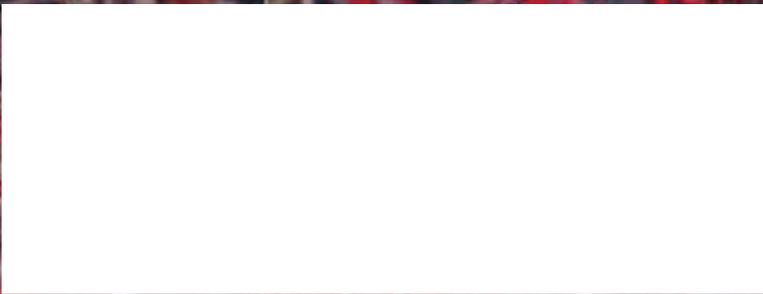


Digger

DECEMBER 2019



The
TRANSITIONS
Issue



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Digger



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On the cover: From left: Steve Ekstrom and Brandon Schmidt stand in their container yard at Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery. PHOTO BY BILL GOLOSKI

On this page: Left: The OAN Research Committee received the Committee or Chapter of the Year Award. Accepting on their behalf (from left) Leigh Leigh Parham Geschwill, Chris Robinson and Scott Renfro. Presenting to them are emcee Carson Lord (left) and president Jim Sinnitt (right). PHOTO BY CURT KIPP Right: J Farms is a successful grower that began through effective mentorship. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



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PH 503-682-5089 PORTLAND
PH 888-283-7219 NATIONWIDE
FAX 503-682-5099 MAIN OFFICE
FAX 503-682-5727 PUBLICATIONS
info@oan.org EMAIL
www.oan.org WEB
www.diggermagazine.com NEWS BLOG

STAFF

Jeff Stone jstone@oan.org
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 503-582-2003

Beth Farmer bfarmer@oan.org
COMMUNICATIONS & WEB DESIGN MANAGER 503-582-2013

Bill Goloski bgoloski@oan.org
PUBLICATIONS MANAGER 503-582-2009

Kelsey Hood khood@oan.org
EVENT & PROGRAM COORDINATOR 503-582-2010

Debbie Hopkins dhopkins@oan.org
ACCOUNTING & DATABASE MANAGER 503-582-2004

Curt Kipp ckipp@oan.org
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS 503-582-2008

Zen Landis zlandis@oan.org
EVENT & EDUCATION MANAGER 503-582-2011

Allan Niemi aniemi@oan.org
DIRECTOR OF EVENTS 503-582-2005

Blair Thompson bthompson@oan.org
ADVERTISING ACCOUNT MANAGER 503-582-2012

Stephanie Wehrauch swehrauch@oan.org
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION 503-582-2001

DIGGER

Curt Kipp ckipp@oan.org
EDITOR 503-582-2008

Bill Goloski bgoloski@oan.org
ART DIRECTOR 503-582-2009

Blair Thompson bthompson@oan.org
ADVERTISING ACCOUNT MANAGER 503-582-2012

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2019-2020 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jim Simnitt
PRESIDENT
Simnitt Nursery
138 NE 22nd Ave.
Canby, OR 97013
simnittnsy@canby.com
503-266-9640
FAX 503-263-6330

Kyle Fessler
PRESIDENT-ELECT
Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.
13009 McKee School Road N.E.
Woodburn, OR 97071
sales@woodburnnursery.com
503-634-2231
FAX 503-634-2238

Josh Robinson
VICE PRESIDENT
Robinson Nursery Inc.
P.O. Box 100
Amity, OR 97101
josh@robinsonnursery.com
877-855-8733
FAX 503-835-3004

Todd Nelson
TREASURER
Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.
17280 Boones Ferry Rd. N.E.
Woodburn, OR 97071
info@bountifulfarms.com
503-981-7494

Mike Hiller
PAST PRESIDENT
KCK Farms LLC
11483 SE Amity-Dayton Hwy.
Dayton, OR 97114
mike@kckfarms.com
503-864-9422
FAX 503-864-4412

