

Digger

JUNE 2018

LOOK INSIDE



Simplantico

Plant communities are an emerging concept in landscape design

Page 15

Olive tree trials for cold hardiness

Page 13

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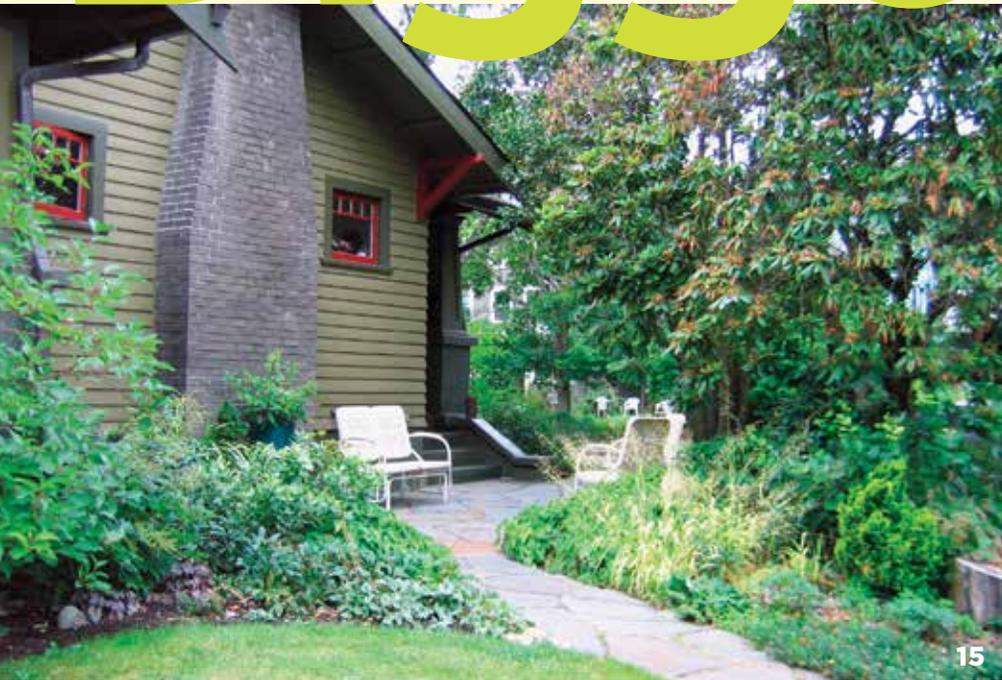


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June 2018 Vol. 62 No. 6

Digger



15 Natural by design

The concept of designed plant communities combines the synergy of nature with the order and beauty of horticulture.

13 Are olives viable for Oregon?

Mike Darcy remarks on the arrival of olive trees to the home gardeners's marketplace and touches on its viability as an Oregon crop product.

SPECIAL
INSERT

Farwest Show Planning Guide

Plan your route through this year's line up of Farwest Show seminars!

25 The emerald ash borers are coming (eventually)!

Oregon urban forest managers take steps to prepare for the an impending harmful insect invasion.

COLUMNS

- 7 President's Message
- 13 What I'm Hearing
- 30 Director's Desk

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 Calendar
- 9 Northwest News
- 21 Classifieds
- 22 Advertisers Index
- 24 Subscription Info
- 25 Growing Knowledge
- 29 Digger Marketplace

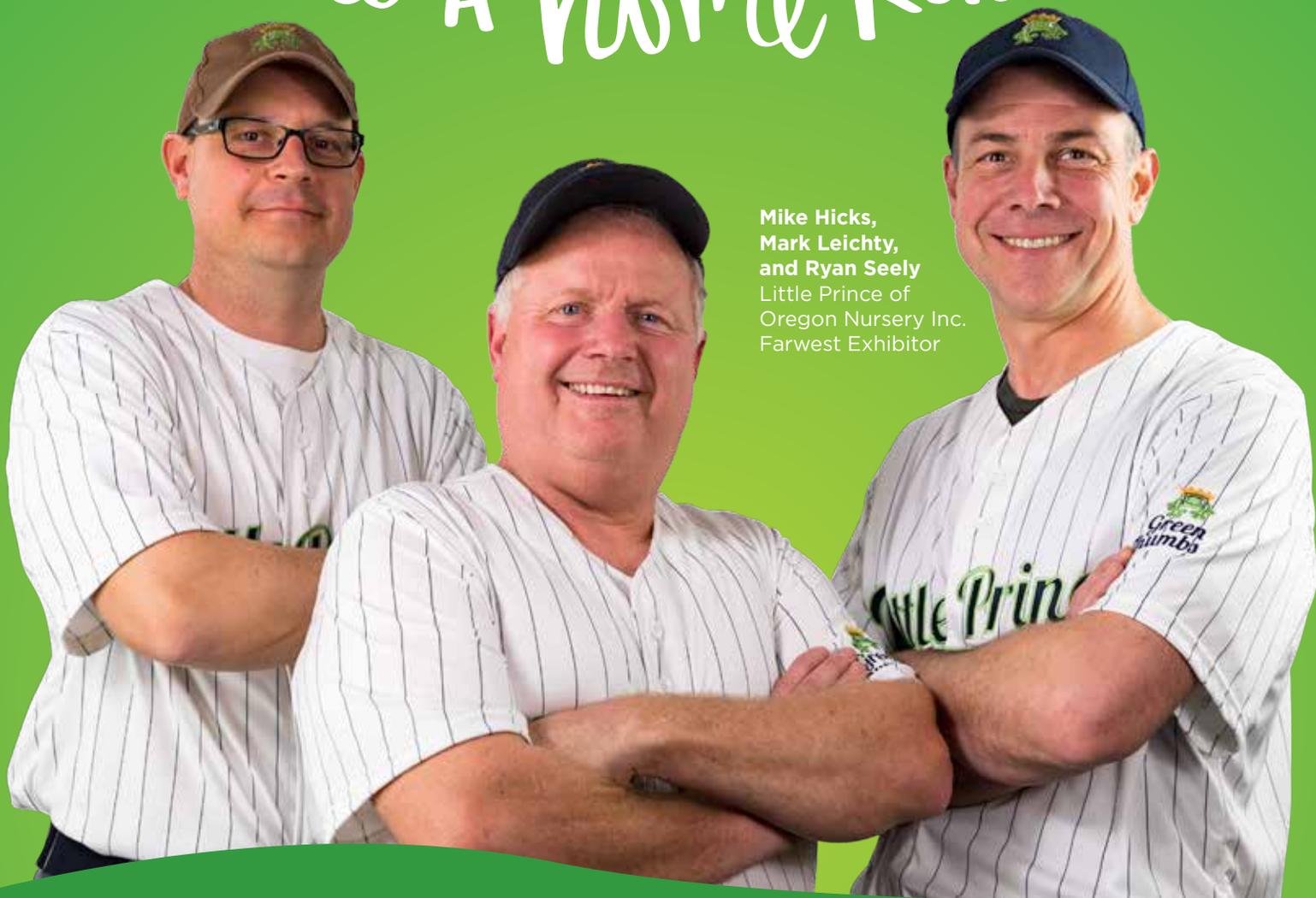
On the cover: *Pachysandra terminalis* and *Thymus citriodorus* make for great Pacific Northwest ground covers. **On this page:** Amy Whitworth designed for a garden for low-maintenance combinations (left). PHOTO BY AMY WHITWORTH Olive trees are monitored for cold hardiness (right). PHOTO BY VICTORIA BINNING



