki, Baughman said they were using a ton of energy, they put

out lots of heat, and they take time to get warmed up after they're turned on. HPS lights also tend to degrade quickly and not very uniformly.

"They just become highly variable over time," she said. "You think you'd be able to predict how much light you're getting, but you can't."

Iwasaki Bros. decided to convert large portions of its operations to LEDs about two years ago. The nursery worked in part with Ricardo Campos, director of sales for North America, Canada and Latin America for Fred C. Gloeckner & Company Inc., a certified partner with lighting company Philips. The nursery operation now has several different kinds of lighting in use and is testing various setups.

The results so far, according to Baughman, have been impressive. In some cases, she said, rooting time has been reduced by a third to a half; some unrooted cuttings that used to take six weeks to be ready to plant now take three. In addition to the quickness, Baughman said the nursery has also seen plants in cell trays that stay a little more compact under the LED lights, but they develop solid root systems. That works well for the automatic planting machine later on in production.

Growing under HPS lamps often produces plants that are very leafy up top but underdeveloped down below at the

roots. Baughman said that's not the case with LEDs, and it ends up saving labor because there's no need to apply plant growth regulator.

Similarly, Campos said that LEDs also help trim labor costs by producing more uniform crops.

"When you have uniformity of the crop because of the light, then you have less need to touch those plants," he said. Furthermore, consistency results in better yields and less waste in terms of seeds and cuttings.

Make the case

While nurseries that have converted to LEDs have generally enjoyed improvements in their plants and their energy usage, there is still a case to be made for nurseries to consider other options, including sticking

with HPS lights.

Plenty of research has been done to help determine just how beneficial LEDs can be compared to traditional HPS lights, but a clear-cut winner has yet to

"When you have uniformity of the crop because of the light, then you have less need to touch those plants,"

Ricardo Campos, Fred C. Gloeckner & Company Inc.

be determined. Much depends on the particular plants being grown, what kind of lights are currently in use — and what shape they're in — and other factors.

Eric Runkel, a professor and floriculture extension specialist in the horticulture department at Michigan State University, is one of the most

well-known researchers in the world of nursery lighting. His extensive studies go into great detail and help shed light on when converting to LEDs might make the most sense for a nursery. In one study

that best sums up the most prudent approach, Runkel and co-researcher Brian Pole note that it's wise to include a deep analysis of an operation's economics before making the switch.

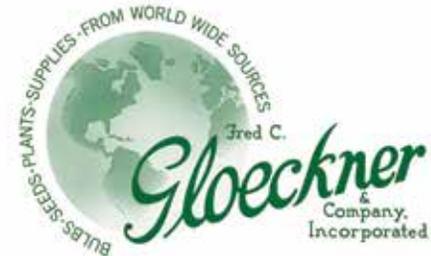
"Whether choosing LEDs or HPS lamps as your supplemental lighting source, consider factors in addition to plant growth," the two wrote in one study.

Incentive to switch

At Peoria Gardens, Verhoeven hopes to enjoy all the benefits that LEDs promise — including an energy 



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An illuminating trend

savings of up to 50 percent. In January, the nursery switched on its new LED lights which were installed in about a quarter of its propagation area for seeds and unrooted cuttings. If all goes well by the end of the summer, he plans to install even more.

Verhoeven said the first installation ran about \$35,000, or roughly \$10.40 per square foot. The system should cost about \$1,800 to run over two months. As the days get longer and more sun shines, Peoria will rely on the system less and less.

To help offset the cost of installation, Energy Trust of Oregon offers financial incentives to nurseries that meet certain requirements. Baughman said ETO had been a “fantastic partner” and provided some “substantial energy cred-

its” for Iwasaki Bros. to transition from HPS lights to LEDs.

Robinson Nursery, a wholesale bare root and container nursery in Amity, Oregon, swapped out many of its HPS lights for LEDs with the assistance of ETO, as well. But at Robinson, the LEDs weren’t for growing areas, but simply for its workspaces, according to Adam Tucker, maintenance supervisor for the nursery.

“We swapped out basically because the old High Pressure Sodium ballasts were just going bad,” he said. “We replaced 141 lights with high bay LED lights that range from 220 watts down to 185. They’re a lot brighter and you don’t get that blinking, flickering light.”

Tucker said the overall cost for the renovation was about \$70,500; ETO

chipped in close to \$18,000 as a cash incentive. Robinson Nursery expects to save about \$7,500 a year on its lighting energy costs, so it should recoup its investment in about eight years.