Denece Messenger
SECRETARY
Decorative Bark Products
P.O. Box 1198
Tualatin, OR 97062
denecemessenger@comcast.net
503-510-4029
FAX 503-859-3764

Wes Bailey
MEMBER AT LARGE
Smith Gardens Inc.
23150 Boones Ferry Road N.E.
Aurora, OR 97002
wes.bailey@smithgardens.com
503-678-5373

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tom Brewer
ASSOCIATE MEMBER
HC Companies Inc. ProCal
tbrewer@hc-companies.com
503-686-8448

Adam Farley
CONTAINER GROWER
Countryside Nursery
afarley@countrysidenursery.com
503-678-0511

Ron Kinney
CONTAINER GROWER
Monrovia
rkinney@monrovia.com
503-868-7941

Amanda Staehely
CONTAINER GROWER
Columbia Nursery
amandastaehely@gmail.com
503-810-2598

Jesse Nelson
FIELD / BARE ROOT GROWER
Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.
jnelson@hansnelson.com
503-663-3348

Chris Robinson
FIELD / BARE ROOT GROWER
Robinson Nursery Inc.
chris@robinsonnursery.com
877-855-8733

Jay Sanders
FIELD / B&B GROWER
KG Farms Inc.
jsanders@kgfarmsinc.com
503-678-3245

Lorne Blackman
GREENHOUSE
Walla Walla Nursery Co. Inc.
lblackman@wallawallanursery.com
509-522-9855

Ben Verhoeven
GREENHOUSE
Peoria Gardens Inc.
benv@peoriagardens.com
541-753-8519

Gary S. English
RETAIL
Landsystems Nursery
gary@landssystemsnursery.com
541-382-7646

Slowing down to take stock

The days are shorter, colder and wetter, which means it's beginning to look a lot like the winter season around the nursery.

This time around the holiday season is a slower time of year. The greenhouses are all buttoned up for winter. The pipes are drained and winterized. We have the time to slow down and look back at the year, including what successes we had and what goals we want to set for the next season.

Last month's OAN Convention featured a dynamic keynote speaker named Greg Wooldridge, a former commander of the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels flight team. He talked passionately about how to build a successful team, starting with the essential need for trust.

For me, a key takeaway was his insight into the importance of debriefing sessions like the ones the Blue Angels conduct after each flight show. They go over what went well, and the not-so-great aspects, too. All members of the team speak up and take responsibility for their parts — the good and the bad. This instills trust that the team members can work together to improve and to achieve common goals.

Although nurseries are not working in life-or-death scenarios — like piloting planes at breakneck speeds, for example — we still can benefit from some of the lessons Wooldridge shared. Namely, we all need to take responsibility for our parts of the team and to continue to work toward common goals.

Looking back on this past year, I can see successes at our nursery. I think one of our most significant achievements was streamlining our order-pulling process. The team embraced the process change that we made. We will definitely build on this success in the coming year.

But when evaluating something, you need to be open and all-encompassing. That means looking for the good things along with the unfortunate. One area I see a need for improvement is in how we handle contingency plans in our deliveries.

While most deliveries can go off without a hitch, every once in a while, there's a snag. In the hectic nature of spring, we don't always have time to evaluate other options. I need to have a backup plan in place. That falls squarely in my lap. I wasn't happy with how I handled that this past year, and I will work to do better this coming year.

It's important to look toward the future. That can mean the next season, next year, the next five years, or even farther. This edition of *Digger* takes a look at how some nurseries have taken the time to plan their future and how they mapped out a transition from one generation to the next. By taking a proactive stance as these growers have, all nurseries can lay the groundwork for future success and smoother transitions.

I encourage you to make some time this season — or anytime the activity level seems to slow down a little — to reflect on your business' successes and your personal successes. That also includes taking stock of deficits and asking how we can be better in this next year. It may even include thinking about the distant future and how that might look for your business and family.