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Fun and business

It seems spring has just started,
but it's coming to an end already.
Summer's just about here.

It's a welcome transition. It means we can regroup after spring's "harvest havoc" and start to focus on production and future planning.

Because it is summer, hopefully there are plans that include something fun and relaxing. And hopefully, there are also plans to get out and see something or forge new relationships that could impact the business for the better. But what if there was a place where you could do both? There is, and it's called the Farwest Show.

We here in Oregon have things covered when it comes to fun, relaxation, new ideas, and good folks to bond with. This very issue contains a Farwest Planning Guide to help you plan your trip. A few highlights for me include:

Equipment Day. This event is held every three years. Its focus is on truly innovative ideas and technologies. What's exceptional is that it's not tucked away in a building full of video demonstrations — it's out in the open with real live action.

Happy Hour. Who doesn't like happy hour? It's right beside the show floor, right at the end of Day 1. Perfect.

Pub Crawl. This year's planned stops include a relaxing patio and the opportunity to let your competitive juices flow with a game of pub-style ping-pong. Laughing at, or with, competitive friends is also an option.

Keynote speaker Ali Noorani. You can bet we're gonna tackle the heavy-hitting stuff, too. The executive director of the National Immigration Forum is just one of several awesome speakers who will share insights on topics that shape our industry.

All this, plus much more, can be found in the Farwest Show Planning Guide. The sheer abundance of options will quell any doubts or excuses not to go to the show. But I (a pretty proud Oregonian) would like to offer some personal recommendations that are great places to visit for out-of-towners, or to revisit or take customers if you are local:

The Oregon Coast. Being about an hour from the bulk of Oregon nurseries, I even tend to take this for granted. It's incredibly jagged and woodsy, which is probably why no one calls it "the beach" even though there are lots of sandy stretches. Essentially it is 300-plus miles of California's Big Sur, but with dunes, hikes, fishing and better seafood. Climb Neahkahnie Mountain, near Manzanita, to enjoy postcard-worthy views. Or grab a microbrew in Pacific City and watch the surfers until sunset, when folks start roasting marshmallows in a campfire right on the sand.

The Cascades. An hour's drive away from Oregon Nursery Country, or less, are the Cascade Mountains. They are typically in plain sight every day during August. Enjoy them from afar or go up for an up-close look and a giant, mostly tree-covered playground. Hikes, bikes, horses, and boats. Rivers, lakes, and waterfalls. It's hard to pick favorites, but close-in Silver Falls State Park is breathtaking, even after the 1,000 times I have run there! A little further out of the way, the Three Sisters Wilderness is grand and awe inspiring, with its snow-covered peaks and pristine alpine meadows.

The Willamette Valley. By August it's admittedly a bit dry and dusty by our own standards, which means it's still rather lush when compared to the rest of the West. If you get off the beaten path a ways, it is one incredible place. It's covered in green forests and some of the most productive farmland in the world. A unique climate means unique crops: there's wine country in the hills, hazelnuts and berries within arms' reach at all times, specialty seed crops only grown here, and of course our top-quality nurseries. So tour a nursery, enjoy fresh farm produce, and sip a locally grown Pinot Noir while you call it a day.

Have a nice summer! ☺



Josh Zielinski
OAN PRESIDENT



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*.

JUNE 1

OLCA/ASLA GOLF TOURNAMENT

Play 18 holes of golf with members of the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association and American Society of Landscape Architects. The tournament will take place at Langdon Farms Golf Club in Aurora, Oregon. For more information and to register, log on to www.oregonlandscape.org.

JUNE 7

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY CONFERENCE

The theme of the 2018 Annual Urban and Community Forestry Conference is "The Dollars and Sense of Urban Trees: Are You Getting the Biggest Bang for Your Buck?" Arborists, tree managers, nursery professionals and municipal government officials are invited to learn the best practices for optimizing their return on investment in tree selection, plant codes, and care cost savings. Please visit www.oregoncommunitytrees.org for details.

JUNE 13

MEMBERSHIP DAY

The Oregon Association of Nurseries offers a strong portfolio of benefits to help nursery growers and green industry professionals improve their bottom line. Join us from 3-5 p.m. on Membership Day to get information and answers about OAN-endorsed health coverage, our bulk fuel program, discounted office supplies, free legal advice for tricky situations, the Farwest Show, the *Nursery Guide* and much more! Attendees will meet other members and OAN staff, make valuable connections, and most of all, learn how to max out your membership value. Got to oan.org/events to RSVP.

JUNE 22 | JULY 20

TRUCKS TO SUMMER TRADE SHOWS

June 22 is the deadline to reserve space on one of the trucks OAN is coordinating to Cultivate'18. July 20 is the deadline for IGC Chicago. Space is limited and reservations are on a first-come, first-serve basis. Trucks may be subject to cancellation if participation minimums are not met. To make a reservation, contact Kelsey Hood, OAN event and program coordinator at khoo@oan.org or call 503-582-2010.

JUNE 25

DIGGER: FARWEST EDITION

Display ad reservations for the 2018 Farwest Edition of *Digger* magazine are due. More than 11,500 copies of this extra-large edition will be distributed to *Digger* subscribers, as well as exhibitors and attendees of the Farwest Show in August. To reserve your space, contact Blair Thompson, OAN advertising manager, at 503-682-5089 or email ads@oan.org.



JUNE 7

DUFFERS CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT

The 29th annual tourney 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. For more information and to register, log on to www.oan.org/events.