Campos said the efficiency offered by LEDs, both in electrical savings and in the way they help produce higher quality, more consistent plants, is what the lights are all about.

“Our emphasis has been on efficiency, because at the end of the day it’s all about net profits,” he said. “And as efficiency increases, the net profits increase.” ☺

Jon Bell is a freelance journalist who writes about everything from craft beer and real estate to the great outdoors. His website is www.jbellink.com. He can be reached at jontbell@comcast.net.



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H-2A for nurseries

The guest worker program offers a labor option, but has its challenges

OREGON NURSERIES are facing pressing labor shortages. Several have turned to mechanization, but the industry still needs human hands. In recent years, those hands have not been adequately available.

Many nurseries are considering the H-2A temporary agricultural worker visa program as a potential solution. H-2A is a federal guest worker program allowing agricultural businesses to hire foreign workers.

The H-2A program traces its origins to the 1953 Immigration and Nationality Act. The program allows United States agricultural employers to bring foreign nationals to the country to fill seasonal and temporary agricultural jobs that the employers are not able to fill with U.S. workers. The duration of an H-2A visa is limited to one year, with the possibility of extending it to a maximum of three years.

The program is administered through the U.S. Department of Labor and the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In addition, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries and the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division participate in oversight of the program at the state level.

H-2A is very complex and full of potential traps for the unwary. This is true both of the application process and of program compliance once guest workers are hired.

Qualifying for the program

The H-2A program has several threshold requirements:

- First, there must be a shortage of sufficient workers who are able, willing and qualified, and who are available at the time and place needed to perform the labor services.
- Second, the needed labor must

be agricultural in nature. Agricultural labor or services include activities such as planting, raising, cultivating, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodity.

- Third, the work must be full-time, which means at least 35 hours per week.
- Fourth, the need for the work must be seasonal or temporary in nature.
- Lastly, employment of foreign workers may not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers performing similar work.

Employers wishing to use H-2A must go through a rigorous application process. This process is time-consuming and unpredictable. Under the best-case scenario, employers need to start the process no fewer than 60 days before workers are needed.



Agricultural businesses have successfully used H-2A, but success under the program requires customized advice and training.

To begin, employers must obtain state and federal certifications demonstrating that the work qualifies for the H-2A program and that U.S. workers are not available. Next, employers must file an I-129 petition with USCIS. If the petition is approved, foreign workers from eligible countries must apply for an H-2A visa.



STEVE SHROPSHIRE

Steve Shropshire serves as legal counsel to the OAN and is a member of the Jordan Ramis PC Dirt Law® team, representing the nursery industry and other agri-businesses as outside general counsel and on water rights, real estate, and land use matters.

He can be reached at 503-598-5583 or steve.shropshire@jordanramis.com.

Once you have the workers

The H-2A program imposes many compliance requirements on employers. Some of the most important are discussed here.

Wages. In Oregon, the hourly rate paid to H-2A workers must be equal to, or better than, the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). For 2018, the U.S. Department of Labor set the AEWR in Oregon and in Washington at \$14.12 per hour.

Housing. Employers must provide housing at no cost to H-2A workers and to domestic workers in corresponding employment who are not reasonably able to return to their residence within the same day.

Meals. Employers must either provide employees with three meals per day or furnish free and convenient cooking and kitchen facilities where workers can prepare their own meals.

Transportation. Employers must reimburse workers for reasonable transportation and subsistence costs incurred to travel to and from the work location from their country or place of origin. In addition, employers must provide free daily transportation between the workers' living quarters and the employer's worksite.

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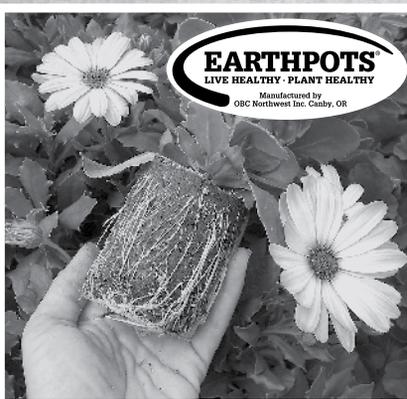
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domestic workers in corresponding employment positions no worse than the foreign workers. This includes the hiring process, wages, hours, transportation, and housing.

