

Digger

FEBRUARY 2019

Cultivating buzz

Garden clubs and the nursery industry

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PAGE 27



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On the cover: Garden club members gather at events hosted at Al's Garden & Home and take trips to places like Joy Creek Nursery. PHOTO COURTESY OF ALS GARDEN & HOME AND HARDY PLANT SOCIETY OF OREGON **On this page:** (Left) *Vitis vinifera 'Pinot noir'* is the number one wine grape variety grown in western Oregon. PHOTO BY PATTY SKINKIS (Right) Mark Leichty often speaks to garden club members about seasonal growing activity. PHOTO COURTESY OF ALS GARDEN & HOME



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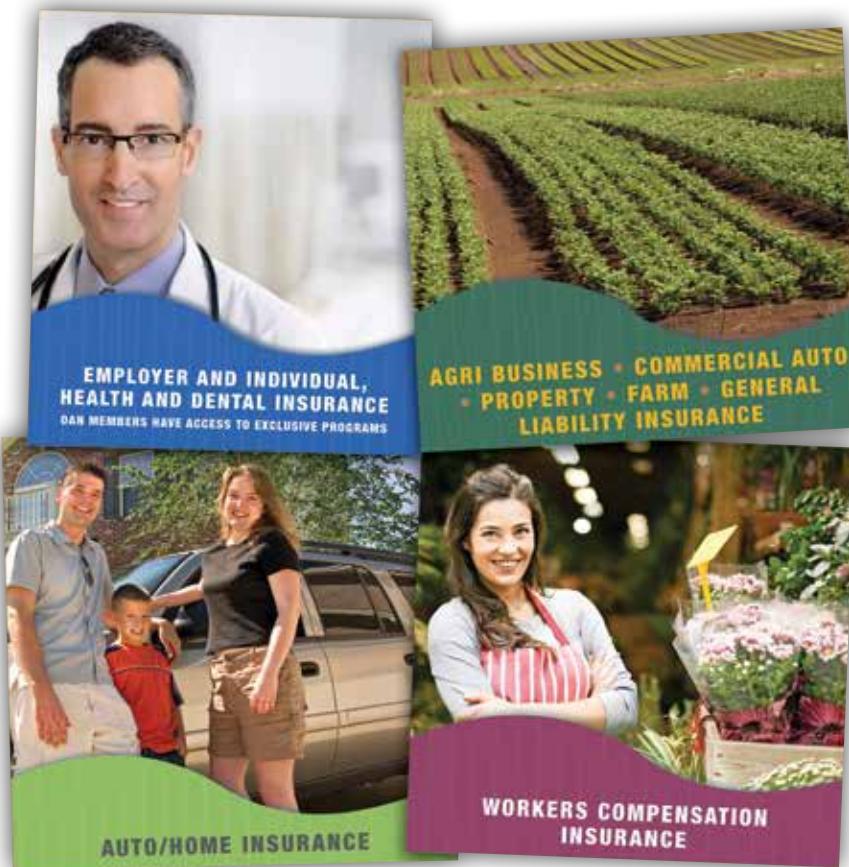
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Don't fall into the trap of history repeating

The holidays and the grueling trade show season are over.

Sports are in a lull. The days of cold, wet and dark are getting tiresome. We are all waiting on better weather — or at least seeing the sun.

Depending on your segment within the nursery industry, you have either completed your digging for the season, or you are just opening back up and discovering how much work you still need to do.

At this time of year, good recordkeeping is important. A sense of the history of your business is essential. However, you need to use that information to make your business better. Don't just file it away! Look at the highlights from last year. Identify areas for possible improvements.

In particular, it's key to examine the vital problems that you encountered last year. Have you identified causes and come up with solutions to those issues?

As the saying goes, "History usually repeats itself." Don't fall into that trap.

As you review history, problems and possible solutions, don't forget to look inward. It's important to build upon the skills you already possess. Wherever you are in your career, you probably only reached that point because you made a decision, one way or another, to acquire greater knowledge and to apply what you learned.

After you reach a certain level in your career or business, sneaky complacency can become your enemy. You begin to perceive that the skills that got you this far are "good enough." The world is constantly in motion. So are markets. Inertia didn't get you this far — effort did.

You have experience. You have skills. And these, along with a sense of your business history, can guide you along a path of improvement.

Do not be afraid to express opinions, take chances or be open to new ideas. Just make sure you do your research before diagnosing problems and developing solutions.

With the start of February, we will soon go from being caught up to being behind. Spring is fast approaching. March 20 is the first day of spring this year — tick tock.

As you focus on your business, don't forget about the work that the Oregon Association of Nurseries does on your behalf. The Oregon Legislature started its 2019 session on January 22, and the OAN is working around the clock to make sure state officials never forget the size, significance and economic impact of Oregon's nearly \$1 billion nursery industry.

The OAN's seasoned, respected and highly effective Government Relations team analyzes each significant piece of legislation to see how it affects the nursery industry, then makes sure that officials on both sides of the aisle understand the impact.

What you see reported is nothing compared to the tonnage of proposals put in play. If you had hair, like I used to, seeing it all would turn yours white and make it fall out.

We are solution oriented and bipartisan — and people in Salem know it. This gives us the ability to derail harmful legislation or at least remove or mitigate the portions that are harmful to the nursery industry.

But the OAN doesn't just play defense. It also pushes forward on industry priorities such as industry research, long-term water supplies and more.

OAN advocacy is one of the best reasons to be a member. Our weekly Member Update, sent electronically, keeps you informed about the issues, and aware of when your input can be most effective. Legislators and officials are always aware of our strength and our numbers. Our team makes sure of it, but some of the time, we need your help.

The bottom line, in business and in politics, is that there is no substitute for "you." Only you possess your experience and your ability to act. If you want change, you have to initiate it. There's no one else. That's why it's so important at this time to look back, realize mistakes, acknowledge weaknesses, strengthen skills and move forward.

I wish you the best of luck with this upcoming season. ☺



Mike Hiller
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*.

VARIOUS DATES THROUGH MARCH

FIRST AID AND CPR CLASSES

The OAN Safety and Insurance Committee is presenting First Aid and CPR classes as a service to members and the industry. Successful completion results in certification that is good for two years. Each class runs from 8 a.m.-noon. Check the OAN website for dates and locations. The cost is \$45 per person for those renewing their certification (two years) AND for those taking the class for the first time. Register and pay at www.oan.org/cprclass, or call Kelsey Hood, 503-682-5089.

FEBRUARY 13-16

PROGREEN EXPO

An educational green industry conference, the ProGreen EXPO features seminars and exhibits on the latest in green technology products, new business efficiency methods, and opportunities for continuing education exams and certifications. More than 6,000 professionals attend the event held at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver. Visit www.progreenexpo.com for more information.

FEBRUARY 14

NOR CAL LANDSCAPE & NURSERY SHOW

The Nor Cal Landscape & Nursery Trade Show is a one-day professional collaboration between California's horticulture and landscape industries. It features more than 250 exhibits and nine educational seminars. Revenues raised by the Nor Cal Show are reinvested in the industry through education, research and philanthropy. The event takes place at the San Mateo Expo Center, 1346 Saratoga Drive, San Mateo, California. Register online at www.norcaltradeshow.org.