JUNE 27-29

NICH CONFERENCE

The National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture (NICH) will hold its annual conference June 27-29 at the Hilton Garden Inn Atlanta Airport North, Atlanta, Georgia. The group represents a nationwide effort of academia, government and industry associations to promote a consistent message of the value of horticulture. The conference will include dinner and an evening at the Atlanta Botanical Garden on the first evening, followed by an agenda exploring national viewpoints on consumer horticulture on the second day. An executive committee meeting is scheduled for the last day. Cost is \$130 to attend. The deadline to register is April 30. Visit <https://consumerhort.org/conference> for more details.

JULY 14-18

CULTIVATE'18

Presented by AmericanHort, Cultivate offers educational and networking opportunities and exhibits featuring technology, new products,

services and plant varieties. Cultivate'18 will take place at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. For more information, visit www.cultivate18.org.

JULY 31-AUGUST 4

IPPS PACIFIC RIM CONFERENCE

The International Plant Propagators Society (IPPS) is holding it's annual conference in Kona Hawaii, enabling guests to network with horticulturists from around the world. Come and tour plant propagation facilities, farms and gardens with others with others in a tropical paradise. Go to wna.ipps.org for more details.

AUGUST 22-24

FARWEST SHOW

The biggest green industry trade show in the West will take place at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Portland, Oregon. The show, produced by the OAN, attracts exhibitors and attendees from across the country and the world. For more information, log on to www.farwestshow.com.



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.

BOWER & BRANCH



Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas joins Bower & Branch network

Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc., Woodburn, Oregon, announced that it has become a member of the Bower & Branch grower network, with **Tom Fessler**, president of Woodburn Nursery, set to serve on the organization's board of directors.

Bower & Branch is an e-commerce site populated with products from independent growers and garden retailers from the Midwest to the northeastern United States. Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas is the first West Coast grower to join in the network, which streamlines the group's ability to ship products nationwide.

Optimistic about the future of the horticulture industry, Fessler invested in the online consumer-driven business model as part of the strategic mindset that follows a grower's products to the end user. "[Future growers] need to understand plant-handling automation, the impact of changing weather, how to create an alternative to commoditization, pricing pressure, a go-to market strategy, labor-shortages and the expense of connecting with an ever-changing home consumer," he said. "When we looked at it that way, it was clear that the right decision was the one where we partnered with Bower & Branch." Visit www.bowerandbranch.com for more information.



An untreated Sudden Oak Death plot shows tanoak mortality from NA1 strain of *Phytophthora ramorum* in an area north of Brookings, Oregon. PHOTO BY BLAKEY LOCKMAN, USDA FOREST SERVICE

MERKLEY ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO COMBAT SUDDEN OAK DEATH

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) announced that more than \$466,000 in federal funding has been distributed for projects aimed at ending the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen that causes sudden oak death. Funding recipients include organizations and agencies in Oregon. They are targeting the EU-1 strain of the pathogen, which was identified in Curry County in 2015 and can infect Douglas firs. That's in addition to the other trees the NA-1 strain, present in Curry County since 2001, can infect.

Merkley co-chairs a Sudden Oak Death Task Force with State Rep. David Brock Smith (R-Port Orford). The task force also secured \$1.7 million in funding from the state of Oregon. Merkley also serves as the top Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

"Partners from broad swath of governments and industries have been working together to address this crisis, and these resources provide urgently needed support to these efforts,"

Merkley said. "The spread of Sudden Oak Death and EU-1 could have devastating impacts on our local economy and environment. I will continue to use my seat on the appropriations committee to fight for the resources our task force needs to work collaboratively on more and better solutions to fight these pathogens."

Although the areas in southwest Oregon affected by the spread of *P. ramorum* in the wild are located far from the bulk of Oregon nursery production areas in the Willamette Valley, the OAN has been deeply involved in this critical issue from the beginning.

"The OAN's Government Relations team has strongly supported efforts to stop the pathogen's spread, keep Oregon's plant material clean and maintain market access for Oregon growers," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. "We greatly appreciate Sen. Merkley's partnership, and that of Rep. Smith and the task force, to stay on top of this issue to prevent greater economic damage to Oregon nurseries, agriculture and forestry."

Read more from the *Coos Bay World* newspaper at tinyurl.com/yc53qsy0.



AL'S GARDEN & HOME MARKS SEVEN DECADES IN BUSINESS

On May 2, Al's Garden & Home celebrated its 70th anniversary as a family-owned business. Over that time, the company has grown from a single fruit stand in Woodburn to a garden center and grower with four retail locations.

Jack Bigej serves as chief executive officer of the company and is joined in the management of the business by three of his children: Chief of Operations **Mark Bigej**, Chief Financial Officer **Darcy Ruef** and Chief of Growing Operations **Dorothy Russo**.

The company added its fourth retail location in Wilsonville last year; the others are in Woodburn, Gresham and Sherwood. The company changed its name to Al's Garden & Home last year to reflect the breadth of lifestyle products now offered in the four stores.

VANCOUVER COMPANY LAUNCHES NEW K-POTS CONTAINER LINE

KASO Plastics of Vancouver, Washington has introduced K-Pots, a new line of injection-molded nursery containers in 1-, 5- and 10-gallon sizes

The company's containers are manufactured locally in Vancouver. KASO has longstanding expertise in engineering and manufacturing, and as a result can create custom containers for customers in addition to the stock sizes. Initial offerings are aimed at agricultural businesses in Oregon and Washington so that shipping costs are kept low. The containers can be purchased economically and with low minimum orders as small as one pallet.

For more information, log on to www.k-pots.com or contact Steve Miller at steve@k-pots.com or 360-833-3815.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT DETERS NEW AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES

Of the 700 people surveyed by the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), most responded that they were delaying their pursuit toward a career in agriculture because of their burdensome student debt load. According to a report by *Capital Press* (Salem, Oregon), expensive loan payments are forcing agriculture-focused graduates into off-farm jobs. It is too difficult to get assets in line and to be approved for further business-related borrowing to operate a business after graduating.

NYFC staff members have written a proposal to convince policy makers that farming is a public service that suffers from too many vacancies, and should be considered eligible for government public service loan forgiveness programs. Read the full article at tinyurl.com/yasrpwjn.







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WILBUR-ELLIS AGRIBUSINESS PRESIDENT TRANSITIONS TO BOARD CHAIR OF CAVALLO VENTURES

Dan Vradenburg announced on May 2 his decision to leave the role of president of the Wilbur-Ellis Agribusiness division in order to take a position as the board chair of Cavallo Ventures, the company's venture capital firm

Vradenburg has been with Wilbur-Ellis — a leading international marketer and distributor of agricultural products, animal feed and specialty chemicals and ingredients — for more than 36 years, where he held the role of president for 19 years. The Agribusiness Division tripped in sized under his leadership, with its success strongly linked to his customer service principle that the Wilbur-Ellis will succeed when their customers succeed.