The holidays are a great time to reflect with your family, celebrate with friends, and give thanks for another great year.

From my family to yours, enjoy the holiday season and have a Merry Christmas! ☺



Jim Simnitt
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

FIRST AID AND CPR CLASSES

Two OAN-sponsored First Aid and Adult CPR training classes are available in December. Successful completion results in certification that is good for two years. Conducted in English, the first class in December will run 8 a.m.–noon, December 4. The second Spanish-only class will take place 8 a.m.–noon, December 12. Both sessions take place at Tuality Health Education Center, 334 SE 8th Ave, Hillsboro, Oregon. Register online at www.oan.org/cprclass

DECEMBER 2–6, 2019

IRRIGATION SHOW & EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The world's largest trade show dedicated to irrigation will take place at the Las Vegas Convention Center, 3150 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, Nevada. Attendees can make plans to see technical session and seminars, view new products and technologies, and find solutions to any and all issues in agriculture, landscape, lighting, golf, turf irrigation and specialty solutions. For more information, visit www.irrigation.org/2019Show

DECEMBER 10, 2019

MT. HOOD CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

All chapters are invited to the Mt. Hood Chapter Christmas Party to visit Santa Claus and see him make some festive balloon art. The event starts at 6 p.m. at the Riverview Restaurant, 29311 S.E. Stark Street, Troutdale, Oregon. The cost is \$20 for adults, and kids under 18 years eat for free. Please register at www.oan.org under "Events" by Monday, December 2, or contact Aaron at aron@emswcd.org or 360-693-5131.

DECEMBER 10–12, 2019

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Registration is open for the third annual Innovations in Invasive Species Management Conference Training at the Coeur d'Alene Resort, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Hosted by the Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Council, Northern Rockies Invasive Plant Council, and Invasive Plant Control, Inc., the event features 15–30 minute oral presentations, posters, equipment demonstrations, and exhibitor opportunities focused on new techniques for managing a wide range of invasive species. Learn more online at www.invasiveplantcontrol.com.

DECEMBER 19, 2019

CLACKAMAS CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

All OAN members are invited to join the Clackamas Chapter 6 p.m. at the Willamette Valley Country Club, 900 Country Club Place, Canby, Oregon for an evening filled with



SIGN UP THROUGH DECEMBER

WINTER TRUCKS TO TRADE SHOWS

OAN members can ship plant material to the green industry shows held across the country in January and February, including MANTS, The Western, Utah Green and others. Space is limited. Reservations are taken on a first-come, first served basis; payment is required to reserve space. To sign up, contact Kelsey Hood at khood@oan.org.

holiday spirit and a visit from Santa Claus! The Willamette Valley Country Club will serve some of their amazing appetizers and a superb buffet. Santa Claus will have toys for the kids, and door prizes for the adults. The Canby High School Cantalinas will be entertaining everyone with their beautiful holiday carols to get us all in the festive Christmas spirit. Seating is limited so please register early! In order to accommodate all those wishing to attend please RSVP no later than December 11. The cost is \$30 for adults, \$15 for kids 5–12 years old, and kids 4 and under eat free. Register at www.oan.org under "Events."

JANUARY 8–10, 2020

MANTS

The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center (One West Pratt St., Baltimore, Maryland). MANTS is one of the largest green industry trade shows on the East Coast, attracting more than 900 exhibitors and 10,000 attendees annually. For more information, log on to www.mants.com.

JANUARY 15–17, 2020

THE WESTERN

The Western Nursery & Landscape Association's annual trade show and conference, known as The Western, will take place at the Crown Center Exhibit Hall, 2323 McGee St., Kansas City, Missouri. WNLA represents the green industry in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa and Nebraska. For more information and to register, log on to www.wnla.org/western.