FEBRUARY 20-24

NORTHWEST FLOWER & GARDEN FESTIVAL

This year's festival theme celebrates "Gardens of the World" with over 20 fully landscaped display gardens, 100 free world-class seminars, and thousands of treasures in the garden and vintage marketplaces. The festival is held at the Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, Washington. For more information, visit www.gardenshow.com.

FEBRUARY 22

GARDENPRO 2.0 CONFERENCE

Held during the annual Northwest Flower & Garden Festival at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle, the GardenPRO 2.0 Conference consists of two keynote speakers and two tracts of concurrent sessions for green industry professionals. Sessions meet continuing education unit credit requirements



FEBRUARY 9

WILLAMETTE CHAPTER MYSTERY DINNER

Play your cards right and you won't get lost in the shuffle. Join the OAN Willamette Chapter for their Mystery Dinner on Saturday, February 9. The event will begin with Social Hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and mystery. Registration is open for a limited time. Starting with a social at 6 p.m., OAN members are hosting a Mystery Dinner at Schilling Farm, 7315 Labish Center Rd. NE, Salem, Oregon. Guests must be 21 years of age or older. The entrance fee is \$50 per person and includes one free drink. (No-host bar.) Register at www.oan.org/event/mystery, or call Janet Poot at 800-391-6411.

for some certifications and organizations. For more information, visit www.gardenshow.com/gardenpro-conference.

FEBRUARY 27

OREGON NURSERIES' HALL OF FAME

Get your tickets to attend the 2019 Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame banquet, taking place 6-9 p.m., Wednesday, February 27, at the Abernethy Center ballroom, 606 15th St., Oregon City, Oregon. The celebration will induct a new class of honorees, including Art and Teri Iwasaki of Tanasacres Nursery, pioneer Henderson Lewelling, Bob and Jean Fessler of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas, Mark and Jolly Krautmann of Heritage Seedlings & Liners Inc., and Keith Warren of J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. The Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame was established to honor and recognize individuals who have been instrumental in the development of the Oregon nursery industry, have brought credit and recognition to the industry or have had a profound historical impact on the industry. To register, go to www.oan.org/hof.

FEBRUARY 21-24

PORTLAND SPRING HOME & GARDEN SHOW

Taking place at the Portland Expo Center, 2060 North Marine Dr., Portland, Oregon, this show entertains and informs homeowners of the latest trends in remodeling and garden design. Guests browse exhibits of the freshest garden projects, new products for upgrading their living spaces, and helpful service providers who can upgrade nearly any aspect of their property.

Attendees may collect magazines, snap photos, and grab the latest edition of the Retail Nurseries and Garden Centers Road Map. For more information, visit <http://homeshowpdx.com>.

FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 2

NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS WEEK

The week of February 26-March 2 has been designated as National Invasive Species Awareness Week. Events taking place across the nation hope to raise awareness and identify solutions to invasive species issues. Each day a different aspect of the fight against invasive species – from impacts and prevention, to public-private partnerships – will be highlighted. For more information, visit www.nisaw.org

MARCH 1

PLANT NERD NIGHT

Start your garden season off with Mike Darcy's 18th annual Plant Nerd Night, brought to you through the support of The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon, as well as the Friends of the Rogerson Clematis Garden and the Salem Hardy Plant Society. Far Reaches Farm, N&M Herb Nursery, Rogerson Clematis Garden, Great Plant Picks, Dancing Oaks Nursery and Sebright Gardens will offer previews of new or favorite plants, many of which will also offered for sale at the event. Doors will open at 6 p.m. on March 1. Presentations run 7-9 p.m. at Lake Bible Church, 4565 Carman Drive, Lake Oswego, Oregon. Visit www.hardyplantsociety.org/plant-nerd-night for more information.



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.

Altman Plants acquires remaining Color Spot locations

On December 21, 2018, Altman Plants of Vista, California agreed to purchase the five remaining production facilities of Color Spot Nurseries Inc. that were listed for sale when the grower filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in May, according to a report from Greenhouse Grower. Temporarily owned by Wells Fargo under the filings, the recently acquired facilities in California and Texas add up to 11 million square feet of environmentally controlled space and 1,500 acres of outdoor space. Altman Plants was previously ranked the second-largest growing operation behind Color Spot with more than 2,100 acres of growing space.

All of the facilities will be renamed Altman Plants and remain closed for the time being, with the exception of one Texas operation: a San Antonio-based woody ornamental facility will return to its former name, Lone Star Growers, and strategically integrate with Altman Plants business plan.

In July 2018, TreeTown USA announced it was purchasing the Hines division of Color Spot, which comprised of three facilities in Oregon and California. For more information, visit tinyurl.com/y9wgeh27



The Portland Spring Home & Garden Show features products and services in the Portland Expo Center.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF METRO PORTLAND

OAN ANNOUNCES SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE PORTLAND HOME & GARDEN SHOWS

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) has reached an agreement with the Home Builders Association of Metro Portland (HBA) to become the exclusive gardening/nursery association sponsor of the Portland Spring Home & Garden Show® and the Fall Home & Garden Show®, both of which are owned and produced by HBA.

The agreement will give OAN members access to main floor booth space rates previously available only to HBA members. The HBA will also be adding more programming related to gardening to its show schedule. The OAN will lend its expertise, connections and branding in order to support the show and enhance its status as a destination for the gardening consumer.

"We are looking forward to this opportunity to strengthen the gardening component of the Home and Garden Shows, and promote gardening to the public," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. "We think this arrangement will provide more opportunities for our retail and landscape members, and more value."

"We are excited about including more nurseries at the Home & Garden Shows," said Dave Nielsen, CEO of HBA. "There is a natural synergy between homebuilders and nurseries, because we know people are interested in improving their homes as well as their gardens. With the OAN's help, we can provide the ideas, inspiration and solutions to help them do it."

The OAN will continue to distribute its Retail Nurseries and Garden Centers Road Map at both shows, as well as the NW Natural Street of Dreams®, which HBA also owns and produces. Every OAN retail and landscape member is featured on the map.

The OAN will also promote its Plant Something Oregon website and newsletter at the home shows and Street of Dreams. These provide gardeners of all levels with expert advice so they can overcome fear of failure and become more successful.

The Portland Spring Home & Garden Show will be held February 21–24 at the Expo Center in Portland. For more information about the show or to secure your booth space, log on to www.homeshowpdx.com/p/exhibitors or contact Yvonne Lerch at 503-479-2660 or yvonne@hbapdx.com.

OAN PREPARES FOR 2019 SESSION OF THE OREGON LEGISLATURE

The OAN Government Relations team expects to be active during the 2019 session of the Oregon Legislature, which started January 22 and will end on or before June 30. During the session, the Legislature will see around 4,000 bills drafted and 3,000 of those introduced. In a typical session, around 1,500 may pass. The main item on the agenda is the state budget for the 2019–2021 biennium, which will take effect July 1.