The challenges for Oregon growers

Oregon agricultural businesses face a number of H-2A-related challenges. Housing availability is foremost. Oregon's land use laws restrict residential construction on property zoned for exclusive farm use (EFU), making it difficult to provide on-site housing for H-2A workers.

The high, mandated base wage is also an issue. Oregon has the second highest AEW wage rate in the nation, making it difficult to compete with out-of-state nurseries.

Compliance with H-2A implementation requirements is also a challenge. The program imposes many requirements related to recruiting, payroll, housing, and reporting. The federal penalties for non-compliance range from approximately \$1,700 to \$17,000 per violation.

Finally, it is important to understand that nurseries are considered co-employers under state and federal law when working with labor contractors. This means that a nursery is liable for full compliance with all aspects of the H-2A program by labor contractors.

Agricultural businesses have successfully used H-2A, but success under the program requires customized advice and training. Nurseries that adequately prepare may find the program to be a viable solution to their labor shortage problem. ☺

Steve Shropshire serves as legal counsel to the Oregon Association of Nurseries and is a member of the Jordan Ramis PC Dirt Law® team, representing the nursery industry and other agri-businesses as outside general counsel and on water rights, real estate and land use matters. He can be reached at 503-598-5583 or steve.shropshire@jordanramis.com.

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Please send your resume and cover letter to DiggerJobs@oan.org with **Blind Box A** in the subject line.

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EMPLOYMENT

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4. Basic understanding of economic thresholds for application justification.
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6. Oregon Certified Pesticide Applicator License (or ability to acquire)
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- Ability to operate and maintain a variety of farm equipment.
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- Ability to train, supervise, evaluate and coordinate the activities of multiple production crews.
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GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Series content is coordinated by Dr. Jay Pscheidt, professor of botany and plant pathology at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon.



An ongoing series provided by Oregon State University in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture and in partnership with the Oregon Association of Nurseries

Flora at your fingertips

Revised, rebranded OregonFlora has new and expanded plant information

BY LINDA HARDISON

LOOKING FOR AN online resource with information about the native and naturalized plants of Oregon? The Oregon Flora Project's newly expanded website, OregonFlora (<http://oregonflora.org>), will meet the need.

Rich with details about more than 4,670 unique species of ferns, conifers, herbs, grasses, and trees, it presents information that is valuable to horticulturalists, gardeners and plant lovers of all kinds. The launch of the OregonFlora web-

site also corresponds with a name change of the Oregon Flora Project to simply "OregonFlora." Why change? The decision to retire the "project" part of our name reflects the broader scope of work in which we are now engaging.

The core information that is used to write the *Flora* — each plant's characteristics, where it grows, and what it is related to — is relevant to a diverse audience. OregonFlora is creating new partnerships to make this information broadly accessible and useful, especially to those in the nursery and landscaping industry.

Plants that are now used in the horticultural trade had their origins in the wild. Knowing a plant's characteristics outside of cultivation — its form, flowering characteristics, and preferred habitats — can provide insights into ways a species can be successfully integrated into a planted environment.

A resource on plant life

Floras have long served as a primary source of information about the plant life of a given region. Ranging in size and scope from a pamphlet for a neighborhood to a multi-volume work describing a continent, floras itemize all the species that occur in the defined area, describe each in detail, and provide a means to identify them. Importantly, a flora also provides the context in which a plant species is found through descriptions of its habitat, ecology, and distribution.