Wilbur-Ellis expects to name a new president by the end of 2018. For more information, visit www.wilburellis.com.



In Memoriam DAVID ETCHEPARE

A memorial and celebration of life for longtime retail nurseryman David Etchepare will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, July 8, 2018, at the Washington Park International Rose Test Garden Amphitheater in Portland, Oregon. He passed away November 2, 2017.

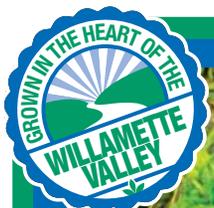


David Clay Etchepare was born on July 8, 1958 in Colusa, California. He grew up farming and ranching in Maxwell, California, and was part of a state champi-

onship agronomy team for Future Farmers of America. He attended Butte College in Oroville, California, where he received a degree in agriculture. He earned lifetime status as a Certified Nursery Professional in both Oregon and California.

In 1980 he went to work for Dennis' 7 Dees, serving as manager of the Powell Boulevard location for 27 years. From 1995 to 2012, he had a gardening show on the radio and was known as The Garden Doctor. He served as an expert gardening contributor for television, print and the Internet, and arranged for plants for the local television and film industry.

Over the years, he served as president of the OAN Retail Chapter and on the OAN state board, along with participating in the Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee and on Oregon's Nursery Certification Board. >>



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Dave is survived by his wife Elizabeth; sons David and Alexander; mother Lois and sister Laurel.



In Memoriam
SEAN DOONEY

Services have been held for Sean Dooney, president of OAN members Leonard Adams Insurance. He died May 6, 2018 as the result of a boating accident in Grays Harbor, Washington. He was 56.



Sean was the grandson of Leonard Adams, who founded the company in 1933. Sean's father, Brian Dooney, went to work at the agency in 1965 and eventually became CEO, a role in which he still serves. Sean remembered his father taking him to the office from a very young age. "Whether it was for pushing a broom, moving furniture, painting offices, working on files or landscaping the grounds, the office has always been a part of my life," Sean stated in his company biography.

Sean was born October 13, 1961 and graduated from Central Catholic High School in Portland, Oregon, then earned a bachelor's degree in business from Oregon State University. After graduation, Sean followed his father and grandfather into the insurance industry, going to work for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1984. He joined Leonard Adams as an agent in 1989, eventually rising to the role of president.

Sean was preceded in death by his brother, Dan. He is survived by his parents Brian and Margaret; wife Sheri; children Brian, Sean, Meagan, Danny, Erin, Ronan and Molly; siblings Maryann, Kathryn Niedermeyer (Jon), Tim (Dena) and Michael; 10 nieces and nephews; and numerous cousins, aunts and uncles.

Sean's son Brian is carrying on the family tradition; he became a fourth-generation agent with Leonard Adams Insurance in 2016. ©

Are olives viable for Oregon?

With a column title like *What I'm Hearing*, I am always listening for new ideas, new plants, trends in garden centers and new plant trials. Recently in a conversation with Ann Murphy, a communications and marketing manager at Oregon State University (OSU), I learned that the OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, Oregon was conducting cold hardiness trials on olive trees.

This topic was of particular interest to me, as I have had experience in my own garden with this issue.

In recent years, I have noticed an increased interest in olive trees for home gardens. I don't remember seeing olive trees for

sale in a local garden center until just a few years ago. Today, the selection is still limited, but they are available, even though their performance in our area is not fully known.

The variety 'Arbequina' has been the most readily available and is said to be winter hardy, but perhaps there are other varieties than might be even more so. Oregon currently has 15 commercial olive growers with Red Ridge Farms in Dayton, Oregon being the largest.

Viable for Oregon?

Could olives become a viable commercial crop in Oregon? That is what scientists at the OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center hope to discover.

I talked with Javier Fernandez-Salvador, director for this olive tree trial project. While the focus for these trials is for the commercial grower to determine whether olives can become a viable crop in Oregon, much of this information can also be applied to the home garden. This particular trial consists of more than 90 different cultivars that will be planted in an open field with no protection from the elements.

There will be supplemental irrigation to get the plants established. Since olive trees are sensitive to cold temperatures, it is believed that planting them early in the spring will offer the trees a better chance of survival. Researchers expect the trees will have the opportunity to become



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.

somewhat established in the ground before winter.

Heather Stoven, OSU Extension horticulturist for Yamhill County, has found the olive trees difficult to propagate. Heather is experimenting with various rooting hormones, the timing of taking the cuttings, and the medium to use. Olives are not grafted, but are grown on their own roots.

Neil Bell, OSU community horticulturist for Marion and Polk County, is working on the cold tolerance aspect. Some cultivars will tolerate the low temperatures much better than others. The issue of cold tolerance has been the limiting factor to olives becoming a commercial crop in Oregon.

For home gardeners, olive trees should be planted in a location with full sun. A slightly sloping area would probably be optimal. Gardens tend to have microclimates, and one should avoid planting olives in any cold pockets.

Home gardeners have probably been told many times about the importance of getting a pH test of their soil. This is very important for olive trees, which tend to prefer a more alkaline soil than is typical in Oregon. Our soils often have a pH of 5.8-6.0, whereas olive trees like a pH of 7.0 or just above. In most gardens here, the addition of lime at time of planting would be advisable. Olive trees generally are relatively insect- and disease-free in our climate.

In selecting a tree, choose one that is multi-branched. Rather than having the trunk exposed in the winter, the addition of branches would offer some protec-



Olea europaea 'Arbequina'

PHOTO BY VICTORIA BINNING

WHAT I'M HEARING

tion. Olive trees bloom young and early in the season. They are wind pollinated, and research is being conducted as to which trees make the best pollinators.

Unfortunately, it appears that the best pollinators are also the most cold sensitive. While home gardeners may get some fruit on their tree, I think it is best to plant an olive tree for the tree itself and not for the prospect of getting a crop.

Mixed results

My experience with planting olive trees has had mixed results. The outcome was eventually fine for me, but might not have been for others.

I bought three 'Arbequina' olive trees in June 2012. They were standards, single trunk, and I thought I had the perfect place for them. It was an area along our driveway between our house and a neighbor, and



since we had hops already growing there, we thought olive trees would be a good a fit. It was on a slope and received very intense summer sun.

For the first few years, they did fine, but then we had some extremely cold winter temperatures and they suffered extensive damage. The entire canopy of the trees died and I was prepared to take them out. I procrastinated until late spring and then noticed new growth coming from the base. I removed the single trunk and cut it off at ground level.