The OAN tracks every bill introduced in every session, with the goal of ensuring that ➤

Northwest News

The Farmington Gardens and Floral store serves customers near Hillsboro, Oregon.
PHOTO COURTESY OF FARMINGTON GARDENS

any bills that pass move the industry forward in a meaningful way, or at least are not harmful to members. The OAN takes a bipartisan, issue based approach, always looking to what is best for the industry. Guiding that effort is the 2019 OAN State Priorities document, which addresses issues such as labor and immigration, water and the environment, taxes and budget, and transportation/land use/infrastructure. It was adopted by the OAN Board of Directors in December.

The 2019 Legislature has all of the same leaders in both chambers as it did previously, but a key difference is that the Democratic party now possesses supermajorities in both chambers. This allows passage of tax increases on a party line vote, without Republican assistance. The majority party is contemplating some \$2 billion in tax increases, according to OAN contract lobbyist Elizabeth Remley, who works with Thorn Run Partners.

Interested members are urged to join the OAN Government Relations Committee and consider taking part in OAN Lobby Day on Tuesday, February 13. The committee will meet that day at 11:30 a.m. at a location to be determined, followed by groups going to the capitol to meet individual legislators in their offices and discuss the OAN's state priorities. For more information, please email Jeff Stone at jstone@oan.org.

FARMINGTON GARDENS OPENS DOWNTOWN HILLSBORO STORE

Farmington Gardens has opened a second store, Farmington Gardens and Floral, in Hillsboro, Oregon. Located at 466 S.E. Baseline St., the new downtown storefront sits on a quarter-acre lot on the corner of Fifth and Baseline streets.

Linda Eshraghi, owner of Farmington Gardens, decided to set up a shop in this location to be closer to the customers that she knows often travel from the west side of Portland to the Beaverton location. In Hillsboro, the shop provides a place for local residents who have limited plant and gift shop options, and it will attract customers who wouldn't usually make the



trek down to Beaverton.

New to Farmington Gardens, the recently opened storefront will offer floral services. Customers can place orders for custom flower arrangements or purchase cut flowers on-site. There will also be a more extensive inventory of gift shop and décor items compared to the Beaverton location.

An extensive selection of annual and perennial varieties will be in stock at the store, as well as a mix of popular nursery stock options. A full line of garden tools, sprays, and other supplies are also available. Six employees currently staff the store.

"This location was a garden center 30 years ago — I used to come here when I was a kid — and I always wanted a place in Hillsboro because there's not much that's green here," Linda said. "I'm a native of Hillsboro, so I'm coming back home."

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT NURSERIES FOUND TO BE INFECTING RESTORATION SITES

Plant biologists with the University of California at Berkeley surveyed five native plant nurseries in Northern California, finding that four of them harbored pathogens related to those that cause sudden oak death.

The survey found that wildflowers and herbs grown for and installed at ecological restoration sites were infested with *Phytophthora tentaculata*, which causes root and stem rot. It is not the same as *P. ramorum*, which causes sudden oak death. However, the presence of *P. tentaculata* in these nurseries raised concerns on the part of the researchers that nurseries could introduce such pathogens into the wild.

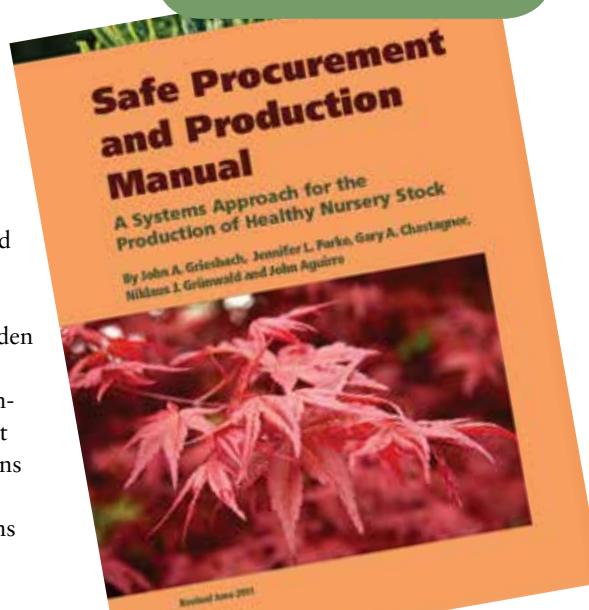
There is concern that disease strains

from ornamental plants could be more aggressive than the ones found in the wild. Some are quickly developing resistance to fungicides.

The research was spurred in part by their discovery of a new strain of *P. ramorum* in Oregon forests that is highly tolerant of phosphite, an environmentally safe fungicide commonly used to control plant parasites in the wild.

The researchers noted that growers can limit the spread of these pathogens through better detection as well as new management techniques. In 2011, the Oregon Association of Nurseries collaborated with researchers at USDA, Oregon State University and Washington State University to publish *Safe Procurement and Production Manual: A Systems Approach for the Production of Healthy Nursery Stock*. This book outlines numerous best practices for all aspects of production that nurseries can adopt to prevent the intro-

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Waxy residue covers the needs of trees infected with elongated hemlock scales.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

duction and spread of *P. ramorum* and other pathogens into their nurseries.

Download your copy for FREE at tinyurl.com/y8j7poth

INVASIVE PESTS TRAVEL TO OREGON ON CHRISTMAS TREES

Plant pest and disease officials reported the detection of two scale insects — the invasive elongated hemlock scale (*Fiorinia externa Ferrisi*) and the Cryptomeria scale (*Aspidiotus cryptomeriae 'Kuwana'*) — on Christmas trees sold from an Oregon plantation, according to a report by KLTN (Medford, Oregon).

Officials cautioned residents and growers to look out for scale eggs, which they consider a possible threat to the nursery, Christmas tree and timber industries. They said any tainted trees should be



burned or buried deep in a landfill.

The infested trees originated from North Carolina. In late November 2018, agricultural inspectors detected the pests on a shipment of about 8,000 Fraser firs shipped from Oregon to California, and later traced back to a North Carolina grower. Officials ordered that the trees be destroyed, but some already had been sold to the public.

The scales eat the underside of the needles on several conifer species native to Oregon, according to experts from the ODA. Affected trees suffer an excessive loss of plant fluid, reduced growth and thinned crowns.

The elongated hemlock scale causes needles to develop a yellowish-brown waxy layer that is present year-round. Cyptomeria scale, on the other hand, creates a translucent waxy cover that is more difficult to detect. Host plants include eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), firs (*Abies spp.*), and spruce (*Picea spp.*). This pest also feeds on cedar (*Cedrus spp.*), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), pine (*Pinus spp.*), and yew (*Taxus spp.*).

A comprehensive report will be published in a future issue of *Lookout*, the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association's magazine. Read the full story at tinyurl.com/y89nvapn



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NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO TAKES OVER AT SKAGIT

Skagit Horticulture has appointed Scott Crownover as the company's new president and chief executive officer, starting in January. Crownover joined Skagit in 2018 as chief operations officer. In this new role, he is replacing Mark Buchholz, who semi-retired at the end of 2018 and will continue to serve the company in an advisory role.



Crownover has more than 35 years of experience in horticulture and has been empowered to develop strategies to grow Skagit into one of the top nursery companies in North America. Prior to joining the company, Crownover served in a variety of other roles, but most recently was president of McHutchison Horticultural

Distributors before that company was acquired by Dümmen Orange.