Adapting a paper-bound flora

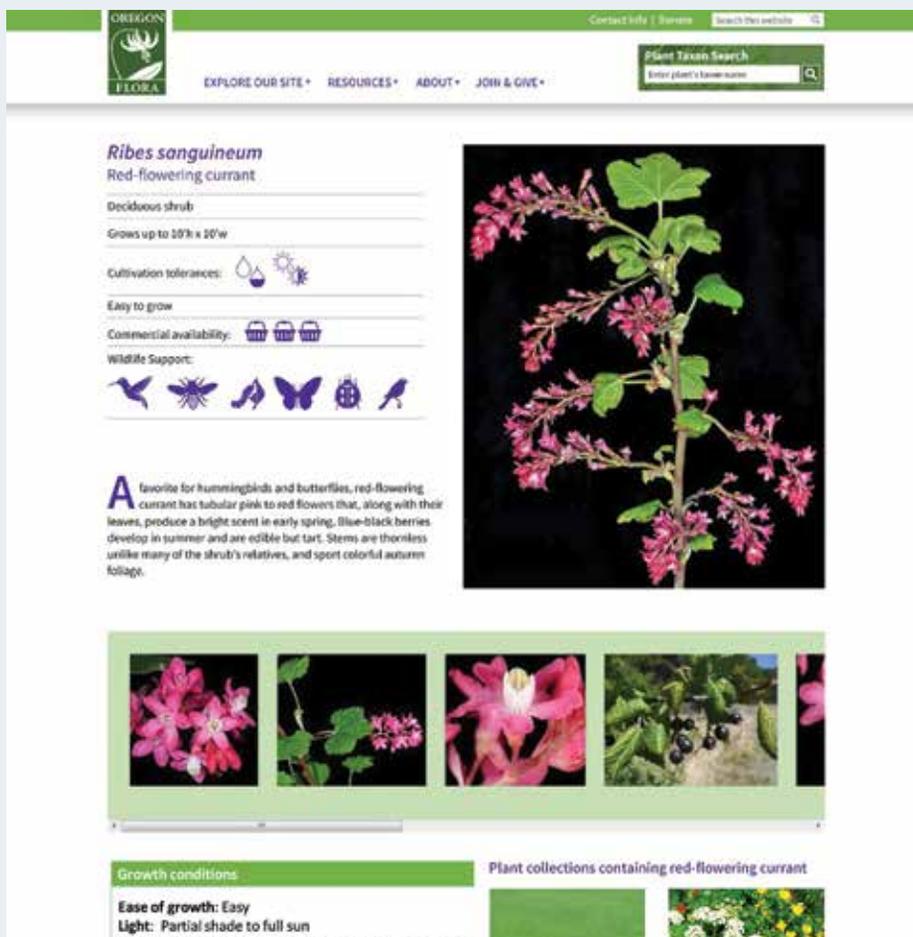


Figure 1. Each garden species has a profile page with photos and cultivation details.

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Table 1: Categories within the Gardening with Natives search tool

Characteristics	Uses	Wildlife Support	Growing Conditions
Plant form	Landscape uses	Pollinators	Ease of growth
Annual/Perennial	Other cultivation preferences	Pest-eating insects	Sunlight tolerance
Evergreen/Deciduous		Butterfly nectar source	Water preference in summer
Height/Width		Butterfly larval host	Spreads vigorously
Bloom months		Hummingbirds	Propagation methods
Flower color		Birds and small mammals	Natural habitat

A species profile page from the OregonFlora Gardening with Natives portal (<http://oregonflora.org>). A page exists for each of the ~200 native garden species featured.

into an online resource involves much more than posting pages from a book. OregonFlora has carefully parsed the myriad details of Volume 1 of the *Flora of Oregon* into fields and tables of a data-

base. As the content of the remaining two *Flora* volumes is being written, it is being prepared similarly.

Hundreds of thousands of map coordinates that document plant occurrences,

more than 50,000 photographs, and data for specialized topics are being added to the database for the OregonFlora website.

The OregonFlora website uses a Symbiota platform — software



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Flora at your fingertips

designed for presenting and sharing biodiversity data. One tool that demonstrates the powerful data-sharing features of the site is the GIS-based mapping module. Plant occurrence records from observations and herbarium specimen labels are mapped onto a variety of base maps.

Users can upload their own datasets — for example, localities of pollinators — to study the relationship of their subject with plant distributions. The shapefile of an area of interest can also be uploaded to determine the plant diversity within the defined space.

Gardening with natives

A new feature on the OregonFlora website is the Gardening with Natives portal. In collaboration with Metro and the ACE NW Native Plant Database Working Group, we have developed educational and garden planning tools that incorporates almost 200 native plant species.

A search tool allows users to choose plant features of interest. There are 20 characteristics for selection that describe physical features of the plant, cultivation conditions, uses in the garden, wildlife support, and propagation (Table 1).

The commercial availability of a native species is indicated with a market basket icon: three baskets indicate it is commonly found in stores, whereas one basket indicates the species is carried by a few vendors. Website users can also select a business as one of their search parameters.

Linking the commercial availability of native plant species with educational and garden planning tools is a powerful marketing tool for retail and wholesale vendors. It also provides customers with needed information about the accessibility of materials for their gardens and landscaping projects.

