



# Arrowhead Ornamentals

Founded: 1997 by Mike Coleman and family

IT'S BEEN 20 years of steady growth for Arrowhead Ornamentals. The vertically integrated nursery grows a deep variety of deciduous trees, deciduous shrubs and conifers on 600 acres in the northern Willamette Valley.

Their main calling card is more than 200 different shade and flowering trees, which (depending on the species or cultivar) are available as bare root or containerized liners, as well as finished B&B up to 4 caliper inches and container material

from 10 to 25 gallons.

They also offer some 36 varieties of deciduous shrubs, mostly in containers (with some bare-root liners), and 23 conifers (mostly B&B, with a few in containers, too). The containerized material is all grown pot-in-pot and can be shipped any time of year.

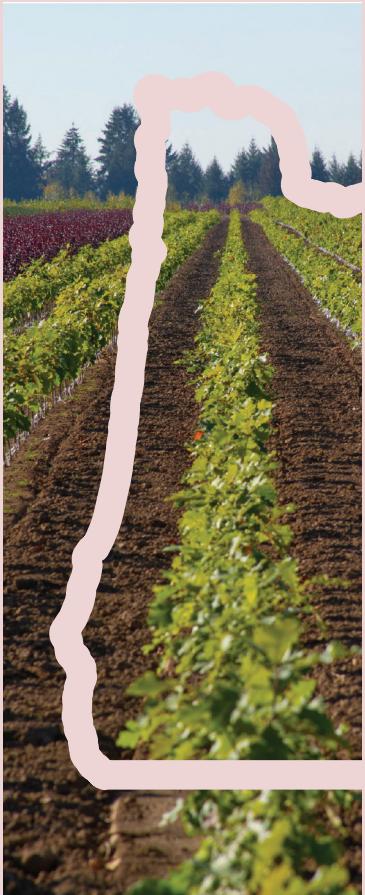
All of that adds up to a large and versatile operation that stays laser-focused on serving the needs of customers.

"I think our product is high quality and a good value," said managing principal Mike Coleman, who runs the business on behalf of a family ownership group that has Oregon agricultural roots running six generations deep. "The best reward is the relationships we've developed and to be able to provide jobs so our employees can care for their families and contribute to their communities."

Arrowhead ships its material all over the United States, with the highest concentrations of customers in Oregon and in the Rocky Mountain states. Landscapers and re-wholesalers are the main customers for the finished material, while the liners ship mainly to other nurseries throughout the country.

But no matter the customer, Arrowhead's time-tested principles of doing business are always the same.

"Treat everyone with respect, whether it be a customer or worker or family member, and do what you say you're going to do," Mike said. "Keep your



## ● ABOUT:

Grower of finished caliper B&B and containerized trees that are sold to landscapers and re-wholesalers, as well as bare root trees that are sold to other growers to be finished.

## ● PRINCIPALS:

**Mike and Gail Coleman** and other family members

## ● KEY EMPLOYEES:

**Mike Coleman**, general manager; **Gail Coleman**, sales manager, bare root; **Jill Rodriguez**, sales manager, B&B and container; **Faustino Palafox**, production manager, bare root; **Jaime Rodriguez**, production manager, B&B

## ● EMPLOYEES:

40 full-time year-round, peaking at 50 full-time during harvest season.

## ● CONTACT:

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## ● ONLINE:

[www.arrowheadornamentals.com](http://www.arrowheadornamentals.com)

## ● TRADE SHOWS:

**MANTS, Farwest Show, iLandscape, Green & Growin', Idaho Horticulture Trade Show, iLandscape, ProGreen Expo, Utah Green Industry Trade Show, the Western, Tennessee Green Industry Expo, Northern Green**

## ● LISTINGS:

**256** [NurseryGuide.com](http://NurseryGuide.com)

Key personnel from Arrowhead Ornamentals hang out at the Coleman family's Ordnance Brewing taproom in Wilsonville, Oregon, including Jill and Jaime Rodriguez, Mike and Gail Coleman and Faustino Palafox.

word. And provide a good value for your customer. Give back to your community and your organizations."

### Growing on native soil

Arrowhead Ornamentals is family-owned by Mike and three siblings (two brothers and one sister) and their spouses. It's run by Mike and his wife, Gail.

The nursery is part of a diversified family farming business that includes various farms as well as a hop growing business, and even a microbrewery (Ordnance Brewing, located near the ammunition depot in Boardman, Oregon) with three taprooms.