In his new role with Skagit Horticulture, Crownover will oversee all company divisions, which span from unrooted cuttings to finished plants in ornamental, landscape and specialty agriculture, and which include four growing locations in Washington and California. He can be reached at ScottCrownover@skagithort.com.

Buchholz joined Skagit Gardens Inc. in 2011 as sales manager for finished material, and was appointed president and CEO in 2012. When the company merged with Northwest Horticulture in 2016, he became president and CEO of the resulting company, Skagit Horticulture. He previously served as chief operating officer of Oregon Vineyard Supply and has amassed 45 years of experience in horticulture.

In memoriam: JOAN PINKERT

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is saddened to report the passing of Joan Pinkert, freelance print production designer for the *Nursery Guide* book. She died November 29, 2018 at the age of 68, following a battle with cancer.

For full obituary, visit tinyurl.com/y7cy89ws

A longtime friend of the OAN, Joan assisted in the production of several association print projects for more than a decade. She will be greatly missed for her skill, attention to detail, warmth, and calmness under pressure. ☺



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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 itgmikedarcy@comcast.net.

Gardeners discuss goals and plans for 2019

WITH THE NEW YEAR upon us, I thought it would be interesting to hear what other gardeners are planning for 2019. I talked to a diverse assortment of gardeners in and around the metro area. These are not professional gardeners, but people who enjoy their garden and are always trying to make it better. There is, of course, the delight of buying new plants and especially a plant that is new to the garden.

In my own garden, I have been continually amazed at the mild weather we have had thus far — mid-January and no hard frost! I still have some fuchsias in bloom, and while they do not look like the robust plants they are in the summer, they are still flowering and attracting hummingbirds!

The sun and shade patterns in my garden have changed dramatically over the last few years. I have plants that were initially planted in the sun that are now partially shaded and vice versa. I will be relocating many of these plants in the next month. I have many pots in my garden and I am always on the lookout for new plants that will give me color for most of the summer.

Lately, the genus *Salvia* has been on my radar and I am always looking for new varieties and cultivars. *Salvia 'Saucy Red'* was an outstanding late summer and fall bloomer in my garden this year.

Here are some comments from six area gardeners in their own words:

Michael Bostwick, Milwaukie, Oregon

"My plan for my garden this year is to tear out my lawn in the parking strip and do a xeriscape garden with rockery. I plan on searching for drought-tolerant plants

and incorporating ornamental grasses and native plants. Having diverse interest with foliage and color throughout the year will make it beautiful year-round."

"My garden did amazing last year, and I want to incorporate some drip irrigation into areas hit hard by heat stress.

I will be on the lookout for new plants to incorporate into my garden including *Trillium*, *Penstemon*, *Salvia*, *Eriogonum*, and rare treasures from the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon (HPSO) Hortlandia sale."

Dan Finn, Trout Lake, Washington

"I will be basically starting from scratch when it comes to gardening in 2019. Last year, I moved from Longview, Washington to Trout Lake, Washington, which is at the base of Mt. Adams in Klickitat County. The property we purchased is mostly lava rock. I am planning on installing raised beds for the vegetable garden and for some of the ornamentals. Another challenge will be the hungry deer in the neighborhood. They even devoured the native plants I put in last spring, so deer fencing is on the agenda.

Our summers here are 8–10 degrees warmer than the west side but the growing season is shorter. Gardening in 2019 will be a real challenge but I'm optimistic we can make it work!"

Barbara Blossom, Portland, Oregon

"This seems to be the year of renewal for my garden of more than three decades. Several decrepit trees and elderly shrubs were taken out late last summer. I built fresh soil on the newly empty spaces by layering



fallen leaves with rabbit litter and grass clippings piled quite high. I had fun searching for new, lower maintenance shrubs and plan to arrange them in the two new beds. One area in full-sun will be home to *Physocarpus opulifolius* Ginger Wine® ninebark found at Garden Fever, *Cistus × hybrida* 'Mickie' from Secret Garden Growers, and several *Hydrangea paniculata* varieties from Hydrangeas Plus*. The second site in partial shade will be home to several mahonia found at Cistus, *Epimedium* and ferns from Sebright Gardens. No doubt there will be room to cram in more irresistible treasures waiting to tempt me at spring's plant sales."

Gail Bernard, Lake Oswego

"In my mostly woodland garden, I'm always looking for plants with bold textures and exciting and brilliant colors. It's been a mild winter, so I currently

have a few hardy impatiens and hardy cyclamen blooming as well as hellebores. I plan to introduce new *Schefflera* varieties, and add to my collection of hardy begonias with wild colors and textures. I'm always on the lookout for *Arisaema* and *Podophyllum* and recently found a wonderful *Dichroa febrifuga* as well as a *Daphniphyllum himalayense* ssp. *macropodum* 'Variegata.' I have Far Reaches Farm, Secret Garden Growers, Whitman Farms and Cistus Nursery to thank for their tempting selections and yes, I've already placed orders for spring!"



WHAT I'M HEARING

Previous page: *Salvia 'Saucy Red'* (top) and *Schefflera delavayi* (bottom).

Stewartia pseudocamellia is Kathy Palmer's choice for a small ornamental tree in her yard.



Doug Barragar, Portland, Oregon

"My garden is full. This would be an apt description of my garden at any time for many years. Yet every year I purchase 30, 40, or 50 new plants that somehow make their way into my garden. It's magic. It's probably not particularly helpful in determining consumer trends, but I'm adopting an 'I'll know I need it when I see it' approach to plant purchases this year. I have placed three roses of Sharon, a couple rhododendrons and a *Pieris* on my 'could live without' list. I also have a few patches of *Tricyrtis* that have, over the years, grown from 4-inch pots to 10 square feet. I'll use these spaces and other old plant edits for this year's purchases from plant sales and nursery visits."

Kathy Palmer, Salem, Oregon

"Our normally heavily wooded front garden was somewhat transformed this

fall when we had seven fir trees removed and the stumps ground out. Many still remain but these were our seven largest trees closest to the house. This has drastically changed our light situation in the front and gives us many new plant opportunities.

"In addition to changing our light situation, we now have a flat open area that needs some structure. Our challenge this spring will be to find ornamental small trees which we can enjoy year-round since our large kitchen window looks out on the front. We have purchased three so far, *Styrax japonica* 'Evening Light,' *Lagerstroemia indica* 'Tuscarora' and *Stewartia pseudocamellia*.

"Much of our prior landscape has been semi-shade to shade loving plants so we will need to rethink a lot of our planting. We are thinking of this as an opportunity to finally have a few sun-loving plants. As we are get-

ting older, we have been slowly transitioning to evergreens, small shrubs and easy perennials that don't require constant tending.

"I have dug all my dahlias that have been scattered throughout my gardens wherever I could find a sunny spot and am moving them all to one large bed that gets full sun in an attempt to reduce maintenance and avoid having to step into the beds to tend them. It's going to be an exciting spring, and as my husband says, 'A plant buying opportunity!'"

