

MEET THE LEADER

The voices of Oregon's nursery industry

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I grew up on a farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California where my parents had a greenhouse operation that grew hothouse tomatoes and European cucumbers for grocery stores. In 1985, we moved up to Hubbard, Oregon. In high school, I worked for Case Nursery (Aurora, Oregon) doing cuttings on Saturdays and was very active in North Marion FFA. I held chapter positions up through president and district treasurer. I attended a private college in Iowa to study business, administration and communications, where I worked at the local radio station and received my FCC license to broadcast on the air. My parents started Grower's Nursery Supply near the end of 1992 in Hubbard, before moving the business just north of Salem in 1995. I started working for them as a salesperson at the beginning of February 2003. When they retired and sold the business, I stayed on doing the bookkeeping and a lot of essential duties.

WHAT'S YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE?

I really love being in the business of getting to know all the growers in the industry. I have formed relationships with our customers and worked to help them get what they need. I strive to help everyone to the best of my ability.

WHAT'S THE BEST BUSINESS DECISION YOU'VE EVER MADE?

Taking the job my parents offered me was my best decision — I wish I had started in the industry sooner.

WHAT'S YOUR GREATEST MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

When my parents decided to sell the business, my parents offered it to me first. As a single mom, I felt overwhelmed and didn't know how I was going to do it alone. At that time, I only had worked there for a short time doing sales, so I turned it down. If I knew then what I know now, I would have bought it. But as they say ... hindsight is 20/20 and things happen for a reason.



Janet Poot
Office Manager
Grower's Nursery Supply Inc.

OAN member since 2006

- Willamette Chapter president.
Previously: vice president and secretary

WHO IS YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT MENTOR?

I have a few mentors: Growing up, I learned from Dad by watching and helping him in the greenhouse operation. There are times I wish I had asked more questions, paid more attention. Overall, my parents showed me the ropes of the industry. In high school, I looked up to my FFA advisor, Joe Wehrli, for helping us students achieve our goals. I admire my boss, Don Top, who has brought Grower's Nursery Supply up to another level of quality as a supplier.

WHAT IS YOUR BEST BUSINESS ADVICE?

Treat everyone fairly with integrity and respect. Every customer who supports your business and livelihood is a valued customer, regardless of the size of their operation.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE?

My annual "greatest challenge" starts with busy season, which involves juggling sales and keeping up with all the books so

I don't have to bring work home. It can be exhausting at times, but I just strive to be the best person that I can be as a mother, an employee and a leader 110 percent.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO TO WORK EVERYDAY?

Even though my folks no longer own this business, I still feel the need to honor what my parents started and treat this like my family business. I love the work that I do. I have a great boss and co-workers. I get to see regular customers as well as new ones. I enjoy building those relationships and I couldn't have asked for a better work environment.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE NURSERY INDUSTRY?

I enjoy getting to know all the growers and other professionals throughout the industry. We are all one big family, connected in one way or another. We see each other at events, we watch each other's children grow up and see each other getting older.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I'm very proud of my boys — Randy, Dakota, and Reggie — who have dealt with my late-night board meetings and chapter events over the years. I am proud to be part of the Willamette Chapter, going on my second term of president. We received the OAN Chapter of the Year award for 2018 and we couldn't have done that without awesome sponsors or past and present board members.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES FACING THE NURSERY INDUSTRY TODAY?

A commonly heard of complaint is that our costs are going up, but end buyers aren't paying much more. Adding to that list are labor, minimum wage, and wage boundaries. Our state is making it hard to operate in this industry and unfortunately that may drive some folks out of business. It's challenging to be up-to-date on all the regulations and have guidance for jumping through all the hoops to operate our businesses. ©