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Winter is coming

This might sound like a plug for Game of Thrones — after all, the Season

Eight premiere isn't that far away!

But seriously, winter isn't just coming, as they say. It's here. Preparations must be undertaken.

From a grower's standpoint, we are almost done getting the plants ready to survive the winter. Some growers, meanwhile, are just starting bare root harvest. Others are doing their winter propagation. In the office, we're planning for next year by developing budgets along with our production and sales plans.

Overall, winter is a critical season for us. This is the season when I watch and read the most about the weather. As an industry we rely on accurate forecasts to be able to plan and protect plants and structures for extreme weather.

It's not fun when a winter storm event catches us by surprise. It can result in lost inventory — inventory we've invested in growing and which now won't have a return.

My best advice? Find your source of weather information and follow it religiously. In the Northwest, we have several great options that geared to farmers and agriculture. These can help us decide what to protect and when to protect it.

I know that I have a network of fellow growers I can reach out to for those weather events. Maybe by attending OAN events you can network with fellow members and establish or expand your network. I know I do.

Speaking of networking, lately I've been hearing a term that I didn't hear much about in prior years. That term is "inventory allocation." It's the idea that you can reserve stock for a customer, but until inventory is allocated to a sales order it is still available to sell. Several nurseries have been talking about this topic and all of the associated difficulties.

Allocating inventory often involves difficult choices. It is important to acknowledge a customer's loyalty through the years, especially the ones that have been with you through thick and thin.

From the purchasing side, if you do not have your items booked by now, you might be on the hot seat. Hopefully you attended the Farwest Show and have a head start on everything. I say that because it is never too early to start planning for the future. If you haven't started yet, today is the best day.

This winter, take the time to plan out what is vital for the upcoming year. Acknowledge your weaknesses and improve of your strengths. We cannot plan for all of the variables that Mother Nature will give us. Just be prepared on how to act.

What worked for you? What did you struggle with? What are going to do about it? Those are questions I ask myself all the time. I make a war board for those topics that need to be addressed. Then I work on a plan on how to address the issue.

Winter allows me the time for that thought process to happen, although I will say that there is no slow season in this industry. Not anymore. We can be swamped anytime.

As you consider these issues, remember that the Oregon Association of Nurseries is here to help with issues you don't have time or resources to handle on your own. The association is your information resource and your networking tool, as well as your missile defense system to protect against market threats and adverse regulation.

And we are not just an association, but a membership-based one at that. Everything would be impossible without member support. That means we need your participation and your financial support. If you are a current member it's time to renew. If you're not, it's time to join. Check the dues statement that arrived in your mailbox, or head on over to www.oan.org/join.

I hope you're able to enjoy the holiday season.
Thanks for all you do. ☺



Mike Hiller
OAN PRESIDENT