Different family members share ownership and manage the various businesses on each other's behalf.

The history of Arrowhead Ornamentals goes back to 1998, but the history of the Coleman family farming in the Willamette Valley goes back much farther. Their ancestors migrated on the Oregon Trail, reaching the Willamette Valley in 1846 and settling on land near McMinnville, Oregon.

For five generations, Coleman family members fanned out across the Willamette Valley. Mike's branch of the family settled in the St. Paul area, at the valley's northern end. His grandfather started a farming business that produced row crops, grass seed and hops, and that is where he grew up.

Mike attended St. Paul schools and graduated high school there, then attended Oregon State University. He earned a degree in finance knowing he would come back and work on the farm. "I wanted to get a different look at the world, and I learned some skills," he said.

After Mike returned from college, his father, John, noticed neighbors and relatives doing well in the nursery business. Among them was John's sister, Jean Fessler, who cofounded Woodburn Nursery &



Azaleas Inc. with her husband Bob.

"Obviously they were successful," Mike said.

It was decided the Colemans would start a nursery on a 300-acre portion of their land, which borders on the Willamette River floodplain near St. Paul. Because the nursery was to be legally separate from other family businesses, the most obvious name wasn't an option.

"Our accountant and attorney thought we should come up with different names," he said. "Coleman Farms was taken by my dad."

The chosen site gave them inspiration.

"We used to find arrowheads on the bluff when we were growing up," Mike said. "Anywhere you're on a bluff above the river bottom you're liable to find them."

The name Arrowhead Ornamentals was chosen.

The nursery was incorporated in 1997, planting its first trees in 1998. "We developed a strategy to grow finished trees for the Rocky Mountain region back west and selected plants for that region," Mike said.

On the 300-acre site, the nursery initially grew finished trees as caliper B&B specimens. Many of Arrowhead's own seedlings were grown on site in their own propagation greenhouses.

By 1999, some were ready for sale, and in 2000, the nursery ramped up production even more. At first, Mike continued working in other family businesses. As Arrowhead's revenues built, he made the transition to working exclusively at the nursery.

The nursery soon added containerized

trees to the operation; they were grown in the ground using pot-in-pot technology.

In 2008, Arrowhead expanded when it purchased a second 300-acre location in Hubbard from A. McGill & Son, a wholesale nursery that was looking to get out of the business. This provided an opportunity for Arrowhead to grow an intermediate bare root product that is shipped to other growers to be finished.

"This purchase certainly opened up a larger market. We're trying to grow the best trees one can and provide a good value," Mike said. "Our bare root trees are shipped all over the United States except Florida and the deep Southeast. They'll finish them in a container or plant them out in a field and grow it out to landscape size."

The latest innovation at Arrowhead Ornamentals is the addition of a new liner program that utilizes air pruned containers.

"It think it works very well," Mike said. "The customer can fall plant them to get a head start on the workload and not do it in the spring, when there's everything else to do."

He expects that the bulk of the company's future growth in finished material will be in containers grown pot-in-pot. Advantages are year-round availability for greater convenience and a lower shipping weight for greater economy.

Arrowhead's material is a blend of self-propagated seedlings, seedlings from other providers and grafted material on understock. They frequently work with other Oregon seedling and understock providers including JLPN Inc., Carlton Plants and ➤



## Arrowhead Nursery

Willamette Nurseries.

A specialty is their Texas red oak (*Quercus buckleyii*), a drought- and cold-resistant tree that the nursery grows from seed. Arrowhead gathers its own seeds in Texas.

### The future

Mike looks forward to the future of Arrowhead Ornamentals.

"The economy continues to grow," he said. "Construction continues to run strong for the foreseeable future. I don't see the growers going into an oversupply situation."

However, he sees tough challenges ahead. Finding adequate labor is a problem, and the succession issue is a challenge for any family-owned farm.

"The economic downturn we went through probably steered many of the next generation into wanting to do

Arrowhead Ornamentals offers B&B deciduous shade trees, shown growing at their Hubbard farm, as well as pot-in-pot trees, grown at their St. Paul farm.



something else," Mike said.

Regulations are also an issue, particularly a new EPA worker protection standard that regulates more without really adding more protection. "We're already protecting our employees," he said.

Water may be the biggest issue of all of these. It is an essential for growing the trees and shrubs, but it also could affect markets into which Arrowhead is selling. "Nobody wants to buy plants if you can't water them," Mike said. ☐



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