

2017-2018 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Josh Zielinski
PRESIDENT
josh@alphannursery.com

Alpha Nursery
5050 Hazelgreen Rd. N.E.
Salem, OR 97305-3519
503-390-1286
FAX 503-390-2639

Mike Hiller
PRESIDENT-ELECT
mike@kniusa.com

Kraemer's Nursery Inc.
P.O. Box 930
Mt. Angel, OR 97362
503-845-2283
FAX 503-845-6557

Jim Simnitt
VICE PRESIDENT
simnittnsy@canby.com

Simnitt Nursery
138 NE 22nd Ave.
Canby, OR 97013
503-266-9640
FAX 503-263-6330

Kyle Fessler
TREASURER
kyle@stchristophernursery.com

St. Christopher Nursery LLC
12936 Portland Rd. N.E.
Gervais, OR 97026
503-580-4470
FAX 503-792-3902

Mark Bigej
PAST PRESIDENT
mbigej@als-gardencenter.com

Al's Garden & Home
1220 N. Pacific Hwy.
Woodburn, OR 97071-3616
503-981-1245
FAX 503-982-4608

Josh Robinson
SECRETARY
josh@robinsonnursery.com

Robinson Nursery Inc.
P.O. Box 100
Amity, OR 97101
503-835-4533
FAX 503-835-3004

Denec Messenger
MEMBER AT LARGE
denecemessenger@comcast.net

Decorative Bark Products
P.O. Box 1198
Tualatin, OR 97062
503-510-4029
FAX 503-859-3764

STATE BOARD REPRESENTATIVES

CENTRAL OREGON CHAPTER
Gary S. English
gary@landsystemsnursery.com

Landsystems Nursery
541-382-7646

CHRISTMAS TREE CHAPTER
vacant

CLACKAMAS CHAPTER
Adam Farley
afarley@countysidenursery.com
Amanda Staehely
amandastaehely@gmail.com

Countryside Nursery
503-678-0511
Columbia Nursery
503-810-2598

EMERALD EMPIRE CHAPTER
Tamara Clift
tamaragreg@msn.com

McKenzie River Nursery
541-747-2767

GREENHOUSE CHAPTER
Andrea Avila-Aragon
andrea.avila-aragon@smithgardens.com
Mark Leichthy
mark@littleprinceoforegon.com

Smith Gardens
503-678-5373
Little Prince of Oregon Nursery
503-678-5687

MT. HOOD CHAPTER
Scott Ekstrom
scott_ekstrom@yahoo.com
Anthony Kinen
akinen5@gmail.com

Ekstrom Nursery Inc.
503-663-4035
Kinen's Big & Phat
Special Plants
503-866-3627

RETAIL CHAPTER
Laura Hammond
lhammond@als-gardencenter.com

Al's Garden & Home
503-981-1245

SUNSET CHAPTER
Matt Gold
matt.gold@midasnurserysolutions.com
Ron Kinney
rkinney@monrovia.com

Midas Nursery Solutions
503-628-3059
Monrovia
503-868-7941

WILLAMETTE CHAPTER
John Maurer
john@evergreengrowers.com
Robert Van Klaveren
vansnursery@aol.com

Evergreen Growers Supply Inc.
Van's Nursery
503-463-4507

Move forward on immigration

I'd be willing to bet most folks in our industry don't have an elaborate tie collection. I myself own three.



Josh Zielinski
OAN PRESIDENT

They rarely come out except for the occasional wedding or funeral, but this past May, I packed all of them up and headed to our nation's capital to do some politicking on behalf of our members. I am a bit of a fish out of water in a place like Washington, D.C., so thankfully I was in good company with Jeff Stone (OAN executive director), Steve Shropshire (OAN contract legal counsel), and Leigh Geschwill (F&B Farms and Nursery, another grower member).

We set out with a clear plan and loaded schedule to see our entire Oregon delegation — five U.S. representatives and two U.S. senators — along with several folks from a half dozen government agencies. We had each been on a similar mission in the past, as this is an annual gig the association does as a service to the membership.

Now, if I had to do this routine daily I would surely go crazy, but catching a glimpse under the hood of the political engine that basically runs this country is a pretty fascinating experience. It can be a real eye opener. At times it is easy to become quite hopeful (believe it or not) and other times it's downright frustrating.

While we addressed a variety of issues ranging from transportation (the high costs of nationwide freight), to water (storage and quality needs), pest and disease control and funding, new laws surrounding worker protection standards and many other concerns. The "big one" was the same as it has been for years now: Immigration reform.

We've long been a leading voice to help assure a dependable and legal workforce that is critical to our industry (and many others). We have also pushed to establish a system to secure a future workforce that helps our country avoid the perpetual cycle where economic upswings are often stifled by growth-inhibiting labor shortages, especially out in the fields where we make our products.

The good news is that this time, it was different when it came to discussing immigration. Elected officials were actually saying the "I" word, at least in terms of agricultural labor force. It actually seemed to be on most people's radar. There were even bills being kicked around. It gave us a chance to have a more defined voice and not just that tired old groan, "please fix it."

The Ag Act and/or Goodlatte Bill was the talk of the town. Instead of picking it apart for some of the frivolous flaws it may contain, we were able to (in some cases to the amazement of our congress members) say: "We can work with this."

As it looked while we were there — and it continues to evolve for better and for worse — there were several steps in the right direction. Just one step in the right direction would be a miracle given how long the issue has been held hostage and kicked around like a political football. There are dire needs out there for more workers so our industry can grow to meet its demand.

Unfortunately, while a clearer message was more powerful, it was also easier to disagree with. There are well-intended people everywhere holding out for the "perfect" policy at the expense of the "OK" ones. These folks desire to pass a bill that gives them every single thing they want and concedes nothing to those who oppose reform. But how long can we suffer shortage before we have an industry that is irrelevant — too expensive, too much of the same non-laborious crops, and so on? Please don't tell me (again) it'll be after the next election. The time to act is now.

So, put on your tie or leave it at home, but let's get up and get moving forward on this. That way, we can all move forward knowing when there is opportunity we will be able to build teams to take advantage of it. ☺