Today, I have three multi-branched olive trees. They actually fit into the area better than the original standards. For the

past several winters that has been no damage and the trees are thriving.

I think that olive trees can be a beautiful focal point in a garden. Their silver foliage provides a nice contrast to abundant greenery. Older trees can be a major focal feature in the night garden if you place a spotlight underneath. Even though the verdict is still out on which cultivars are the best for cold tolerance, they are worth trying.

It will be interesting to see the results of the current trial at OSU NWREC. In the meantime, check with your local garden center and do some experimenting on your own. ☺

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NATURAL BY DESIGN

The concept of designed plant communities combines the synergy of nature with the order and beauty of horticulture

BY KYM POKORNY

Some neighbors are better than others. They'll take in your mail, watch your dog or bring you soup when you're sick. Then there are those who fight over boundaries or play their music at 2 a.m.

So it is in gardens. Designed without thought to neighborly compatibility, plants won't thrive without an unsustainable amount of effort.

But combined in designed plant communities — a term coined by Claudia West and Thomas Rainer in their book "Planting in a Post-Wild World" — plants can work together as friends.

In the book, West wrote about the approach as a hybrid between the wild and the cultivated, what she calls a "new nature" that can flourish in cities and suburbs but needs the help of humans.

Designing gardens this way is an interpretation of nature, not an imitation, West said in an interview. Their approach is not about restoring ecosystems — though plant communities call out to pollinators and other wildlife — but rather looking to nature, observing what grows together and designing a creation for the human eye. It's not a science, but a philosophy — one that's attracting interest.

"Designing with plant communities cannot only link nature to our landscapes, but also bring together ecological planting and traditional horticulture," West and Rainer stated. >>

Plant communities

Gymnocarpium dryopteris 'Plumosum' and *Blechnum penna-marina* (background).

PHOTO BY RICHIE STEFFEN

Three layers of plants make a complex community (bottom circle). BY CLAUDIA WEST

Anemone nemorosa used in a garden (background).

PHOTO BY RICHIE STEFFEN

Signs advise gardeners to group plants with similar characteristics (top circle). PHOTO BY PAUL BONINE

Greater than the sum

Mulysa Melco, owner of Resilience Design in Portland, Oregon, gets the concept. “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Melco’s designs link her love of nature, where she gets her inspiration, and her goal to give clients a low-input garden that appeals to their aesthetic. In her own garden, she’s created a community around an English walnut with species that can take its inclination to suppress a majority of plants because of the allelopathic chemical it releases.

Instead of fighting the tree, Melco planted species unaffected by juglone. She put in native plants like wild rose, creeping Oregon grape, sword fern, knick-knick, broadleaf stonecrop and lots of berries, including artichoke strawberry as a ground cover. Now, the neighboring plants work together rather than fight the site.

Though in this instance natives were the appropriate choice, West and Melco steer people to non-natives, as well. A native-based design is a good place to start, but if a plant fits and isn’t invasive, it’s acceptable — even desirable.

“By focusing on naturally occurring plant communities as opposed to those that are purely native, the focus is shifted from a plant’s country of origin to its performance and adaptability,” West and Rainier wrote in their book. “The shift is absolutely crucial ... we must put aside our romantic notions of pristine wilderness and embrace a new nature that is largely designed and managed by us.”

The plantings have the “spirit” of wild spaces that still speak to people but

are created to appeal to modern sensibilities that want more ordered landscapes — like bringing more color to the design or planting perennials in a grassland-inspired design closer together to make them more noticeable. Designed plant communities can and should have margins of hedges, walkways, fences, even formal parterres to define them.

It’s a practical fusion of designs, West said, appealing to humans and recognizing that urban and suburban gardens are a far cry from the ecosystems of the past.

“It’s important to understand that a plant community is a human creation,” said author West, a landscape architect and principal at Phyto Studio in Arlington, Virginia. “In nature what we see are snapshots in time. Nothing is ever set in stone.”

What is set in stone for West is planting in layers, the guiding principle of their designed plant communities. The interlocking layers, she said, are both horizontal and vertical, with vertical playing the most important role.

“It’s highly complex,” she said. “We say communities have two layers, a bottom of functional plants at the base to act as a living mulch and hold soil in place, help the flow of water into the ground, smother the weeds. On top of them is the design layer. The icing on the cake.”

They start with the structural layer: the trees, shrubs and heavily blooming perennials planted in waves of color. The next step is to

add plants to fill in the gaps as green mulch — no soil showing, please — like sedges, violets and creeping strawberry.

This approach defies the traditional ways of designing in bubbles with a group of black-eyed Susans here and a group of asters there in solitary confinement with mulch as their prison bars.

“Imagine taking a bubble of black-eyed Susan and moving it into a plant community,”

West said. “They may still be arranged, but not in a monoculture. They will be surrounded by other plants that grow right on top of them, all working together.”

West is quick to explain that the designed plant community is a method, not a style. As long as they’re planted in appropriate combinations in the appropriate way, the plantings can be designed as you like with no inputs of mulch and fertilizer and little or no water. This means using fewer resources, as well as less time and energy.

Like-minded plants

Though not specifically using West’s and Rainier’s particular approach, designers and nurseries in the Pacific Northwest have long encouraged customers and clients to embrace the low-maintenance of arranging like-minded plants in the site situations they require. Paul Bonine, co-owner of Xera Plants wholesale and retail nursery in Portland, Oregon, put together signs that describe climate biomes. Around the signs, he’s arranged plants that grow in those conditions.

The biomes — xeric for summer-dry climates and mesic for summer-wet — help gardeners group plants appropriately. If they’ve got a south-facing site with reflected heat from a sidewalk, street or driveway, it’s an opportunity for a xeric landscape with cistus, ceanothus, man- ➤➤





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Plant communities

Gymnocarpium disjuncta, *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Maianthemum stellata*, and *Vancouveria planipetala* (background image) work together in a plant community. PHOTO BY RICHIE STEFFEN Signs educate shoppers (below) about plants that adjust to Pacific Northwest climates. PHOTO BY PAUL BONNIE

zanita, lavender, rosemary, callistemon, escallonia and grevillea. For mesic landscapes, he might recommend hydrangea, hosta, willow, stewartia and primula.

Customers eat it up. "It's incredibly popular," Bonine said. "People, especially under 30, come in saying, 'I don't want to water. I don't want to weed.' We take them to the signs. It gets their attention and they learn."