A second way to explore OregonFlora's gardening resources is by browsing collections of plants suitable for unique garden and landscape types, such as meadowscapes, woodland gardens, pollinator gardens and others. Images of the plants in a collection can be viewed in a slide show.

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This should be our month

What is the true meaning of Earth Day? And what about Arbor Day? The answers really depend on one's personal perspective.

I think of parades with causes on big poster boards, and a mix of environmental advocates, students, and parents with baby strollers. I asked my daughter and her two friends, all sophomores in high school, what they think of Arbor Day and Earth Day. Let's just say their responses were interesting.

One girl said that nobody really knows when the earth was born, so she guessed having an Earth Day (akin to a birthday) was cool. Maybe she would make up a card or something. The second girl asked whether kids get the day off from school — I responded no. She curtly replied that it is a not a real thing then.

Now to my Carolyn Rose: She said Earth Day is when we celebrate our blue planet and hippies tell us how we are doing it wrong. Oh boy! Instantly, I could feel my wife's cold, hard judgmental stare — directed not at my daughter, but at me.

What I told them is that the nursery industry is a solution for the problems Earth Day and Arbor Day are trying to bring to attention. We grow environmentally beneficial plants and trees.

My daughter then asked: Why don't we see nurseries through the country owning it? Why don't we dominate the month of April? Good question, kid. But first, some background.

Arbor Day

National Arbor Day is traditionally celebrated the last Friday in April (April 27 this year), but various states observe the tree-planting day based on climate and weather — it has to be warm enough to plant trees. The good news? This day is about as “pro tree” as you can get.

J. Sterling Morton founded Arbor Day 146 years ago with the simple idea of setting aside a day for tree planting. This effort spans communities, schools and parks and public gathering spaces.

Earth Day

First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day

is always April 22. Events are held in more than 193 countries to promote environmental protection.

Gaylord Nelson was the father of the Earth Day movement and served as governor and United States senator from Wisconsin. Sen. Nelson passed away in 2005, but he is seen as a force in pushing for environmental activism even to this day. He was instrumental in the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Nurseries can make a difference

In a sea of concrete and steel, New York City set a goal of planting one million trees. It was one of the largest urban canopy efforts ever undertaken. Some 11 years later, that wise investment in the community sets an example for cities and states all over the country to follow. The nursery industry is poised to provide trees for this purpose.

Improving a city's urban tree canopy can have numerous benefits, including reducing summer peak temperatures and air pollution, enhancing property values, providing wildlife habitat, providing aesthetic benefits, and improving social ties among neighbors. A robust tree canopy can also attract businesses and residents.

Scientists now have the ability to qualify and quantify the benefits of urban tree canopy, using the Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Assessment suite of tools.

The benefits of planting trees and shrubs are known and well promoted, not only through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but within our own industry.

The Plant Something campaign — an organic marketing and education effort by 23 states and the Canadian Nursery Association — is now six years old. We're sharing what we know, and what we know is pretty simple. Plants purify our water and nourish ecosystems. They save energy for businesses and homes. They encourage good health. And no matter whether the plants are inside or outside, they reduce air pollution. The OAN created its own campaign to promote these benefits. It's called Plants Make Life Better and you can find the materials at www.plantsomethingoregon.com/pmlb.

Being the solution

There are opportunities for the nursery and greenhouse industry to be a source of



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

mitigation for greenhouse gas emissions. A warmer climate creates challenges to growing conditions in our state and opens doorways to pest and diseases never contemplated. This threat has also given nursery growers the opportunity to show the way and help solve the challenges that we as a society face.

A few years ago, the OAN created the Climate Friendly Nurseries Project (CFNP), which was the first of its kind in the nation. This project partnered with nurseries to help them measure and reduce energy, resource use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while achieving greater economic efficiency and profitability.

At the conclusion of the three-year project, participating nurseries reduced their GHG emissions by an average of 20 percent. *Best Management Practices for Climate-Friendly Nurseries*, a guide developed through the project, provided recommendations and case studies and identified funding sources and technical resources to assist with the energy and resource-efficiency upgrades.

Answering the call

So as we celebrate in the month of April, Earth Day is an opportunity to leverage green goods to promote an environmental ethic and make a difference in our home, neighborhood and state. It is also an opportunity for me to take three high school sophomore girls out and plant a tree and introduce them to Arbor Day.

Here is where the nursery industry can help simply by doing what it does best — growing plants and trees. Over the next couple of years, let's make April our month to shine! ☺

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