In talking with other gardeners over the holiday season, there is certainly no lack of enthusiasm for the spring and summer garden season. It is difficult to predict what the balance of the winter or early spring season will be, but I am hopeful that we do not have a snowstorm in February! ☺

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Garden clubs: Cultivating buzz

Growers benefit by building relationships with gardening groups, both in person and online

BY CURT KIPP

GARDEN CLUBS HAVE always had a mutually beneficial relationship with wholesale and retail nurseries. Each can provide something the other needs.

Nurseries need passionate gardeners who are always in search of new and interesting plant discoveries. Gardeners hunger for knowledge about new plant selections, places to shop, design ideas, solutions to common garden problems and much more.

That's why many growers and retailers cultivate relationships with clubs. Among them is Mark Leichty, director of business development with **Little Prince of Oregon Nursery**, a wholesale grower based in Aurora, Oregon. He's also the former owner of a wholesale/retail nursery.

Leichty accepts speaking engagements, and also hosts an occasional tour at Little Prince. "I probably do a lot more speaking than I've ever done," he said. "The topics vary. Sometimes I have done presentations on ferns, I've done gardening in shade, drought tolerant gardening, gardening with succulents, and sometimes it's just an introduction to all our brands and lines."

Leichty also manages the social media accounts for Little Prince and participates in gardening groups that exist on various online platforms. "I couldn't even tell you how many gardening

groups I belong to on Facebook," he said.

Leichty considers all the time spent on promotional work in person and online to be essential. "As an industry professional, I have a vested interest in working to create the current and future generation of gardeners," he said.

Where the gardeners are

Garden and plant clubs are typically either based around a particular city or region, or devoted to a particular type of plant. There are clubs dedicated to fuchsias, begonias, ferns, daylilies, rhododendrons, conifers and many others. The Internet, likewise, has groups focused on gardening in general, as well as particular plant types or genera.

Dan Heims, a principal at **Terra Nova Nurseries Inc.**, remembers the pre-Internet days when garden and plant clubs were among the few forums where the non-academic could share knowledge.

Heims frequented such groups starting in the 1970s, which he considers the "golden age" of garden clubs. "You could bring a sick plant in and have resources," he said. "There was always some old person in the group. I've coined the term 'chlorophyll-luminati.' They just knew everything." **>>**

Cultivating buzz

Previous page: Left: Mark Leichty speaks to attendees of the Farwest Show. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP Right: Plant enthusiasts listen to a presentation of the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

Top: Al's Garden & Home hosts a garden club event. PHOTO COURTESY OF ALS GARDEN & HOME Below: Social media posts from gardening groups reach a large online audience.



Garden clubs in the United States date back to the 1800s, and the Oregon Federation of Garden Clubs — still 83 clubs and 2,300 members strong today — started back in 1927. The impetus then was social as much as botanical. "Women wanted something to do while their husbands were away at work," federation president Gaye Stewart said.

Although garden clubs have since changed (along with society and gender roles), Stewart believes in their continued importance.

"So many of our kids have no idea how you grow a vegetable, or where they come from," she said. "We're really conservationists. We want to protect and educate. I don't know that there is a group in the state that buys more plants and appreciates the nurseries more than our members."

With the Internet, however, garden clubs aren't the only ready source of expertise and advice. It's now possible to get a question answered in seconds by visiting Facebook or Reddit and finding the right group or board. "It's almost instantaneous," Heims said. "I love it."

Heims reads gardening blogs on a daily basis and posts pictures, but still finds the experience lacking in some

respects. "There is nothing like coming to a meeting, experiencing the passion of the members firsthand, and putting your hands on the plants," he said.

That's why he still invests his time in clubs and groups, speaking to them frequently and hosting tours. "We open up our garden to the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon every year," Heims said. "I open up my personal garden and we open up our garden at Terra Nova."

Sometimes the in-person exposure leads to online exposure. "If you get one person enthused, it's going to hit 100 more people," Heims said. "For them to take a picture of a plant, put it up on the web, do a video, that's all strokes."

Adapting to the times

There remains a broad concern over a decline in garden club membership and participation, whether due to aging leadership, the move to online forums or other factors.

In early 2018, one of the largest garden clubs in Oregon, the Metropolitan Garden Club of Portland, disbanded. Leaders cited declining interest in the club, though it had an active newsletter and regular events right up to its demise.

Judy Alleruzzo, the perennials and

house plants buyer for **Al's Garden & Home** (Woodburn, Oregon) and co-host of the Garden Time TV show (Portland, Oregon), has noticed a similar dropoff. "The local daylily society and fuchsia society used to come to stores and do displays and ask questions," she said. "They've stopped coming. They don't have anybody to man the booth and interact."

Their presence is missed. "It's like having a focus group that you don't have to organize," Alleruzzo said. "You can ask, 'What are you planting? What's your focus?' If they don't talk to us, we don't know."

However, other garden clubs are growing and even thriving. One example is the Bonsai Society of Portland. "A huge portion of our club now is in the range of mid-20s to 50 now," club president Lee Cheatle said. "It's not just people in or nearing retirement, empty nesters. These people still have children but they want to do bonsai."

Not so long ago, the club appeared headed for bankruptcy. "A bunch of us got together and said, 'Not in my lifetime.' And now we're thriving," Cheatle said.

One key survival strategy was to make all interested people feel welcome, regardless of skill level or knowledge. "I



tell people at their first meeting that everyone is sincerely there to help them learn and to grow in their bonsai journey,” Cheatle said.

Heims visited a recent International Aroid Society Show in Florida and found an environment of sharing and mentorship. “They have some 80-year-olds in the group and then there were some young, 25-year-olds in the group with their eyes wide open,” Heims said.

He found the same at a recent sale of the African Violet Society. “I went to it this year and it was so crowded,” he said. “The beauty of it was seeing all the young faces.”

Changing of the guard

Last fall, the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon (HPSO) attained an all-time high of 2,700 members and 2,100 households, according to administrator and past-president Bruce Wakefield. The club has promoted itself well and adapted offerings to fit member desires.

“I think we’ve finally got some people on our board who are under 50, and even some under 40 who are very savvy with social media,” Wakefield said. “They are bloggers, in fact, and they know how to reach out to younger generations and ➤”

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communicate with them."

The open garden program has become one of HPSO's most popular offerings. Some 120 private gardens participated during the 2018 summer season. "On any weekend from April 1 to October 1, our members could visit private gardens on Saturdays and Sundays

and sometimes Monday evenings," Wakefield said.

HPSO's travel program is also popular, with about 450 members participating.

For speakers, HPSO draws on experts mostly from specialty nurseries and small retailers, and usually not from larger growing operations. They

have included Leonard Fultz of **Dancing Oaks Nursery** (Monmouth, Oregon), Paul Bonine of Xera Plants (Portland, Oregon) and Maurice Horn of **Joy Creek Nursery** (Scappoose, Oregon), among others.

"There is a core of people that are really plant nerds," Wakefield said. "They want to know about the latest, greatest

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However, even with strong membership rolls, getting participation is still a challenge.