Their branding is a matter of "edit, exaggerate, endorse." Xera owners Bonine and Greg Shepherd choose the climate-appropriate plants they want to sell and then put those plants together in groupings in order to exaggerate and endorse them.

"Go into the Gap and there are no mums," Bonine said. "They've edited it down to their palette and direct your

attention to what they have and that's what they sell. We do the same thing."

Sean Hogan, owner of Cistus Design Nursery, achieves something similar by organizing plants that grow in similar conditions in the wild on separate tables. "We divided the nursery that way to give people an idea of appropriate pairings," he said. "When I see a conifer garden with hostas, it drives me crazy."

That said, Hogan says he's not a "truist." He's happy when people learn — through observation or by talking to experienced nursery personnel or designers — to create proper plantings. Like Bonine,

he wants to see native chaparral plants like live oaks, ceanothus, manzanita and madrones growing next to Mediterranean cistus, olives and rosemary, even if they aren't native.

"It's about being informed by the natural environment around us, but in a garden situation there's no place we touch that we're recreating nature.

In an urban context, we're creating pleasure and art and we're lucky," he said.



Up from the underground

After designing Kristen Ohlson's garden and reading her book "The Soil Will Save Us," designer Amy Whitworth,



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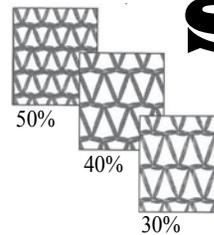
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Amy Whitworth designed Kristen Ohlson's front entrance with plant relationships in mind. PHOTO BY AMY WHITWORTH

owner of Plan-It Earth in Portland, Oregon, became fascinated with what goes on underground.

Much of it is still not understood, but the relationship between plants and the bacteria and fungi they share through their roots is now accepted knowledge because of work by soil scientists like Elaine Ingham, a leader in research of the soil food web.

Whitworth looks to the soil and to nature for guidance when she designs a garden. She looks for plants that fit the site — soil, sun exposure, and moisture — rather than changing the site for the plant.



“What I’m looking for is low-maintenance combinations,” Whitworth said. “How to put plants together so they support each other with minimal inputs from us. They are thriving and self-supporting without our help.”

The plantings at the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden in Seattle, Washington are very naturalistic but they are completely contrived, curator Richie Steffen said. He points to the woodland garden, which is a combination of native and exotic plants, all of which take the same



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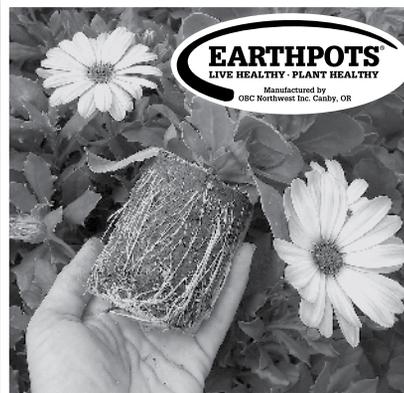
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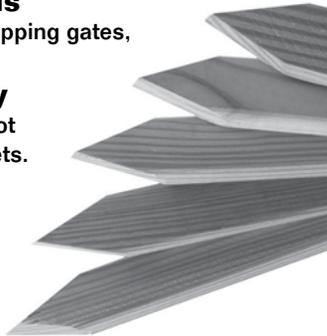
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Three layers of herbaceous plants were thoughtfully grouped together.

PHOTO BY CLAUDIA WEST

shady, moist conditions. One bed prospers with a tapestry of black mondo grass, *Anemone nemorosa*, native elk fern and *Cyclamen hederifolium* mingled in.

Like West and Rainer, he interprets the ecological needs of the plant communities, but not necessarily the aesthetics. The reality, Steffen said, is that the design can look like anything. Still, he does have parameters: plants must need the same conditions, repetition (which doesn't have to be drifts) and plant randomly — something almost impossible for us to do.

"We are programmed as people not to plant randomly," he said. "It's shocking how much practice it takes to be random, but in doing plant communities it makes it look less contrived."

West sees, indeed strongly believes, that designed plant communities are the way of the future. "The building blocks of this new nature are resilient and native plants — and, yes, even exotic species — that are naturally adapted to environments similar to our man-made landscapes," she said. "The question is not what grew there in the past but what will grow there in the future." ©

Kym Pokorny is a garden writer with more than 20 years of experience writing for The Oregonian and other publications. She is currently a communications specialist with Oregon State University Extension Service. Kym can be reached at kym.pokorny@oregonstate.edu.

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AD INDEX

AAA Mercantile	29	Motz & Son Nursery	29
Anderson Die & Mfg. Co. Inc.	3	Nelson Irrigation.....	31
Biringer Nursery.....	27	OBC Northwest.....	19
Crop Production Services.....	20	OHP Inc.....	2
D-Stake Mill Inc.	20	OAN	5, 24
Energy Trust of Oregon.....	31	Oregon Valley Greenhouses	18
F & L Lumber Inc.....	27	Plumlee Nursery Products.....	28
GK Machine.....	10	Reardon Nursery.....	20
Hostetler Farm Drainage.....	29	Rickel's Tree Farm.....	29
Kubota	26	Schurter Nursery.....	29
Lane Forest Products	11	Spring Meadow Nursery Inc.	32
Leonard Adams Insurance	6	Surface Nursery	17
Marion Ag Service Inc.....	12	T & R Company.....	14
Marr Bros.....	19	Weeks Berry Nursery	12
McPheeters Turf Inc.	29	Willamette Nurseries	11

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



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The emerald ash borers are coming (eventually)!

An impending threat to Oregon's urban ecosystems

BY SARAH GREENLEAF AND PAUL RIES

IF IT'S NOT ON your radar yet, it will be soon: The age of ash trees (*Fraxinus*, sp.) in the United States is winding down as the emerald ash borer (EAB) slowly follows a western route across the country, leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

EAB is a human-assisted invasive species that was discovered in the eastern United States in 2002. The little green insect has made it as far west as Colorado. It has devastated ash populations and is an uncontrolled epidemic. It is the most expensive invasive forest insect in U.S. history.¹

Though Oregon is currently unaffected by EAB (*Agrilus planipennis* Fairmaire), the eventual arrival of the insect to the West Coast poses a significant threat to Oregon's urban ecosystems, which have a high number of ash tree species.

Additionally, EAB impacts Oregon's nursery industry as the market demand for ash trees declines and other trees gain market share.

The spread of EAB over long distances is attributed to the movement of firewood and other infested wood products, prompting quarantines across the country to slow its movement.

In spite of these federal quarantines, there is no cure. The U.S. Forest Service has predicted that EAB may eventually decimate nearly all ash trees in North America.²

EAB insects bore into the bark of an

ash and tunnel through the vascular system, killing the tree. Once infested, a tree is likely to fail.

Using principles of integrated pest management (IPM), the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) has begun implementing monitoring systems for the pest. There have been no occurrences yet, but the traps play an important role for initial detection when the pest arrives.

Though EAB's destructive arrival to Oregon is inevitable, its impact can be minimized with smart management of urban ecosystems.

Oregon's urban forests

Ash trees have traditionally been revered as a good choice for street trees due to their shade, fast growth, and ornamental foliage. They have been planted far and wide in Oregon's cityscapes. The stressful environment of a city, however, makes it a good breeding ground for an insect invasion, leaving an abundance of ash trees at risk.

Besides losing a plentitude of urban forest benefits, local communities can also expect an increased public-safety risk as dead and dying ash trees become hazardous to people and property.

Urban forests are critical to functioning urban ecosystems because of the benefits that trees provide. In fact, the U.S. Forest Service estimates that in the United States, trees that make up the urban



Bright green emerald ash borer adult next to larval "S" shaped galleries.

PHOTO BY TAWNY SIMISKY, UMASS EXTENSION

The emerald ash borers are coming (eventually)!

forest canopy provide millions of dollars in ecosystem service benefits.³

Is Oregon ready for EAB?

In the summer of 2015, the ODF administered an online survey to urban forest managers in Oregon cities. The goals were to find out what percentage of this population was aware of EAB and to assess preventative actions that have been taken within communities.

Alarming, 50 percent of respondents indicated they had not heard of EAB in the United States. The same amount was unable to report the number of ash trees within their city, meaning the respondents could not estimate the extent of risk and damage their communities could face.

Though survey responses demonstrated the need for increased education among Oregon urban forest managers,



Mature emerald ash borers leave behind a distinct "D" shaped exit hole, providing evidence of the pest. PHOTO BY STEVE BASKAUF, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

several communities did report that they were already considering preventive steps, such as removing ash species from their recommended street tree list.

Getting Ready for EAB

Even though EAB will not be arriving in Oregon tomorrow, it is certainly not too

soon for municipalities to begin preparations. The following management plan offers Oregon urban forest managers a comprehensive idea of how to handle the emerald ash borer before and when it arrives.

1. Know the ash resource. A community's urban forest managers should be aware of all potential infestation sites and make sure their ash tree inventory is up to date, including information on general health and condition.

2. Phase out ash trees. Though it is undoubtedly a tough reality to accept, all of Oregon's ash trees will be at considerable risk when EAB arrives. Chemical control is expensive and cannot feasibly treat large numbers of ash trees. The best preventative measure is to minimize the ash tree

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population. This can be done in a few ways:

- **Discontinuation of planting ash trees.**

A city may choose to remove all ash species from its list of approved city trees and create a local ordinance that prohibits planting ash.

- **Replacement of ash trees.** This is a good opportunity for managers to increase plant diversity by incorporating non-ash replacements into replanting efforts.

- **Removal of ash trees.** Sadly, ash tree removal is a necessary evil in order to protect Oregon urban forests. Instead of removing any ash tree, however, strategically target only the trees at highest risk. Inventory data such as age, health, structure, and hazard potential can be used to weight the severity of an individual ash tree's risk of failure. In the absence of a target risk, the healthier specimens should remain in the cityscape, as they have the most defense potential against the pest.



Stressed trees are easy targets for EAB. This Oregon white ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*) exhibits some mottling and damage and might be rated with a higher removal priority than a significantly healthier specimen. PHOTO BY DANIEL GLEASON, PORTLAND URBAN FORESTRY

3. Detection.

- **Monitor for insects.** As emphasized in the principles of IPM, keeping track of an insect population is an important part of its control. "First responders" need to be ready with a management plan as

soon as EAB is initially spotted. The best approach to monitoring pest communities is by setting up traps. Once we find an emerald ash borer in a sticky trap, we know the epidemic has arrived.

- **Recognize signs of the pest.** The



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The emerald ash borers are coming (eventually)!

movement of emerald ash borer larvae leaves behind S-shaped galleries visible in infected tree bark. The insect eventually exits the tree by burrowing through a D-shaped hole. Spotting these distinct holes and galleries in an ash tree can provide evidence of EAB.

• **Become an Oregon Forest Pest Detector.** Oregon State University Extension offers this certification program that trains individuals to identify pests and their signs and symptoms on trees. Giving industry professionals and concerned citizens the right tools to help in early detection will better position the overall response and management effort for EAB.

4. Respond to infestation. Just as the ODF has prepared a thorough and collaborative response plan for EAB, so should every community be prepared to respond once the pest arrives. After initial infestation, it may take 1–3 years for an ash tree to completely fail. Larvae may have already imposed significant damage to the tree even if it is not yet visibly declining. This is a good time to prioritize inspections for trees that present hazards to people and property.

5. Public education and awareness. The education and awareness process should begin within the nursery industry and then spread throughout the community. Outreach examples should involve local news outlets like magazines, city websites, and social media.



Invasive species specialist Wyatt Williams of the ODF Oregon Department of Forestry hangs an EAB trap. The pests are particularly attracted to the color purple and to the volatiles that are applied to the sticky walls of the trap. PHOTO BY DANIEL GLEASON, PORTLAND URBAN FORESTRY

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A heavily infested ash tree detected in Worcester, Massachusetts in 2015. Removal of the bark revealed extensive s-shaped feeding galleries from emerald ash borer larvae. PHOTO BY TAWNY SIMISKY, UMASS EXTENSION.

An educational campaign should accomplish two goals: alert people about EAB and encourage community participation in tackling it. It is important to know how to identify affected ash trees and how individual behavior can affect the epidemic. A city might consider establishing an online reporting system that facilitates identifying ash tree locations and possible pest sightings.

Conclusion

Oregon urban forest managers have a unique opportunity to minimize the potentially devastating impact of an impending harmful insect invasion. While there appears to be no way to prevent the arrival of the pest, this report has offered several methods that will help to prepare communities and to reduce the overall impact. ☺

Sarah Greenleaf was a graduate student at Oregon State University in the College of Forestry and is now a state forester in Massachusetts. She can be reached at sgreens22@gmail.com. The author wishes to thank Paul Ries and Wyatt Williams for their advisement in this report.

¹ (Buhl et al., 2014).

² DeSantis, R.D., Moser, K.W., Gormanson, D.D., Bartlett, M.G., and Vermunt, B. (2013). Effects of climate on emerald ash borer mortality and the potential for ash survival in North America. *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology* 178-179, 120-128.