"We used to fill rooms with 600 people for a lecture in the 1990s," Wakefield said. "Now we are lucky to get 300 at a lecture, and that's despite the fact that our membership has actually grown. And people register for these events at the last minute. They expect more instant gratification and they don't want to make up-front commitments."

Or perhaps, Heims suggested, people lead busier lives and don't have the time they once did.

The payoff for nurseries

In the end, growers like Leichty find that investing time and resources in garden and plant clubs is still worthwhile. "Garden clubs are a great source of word of mouth and traffic," he said. "If one person discovers a cool nursery or garden center, they come back and tell their whole club."

From a retail perspective, Alleruzzo has found that online discussions can lead to sales. "One lady is on the *Phellodendron* (cork tree) Facebook page and is asking me to bring in things that I've never even heard of," she said. "That's so cool. It's generating business. They're contacting us and saying, can you get these plants?"

For another example, demand for the Chinese money plant (*Pilea peperomioides*), a houseplant with pancake-like leaves, suddenly spiked. "We can't



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Cultivating buzz

A group of gardeners attend an interactive program hosted by Al's Garden & Home.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALS GARDEN & HOME



keep them in stock because there's a buzz somewhere on the Internet," Alleruzzo said. "And it's across the country. It's not just the Northwest."

The 4-inch houseplant is profitable, selling for \$20–\$30.

Leichty frequently writes blog and newsletter posts highlighting a particular plant. He does this to promote the plants as well as to assess gardeners' interest in particular ones.

"If I can generate a lot of interest in a particular plant that we don't grow, then it becomes worthwhile to invest in getting the stock to begin growing that particular plant," he said.

According to Wakefield, garden clubs are often eager to build relationships with more nurseries, and he hopes those nurseries will see the benefits.

"I wish that organizations like Hardy Plant could coordinate more with nurseries, not duplicate efforts," he said. "We need to network a little better and leverage each other's strengths." ☈



Taxing times for trade

How Trump's tariffs and trade policies are impacting Oregon's nursery industry

BY JON BELL

JEFF STONE HAS BEEN in the nursery industry in Oregon for nearly 15 years. And in that time, the executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries has seen his share of industry ups and downs, particularly in the area of trade. Most recently, he's seen it swing wildly under President Donald Trump.

But even though it might seem more extreme under Trump, the tariffs and trade policy tit-for-tats are nothing new.

"It's not unusual to have disagreements over trade," Stone said. "Trump is not the first president to engage in all this, and he won't be the last."

But this time around, there is something different. This time, the steep tariffs and trade tightening imposed by the Trump administration — which triggered retaliatory tariffs from China, Canada and the European Union — seem to be missing something: A plan.

"My main criticism of all this is that I don't know if the administration has a real plan," Stone said. "The political side of this is as much drama and theater as anything else. But if you're just upsetting markets and there is no real plan — I just don't like the optics."

Plan or no plan, the trade and tariff environment has shifted dramatically over the past two years under Trump. This year alone, the Trump administration has levied or proposed billions in new tariffs on everything from steel and aluminum to auto-

mobiles, televisions and plastics. While the nursery industry may not be as directly affected as some other fields within agriculture and horticulture, there are impacts and concerns that have the industry on edge and ready to react. There's also a general sense of uncertainty that's hanging over the market.

"We know the additional tariffs have had impact on our exports and imports over the past six months," said Alexis Taylor, director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. "What we don't know is how well-established trade relationships will fare during this time of uncertainty."

What's at stake

When it comes to international exports, Oregon's nursery industry may not be hit as hard as some when trade policy changes and tariffs ratchet up. Just over 5 percent of what is produced here in Oregon is exported to other countries, including Canada, China, Europe and elsewhere. The rest stays statewide, with 26 percent remaining in Oregon, 25 percent going to western states, about 20 percent heading to the Midwest, 12 percent going to Atlantic and Gulf states and 13 percent going to the Northeast.

According to Craig Regelbrugge, senior vice president of AmericanHort, part of the reason the nursery industry is shielded a bit from direct impacts to new retaliatory tariffs from other countries is the fact that trade in live plants is somewhat lim- ➤

Taxing times for trade

ited by quarantine restrictions that are designed to prevent the movement of serious plant pests and diseases. Live plant exports from the U.S. are similarly limited.

The larger Oregon agriculture industry is a little more vulnerable and, as a result, concerned about new tariffs and trade shifts, according to Taylor.

"The uncertainty around federal trade policy with China is causing concern in the agricultural community and for good reason," she said. "China is one of Oregon's top agricultural export markets. In 2017, more than \$290 million in Oregon food and agricultural products were shipped to China, the state's fourth largest market."

Even so, thanks to a list of more than 1,300 goods from China impacted by the Trump administration's new tariffs, Oregon's nurseries do face the potential of higher costs for a variety of inputs required to produce plants. Those include plastics — think products such as pots and stakes — as well as farming equipment and components, fertilizer and other goods.

"During my tour of nurseries in the Willamette Valley in September 2018, I heard concerns from growers that additional tariffs on key inputs are raising the cost of doing business," Taylor said. "The effects of additional tariffs are widespread and can be found in both products we export and import in agriculture."

Regelbrugge said AmericanHort recently heard from a fruit tree nursery stock producer in the Pacific Northwest who was stuck with a \$50,000 tariff bill for a container load of fiberglass tree stakes.

"So we may see input costs rising until the tariff spat settles down," he said.

In addition, Regelbrugge said a number of specialty flower and vegetable seeds are produced under contract in China. Volumes of those produced are often too small to be of interest to domestic producers here in the U.S.; nonetheless, some of them were included in the last round of tariffs, "so some seed supply chain impacts are being felt," he said. Tree fruit



and tree nut industries have also had their export markets hit hard. That could lead producers to scale back planting, which in turn could end up hurting the propagation nurseries that produce fruit and nut tree planting stock.

Taxing times

On top of Oregon nurseries feeling the impact of trade tensions and the new tariffs, ultimately consumers will, too.

Charlie Hall, professor and the Ellison Chair in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University, said every time tariffs are levied, it's the consumer who pays the bill. And those higher prices, Hall said, end up canceling out some of the savings that may have come from Trump's tax cut bill of 2017.

"The tariffs are like a sales tax for our products," said Stone.

Severely increasing tariffs and edging toward a trade war also puts at risk the valuable relationships that Oregon nurseries and others in the agriculture industry have worked so long and hard to establish. Stone said those kinds of relationships take a lot of time and effort to build. Policy decisions that aren't well thought-out can put those relationships at risk.

"Oregon businesses have many long-standing relationships in China, some spanning decades," Taylor said. "At ODA we are working to strengthen those relationships through continued talks and trade missions."

The trade-offs

There are other efforts, aside from trade missions like those the ODA conducts, to help soften the tariff blow on Oregon nurseries and the industry in general. Regelbrugge said those include teaming up with other industries who might be feeling the same pinch.

"The tariff issues and dynamics are, as a general matter, way bigger than our industry, and so are the pressures to resolve them," he said. "One area where we share something in common with other sectors, like the high-tech sector, relates to intellectual property. Some of the world's foremost plant breeders and innovators are here in America, and they would benefit from more robust plant intellectual property protection schemes in countries like China. If the tariff wars lead to better Chinese laws and compliance that will be a positive."

As evidenced in early December, after Trump met with Chinese President Xi in Argentina, the ongoing trade dispute is likely to continue meandering and morphing as the administration's trade policies evolve. There have been some hints that certain tariffs might be scaled back on both sides of the table. The December signing of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, also known as the "New NAFTA," has helped calm some fears.

There may be some long-term good to come out of the current trade upheaval, but Regelbrugge said too many wrong steps could also have dire consequences.

"In my own humble opinion, the tariff and trade tensions have had some legitimate basis. In the case of China, for instance, everyone believes that the country has been a fair partner. If the tensions result in real gains, that'll be to the good," he said. "On the other hand, many sectors have seen market access disruption and greater costs and uncertainty. Ultimately, trade tensions or even wars are not good for the business cycle and the economy, and if they drag on, they may contribute to the next inevitable tipping point toward a recession." ☈

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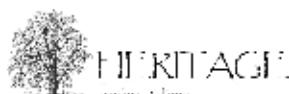
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Grapes as a nursery opportunity

BY DR. PATTY SKINKIS

GRAPES ARE ONE of the ancient commodities, as they have been important to agriculture and human history for centuries. The growth of grapes and production of wine are rife with tradition. As a result, wine grapes are one of the least improved crops in modern agriculture.

The wine industry's strong tradition has growers in both the Old World (Europe) and New World (United States, Australia, New Zealand) producing primarily one wine grape species — *Vitis vinifera*. Although there are more than 10,000 varieties of *Vitis vinifera* to choose from, wine markets demand that only a handful of varieties are produced and wine regions challenge themselves to focus on one or few flagship varieties.

Commercial grape production includes almost exclusively wine grapes, and only a handful of *Vitis vinifera* varieties are grown on a sizable scale. While Oregon is not a table grape industry, some small-scale producers are growing table grapes for farm markets.

This article outlines the trends for grape varieties grown by commercial producers (large and small) and homeowners in Oregon with opportunities suggested for nurseries in making grapevine plant material available to Oregon producers.

Commercial wine industry

It's all about Pinot Noir clones. *Vitis vinifera* 'Pinot Noir' is Oregon's flagship wine grape variety (Figure 1). It grows well under Western Oregon conditions and produces high quality wine for which the state is well known. As a result, there are more acres planted with Pinot Noir



than any other variety, making up 58 percent of the total state acreage (University of Oregon 2018).

If you ask a wine grape grower what they produce, they may list off clones rather than varieties. They rely on certain clones for specific wine quality outcomes. The Dijon clones (originating from France) are the most commonly grown in Oregon since the 1990s and include 115, 777, and 667. Many growers also produce the Pommard clone, which is cited as the clone that helped the early industry achieve wine quality acclaim.

Other clones have piqued winemakers' interests recently, including 90, 97 (Swan), and 37 (Mt. Eden) amongst others, as they seek to make their wines more distinctive. The challenge for producers is understanding the clonal characteristics, source, and availability. There is not much

public information about the characteristics of each clone, and most information comes from winemaker experience.

There are 156 Pinot Noir clones available at the Foundation Plant Services (FPS) Grapevine Program in Davis, California. They provide importation and plant material clean up processes to ensure that clean plant material (virus-free) is available to nurseries. However, it is important to note that many producers speak of clone based on their origin and not the FPS-assigned numbers, and there can be great confusion about clonal identity.

Other cool climate varieties

Far more vineyards are being planted to *Vitis vinifera* 'Chardonnay' today than *Vitis vinifera* 'Pinot Gris', as there is a greater market for premium Chardonnay wines. Similar to Pinot Noir, winemakers are seeking to plant certain clones with preference for both French (Dijon) or American (California) clones. There are 120 Chardonnay clones available through FPS, many of which are clean and available to nurseries as certified stock.

Again, the challenge is in understanding what the producer is seeking and cross-referencing this with the clonal identity upon completion of the clean-up process. In addition, there is some interest in planting *Vitis vinifera* 'Gamay Noir' and 'Sauvignon Blanc' for certain areas of the Willamette Valley. However, the demand is much lower than for Chardonnay.

Cold-climate varieties

There is a small sector of the Oregon wine industry experimenting with wine ➤

Grapes as a nursery opportunity

Previous page: Figure 1: *Vitis vinifera* 'Pinot noir' is the No. 1 wine grape variety grown in western Oregon, making up 58 percent of the state's acreage. PHOTO BY PATTY SKINKIS

Figure 2: Pinot Noir grapes infected with Red Blotch Disease, a virus of grapevines that cause reduced wine quality. This virus has likely been present for some time but was not identified until 2012 when scientists were able to test for the virus. This virus heightened industry's awareness of the consequences of unclean plant material and increased the desire for certified clean plant material.

PHOTO BY PATTY SKINKIS

grape production in Central Oregon. The challenges are many, given the region's short growing season, seasonal frost events, and high daily temperature fluctuations throughout winter. Most *Vitis vinifera* varieties will not be able to survive these conditions. Specifically, they would not break bud late enough or ripen early enough for wine production in Central Oregon.

However, some of the interspecific cold climate varieties bred by the University of Minnesota and Cornell breeding programs may be better suited to Central Oregon's climate.

There has been success in growing Marquette, Frontenac, Frontenac Gris, Vignoles and Foch, all of which are complex hybrids of *Vitis vinifera* and American *Vitis* species. They offer characteristics such as greater winter hardiness and shorter growing season requirements compared to *Vitis vinifera*. The availability of these varieties to Oregon growers is limited, and mainly nurseries in the East and Midwest produce these varieties but are not able or willing to comply with the current Oregon grape quarantine. There is a potential for local nurseries to produce some of these varieties in small quantities for growers in the Central Oregon region.

Homeowners and small-scale growers

I often receive homeowner inquiries about sourcing grapevines for home gardens or vineyards. Wine grape requests usually follow industry trends, with interest primarily in Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and others. However, these varieties are not available in most garden centers, and it is difficult to find a nursery that will sell small quantities or a single vine.

Often homeowners or small-scale growers inquire about where to obtain cuttings for propagation, but we do not encourage that practice given concerns of the commercial industry about disease spread. Many of the issues with virus in plant material have been spread primarily by propagation with infected plants.

When it comes to table grapes, the biggest limitation is the number of cultivars that will do well in Oregon. Many

of the table grapes produced for grocery stores require greater heat units and longer seasons than available in Oregon. In fact, traditional table grape cultivars are grown in the hottest grape production regions of the world (California's Central Valley and the Middle East). However, there are options for high quality table grape varieties for cooler climates thanks to the work of the University of Arkansas grape breeding program.

The OSU Berry Crops Program has been evaluating the performance of some of the Arkansas releases and crosses amongst others in a table grape variety trial at the OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center. These varieties are evaluated for yield, ripening ability, and resistance to cracking (due to rain) and are showing promise for small farms in the fresh market production. They are also more flavorful than the generic red or green table grapes found in grocery stores.

There is an opportunity for nurseries to supply some of these new releases to homeowners and small-scale growers who wish to grow something more unique.