³ Nowak, D.J., Crane, D.E., & Dwyer, J.F. (2002). "Compensatory value of urban trees in the United States." *Journal of Arboriculture*, 28: 194-199.



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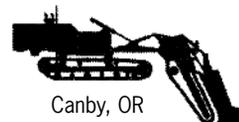
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I am the third Oregonian to serve in that role. Merv Belknap was the first in 1969-70, followed by Dan Barnhart in 1989-90.

The NLAE is a team of committed executive leaders from all over the country, and six Canadian provinces, serving the green industry. It started in 1947 and slowly became what it is today, thanks to many hardworking people, including now-retired OAN Executive Director (and legend) Clayton Hannon.

Once a year at our convention, we get together to solve common issues, learn from each other and work together to serve you, our combined membership. My colleagues in NLAE bring a lot of talent to the table, but the most important thing we share is the experience, commitment and desire to work every day to help your business thrive.

Common denominators

Months before the convention, we assemble a geographically diverse subset of executives to identify issues that are impacting the industry and top-line challenges facing nursery associations. We discuss topics that are impacting our members today, and we also get a jump on emerging and critical issues that are on the horizon.

The breadth and strength of individual nursery associations creates a pathway to get to the heart of a matter, dissect it, and build possible solutions.

Workforce woes are a consistent agenda item, not only with the labor shortage that is limiting economic growth, but the positive side of the issue — we talk about ideas that work in various parts of the continent. There is a common misunderstanding that our Canadian partners have immigration figured out, but they have many structural and policy issues, just like the rest of us.

Other items on our agenda include pollinators, water supply, transportation infrastructure, land use and taxation, and it's great to hear the diverse opinions.

It's worth noting that associations are

run like a business. (Many of the elected officials I talk to don't understand this.) We must grapple with the same issues our members do — minimum wage changes, overtime regulations and the myriad of imposed workplace requirements.

It is not enough for associations to deal with these issues and provide a lean organization — we must also protect the industry. As NLAE members, we're always looking at the return on investment we are providing to our members, as well as tools to communicate that ROI. Some associations offer discounts for health insurance, fuel or truck purchases, to name a few examples. Others, like the OAN, have a trade show to market members and the industry.

As we discuss all this, we also make an effort to learn from each other. Cassie Larson, the tremendous leader out of Minnesota, conducts a "30 ideas in 30 minutes" session. It includes ready to use tips from everything from social media to nursery certification techniques. I always get something out of it.

You are the heroes

All of the executives agree, without a doubt, that the members are the heroes of our associations. You grow and sell plants, work with your hands and make something you can sell with pride.

Being in business is not easy. We understand that you want a rewarding career in the green industry. If you didn't love plants, you'd probably be doing something else.

Your associations also see you as a business run by honest people. We want others to see you that way too. We wish to help provide a regulatory environment of financial stability for owning, operating and expanding your business.

We cheer your success and help with working through your problems. Working with regulators can make you frustrated, anxious or downright angry. Dealing with entrenched agencies can be too much for an individual business to bear.

A unified and aggregated voice, which blends both smaller and larger operations, has proven effective and has the added benefit of shedding a regulatory burden from daily work at the nursery.

Associations also look for a number of ways for each member to engage the nursery community. The OAN utilizes open



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

houses, chapters organizing tours and chats, organized relevant content to impart critical information or bring together segments of our industry. It is affirming that my colleagues around North America all pursue a "member first" attitude.

Improvement through collaboration

Expert speakers have a role in increasing the knowledge base of our nursery executives every year at the NLAE Convention, but candidly, one of the best parts of the annual meeting are the informal exchanges of ideas. We chat without an agenda, just sharing the things that work and more so, the efforts that do not pan out. It is really cool that size does not matter — all of us contribute ways we can do a better job for you.

The OAN shares information on the programs and services we provide to members. We get great feedback about *Digger*, Nursery Guide and the Farwest Show. The new promotional materials of the Farwest Show, which show our members as the core of the show (which they no doubt are), received strong praise. I think it is awesome and was excited to hear that others did too.

Grateful to OAN Leadership

NLAE is an information resource and professional network for nearly 100 association executives — an intimate group dedicated to advancing their associations and the industry as a whole. I am grateful for the leadership of the OAN to allow me to grow as a professional, network with green industry leaders and hone leadership skills.

Both the OAN and NLAE work toward making sure that you, the members of the nursery and greenhouse industry, grow and prosper and continue to make a difference. ☺

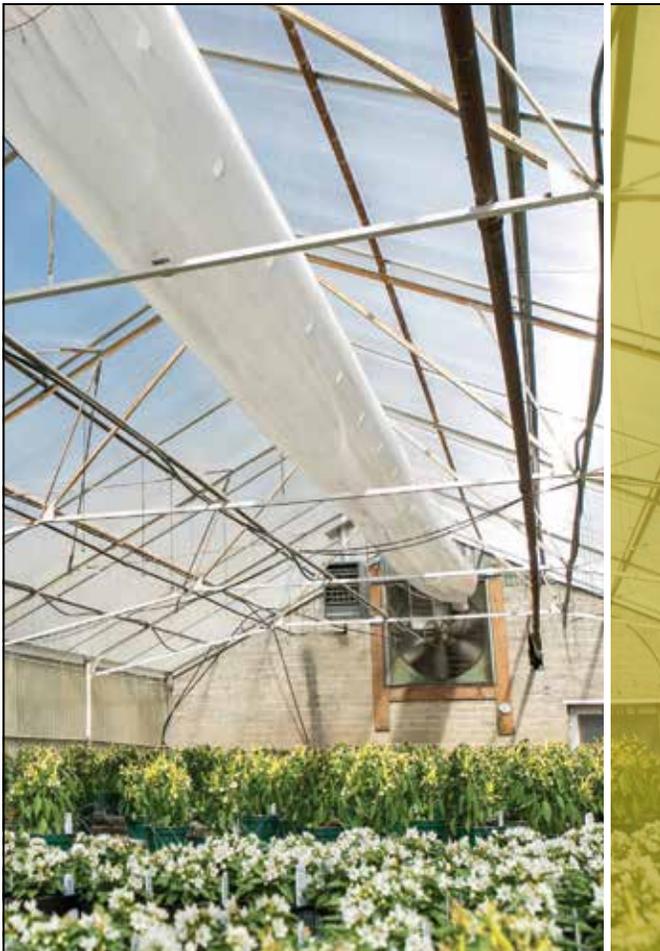


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