A need for "clean" grapevines

Regardless of the grape variety, Oregon growers will soon be seeking certified plant material for their vineyards, farms, or home gardens. With the discovery of new grapevine viruses that can be damaging to wine quality, including Red Blotch disease (Figure 2) and Pinot Gris virus among others, growers are nervous about planting unclean (non-certified or non-tested) materials.

Growers have not been careful about sourcing clean or certified plant material in the past and often would try to reduce planting costs by gathering bud wood and having custom grafting done from their local plant sources. However, the spread of these viruses has primarily been due to propagation with infected plant material.

To address the growing concerns, we have been educating the industry about the importance of planting only "clean" plants that come as "certified" stock from



the nursery. Certification can show that the plant material came from a mother source that was tested to be free of viruses and pathogens of concern.

To further address this issue, the wine grape industry and academic partners are working with departments of agriculture in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho to achieve certification uniformity across the Pacific Northwest (Washington Wine Industry Foundation 2018). If enacted, all growers (commercial or hobby) will be required to plant only certified grapevines by the year 2023.

Regardless of the rule changes, some commercial growers are currently seeking only certified stock for new plantings due to recent concern over virus-infected vineyards. Furthermore, LIVE sustainable certification of vineyards — the most common farming certification for Oregon — already requires its members to plant grapevines that are certified or have virus testing completed at the source prior to propagation.

There is a growing opportunity for nurseries to provide the Oregon wine grape industry and the public with clean, certified grapevine plant material, and the ODA is currently working on certification standards for a local grapevine certification program. The wine industry's biggest concern with the rule change will be the lack of sufficient stock available for new plantings. Certification programs take

time to implement and generate sufficient tested stock to growers. Many Oregon producers currently purchase stock from California or Washington, but there is interest in buying locally (from Oregon nurseries) should there be sufficient stock available to meet production needs.

Grapes are an important crop for Oregon. The wine grape acreage has nearly doubled in the past 10 years to just over 33,000 acres, and the future growth trajectory in the wine sector is strong. Having additional in-state sources of clean and certified grapevine stock for those growers, including scion and rootstock material, will be helpful for producers who wish to buy locally and alleviate supply chain shortages anticipated from producers across the West Coast. Understanding which "cleaned up" versions of wine grape clones are available is important to ensure that growers are getting the clonal material they desire without the viruses.

Finally, there is opportunity for nurseries to consider offering table grape or wine grape varieties for small-scale growers or homeowners to allow a greater diversity for their farms, gardens, or landscapes. ☺

For further reading

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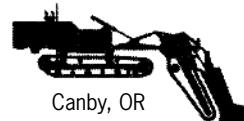
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Flowers, hearts and decapitations

Valentine's Day is a day to show affection for our loved ones, but it also happens to be one of the most profitable holidays of the year.

Although the giving of flowers makes up only a small part of the spending, far behind Christmas or Mother's Day for our retailers, it still brings in customers and money.

The traditions we experience on February 14 are familiar to all. Less well known are the stories behind how they got started.

An inauspicious beginning

February 14 is the feast of St. Valentine, a Catholic saint who was beheaded by Roman Emperor Claudius II on that very day in the third century A.D. Many legends try to explain why the saint was put to death. A popular tale says he officiated weddings for young couples after Claudius outlawed marriage for young men. The emperor believed men who weren't romantically involved would make better soldiers.

Another story says he helped Catholics who were imprisoned for their beliefs.

However it is quite possible that the holiday was promoted to overshadow the pagan festival of Lupercalia which took place between February 13 and 15. Celebrants sacrificed goats and abused women in the hopes of making them more fertile. Pope Gelasius I (who served from 492–496 A.D.) outlawed Lupercalia and officially declared February 14 to be Valentine's Day.

My youngest daughter once asked me why the day was called Valentine's Day. I remember the horrified look on her face when I told her this story of a beheaded priest.

Legend has it when St. Valentine was in prison, he prayed with the daughter of one of his judges. Before his execution, he wrote her a letter, signing it "From your Valentine." The signature caught on and is used to show affection.

Hearts, roses and chocolate

We associate Valentine's Day with the heart shape, roses and chocolate. But if the heart shapes we draw were anatomically correct, the result would be a complex image of

valves and muscles.

If the Catholic Church theory is taken into account, the heart came to St. Margaret Mary Alocoque in a vision in the 1600s. The heart appeared to her surrounded by thorns. This symbol is known as the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a representation of His love.

Roses have an anchor back to the Victorian era, when people expressed their emotions through florigraphy, otherwise known as the language of flowers. Giving a certain kind of flower conveyed a specific message, and red roses meant romance.

Getting flowers to bloom in February is a challenge, but what do the colors mean? Yellow conveys friendship and joy; lavender is associated with love at first sight, and dark pink designates gratitude and appreciation.

My existence in the male gender has made me unaware of such differences, instead defaulting to the binary judgement of flowers or no flowers (and thus in good graces or in trouble).

As for boxed chocolate and Valentine's Day, Richard Cadbury should get the credit (or blame). He discovered a way to extract pure cocoa butter from whole beans and the "extra" that was not used for a chocolate drink was converted into "eating chocolate." This turned into beautiful boxes for his special Valentine's Day delicacies in the shape of cupid and roses.

The State of Oregon's preferred chocolate is the chocolate rose. My wife Jennifer would prefer the states of Idaho, Iowa, Maryland or Pennsylvania, where M&M's rule supreme.

Hallmark and a cottage industry

Around the 18th century in England, it became a common custom to give out handwritten notes for Valentine's Day as a sign of affection. Eventually, printing technology improved and ready-made cards supplanted the more personal handwritten effort.

The practice reached America in the 1840s when Esther Howland, a student at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, decided she could make cards as beautiful as the British. Under the name New England Valentine Co., Howland earned acclaim as the "Mother of the American Valentine."

Now Hallmark sells 145 million Valentine's Day cards a year, just behind



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

their total number of Christmas cards. They have 1,400 different cards in print.

Conversation hearts

Conservation hearts — those little, pastel-colored candies with pithy romantic entreaties such as "kiss me" on them — have become the bane of the Stone family existence.

Love them or hate them, these hearts are everywhere the weeks leading up to Valentine's Day. If you have younger children, making sure every classmate receives the candy hearts is the focus of a household.

But not many know that these hearts date back to the days of the American Civil War, when their predecessors — candies called "cockles" — were popular. Similar to fortune cookies, these treats were shaped like scallop shells and contained paper messages.

In 1866, candy companies began churning out miniature candy hearts, then called "motto hearts." The sayings have evolved a lot since those days of "be mine" and "love you." I shudder to think about what they could say today: "Tweet me", "PM (personal message) me" or something equally horrifying — surely romance at its finest.

Our part in a special day

While not a huge holiday like others, the florist industry is slammed during this love-filled holiday. Valentine's Day also signals the unofficial "opening day" for spring sales at nurseries. (For this particular executive director, it also signals when pitchers and catchers report to camp).

Love is in the air for many in our industry and it a good time and take stock of the many relationships and friendships we enjoy. Nobody should lose their heads over it but from my family to yours — hope you have a wonderful holiday and the start of the spring season! ☺

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