JANUARY 15–18, 2020

NORTHWEST AG SHOW

The 50th edition of the Northwest Ag Show will be held at the Oregon State Fair & Exhibition Center, 2330 17th St. N.E., Salem, Oregon. The

annual event focuses on the emerging trends in the ag industry such as small farming, technology and education. The show coincides with the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce's SAIF Agri-Business Banquet on Friday, January 17 at the Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St S.E., Salem, Oregon (tinyurl.com/y5vba3gp). Both events contribute to Ag Week celebrations for the Salem area. For more information, log on to northwestagshow.com.

JANUARY 27–29, 2020

UTAH GREEN CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW

Presented by the Utah Nursery & Landscape Association, the event will be held at the Mountain America Expo Center, 9575 State St., Sandy, Utah. The show features green industry vendors from across the nation and offers seminars on topics such as business management, landscape design, plant material, irrigation, and many others. Full details are available on www.utahgreen.org.

FEBRUARY 21, 2020

PNWCTA CHRISTMAS TREE 2020 SHORT COURSE

Christmas tree growers and retailers are invited to the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association (PWNCTA) 2020 educational session, starting at noon at Holiday Inn Portland South, 25425 S.W. 95th Avenue, Wilsonville, Oregon. Experts will discuss topics such as new growing and harvesting methods, research updates, pesticide and safety information, business practices and tax implications for those involved in the industry. Registered attendees may earn pesticide re-certification credits with ODA and WSDA. The lodging deadline is February 7. See tinyurl.com/y6lpuw6t 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.

Columbia River bridge replacement committee meets

Legislators from Oregon and Washington met in late October to discuss replacing the outmoded, 100-year-old Interstate 5 bridge over the Columbia River between Portland and Vancouver, according to a report from the *Bend Bulletin*, (Bend, Oregon).

According to officials, the bridge is seismically vulnerable and unable to handle the traffic it gets. The prior attempt at a replacement, the \$3 billion Columbia River Crossing project, suffered political failure in 2013 when GOP legislators from Washington withheld their support. The main sticking point was the extension of MAX light rail from its current terminus at the Portland Expo Center, over the new bridge to downtown Vancouver and Clark College.

"We supported the prior bridge proposal due to the urgent need for nurseries to move their products efficiently through the Portland/Vancouver area to local destinations and beyond," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said for Member Update. "We are hopeful that the political obstacles can be surmounted this time. Interstate 5 is a critical corridor for not just agriculture, but anyone shipping product in and out of Oregon. Steps to address its safety, security and capacity are long overdue."

Read the full story at tinyurl.com/y6p8hez2



New OAN president Jim Simnitt presents at 2019 Convention at Hood River, Oregon. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

SIMNITT TAKES THE PRESIDENTIAL REINS AT OAN CONVENTION

The Oregon Association of Nurseries has a new president, with **Jim Simnitt** of **Simnitt Nursery** taking over from outgoing president **Mike Hiller** at OAN Convention in Hood River.

"I look forward to the successes and challenges that will come this year," Simnitt told members in his first presidential remarks at Convention. "Thank you for allowing me to be your president, and I look forward to working with all of you."

Serving along with Simnitt and past president Hiller on the OAN Executive Committee will be president-elect **Kyle Fessler** of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.**, vice president **Josh Robinson** of **Robinson Nursery Inc.**, treasurer **Todd Nelson** of **Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.**, secretary **Denece Messenger** of **Decorative Bark Products**, and member at large **Wes Bailey** of **Smith Gardens Inc.**

Simnitt has served on OAN Board of Directors since 2009, when he began several years of service as a representative for the **Willamette Chapter**. He served on the Executive Committee as secretary in 2015–16,

vice president in 2016–17 and 2017–18, and president-elect in 2018–19. His brother **Jerry Simnitt** served as president in 2011–12.

Members of the OAN Board of Directors were also sworn in at the convention. They include associate member **Tom Brewer (The HC Companies Inc.)**; container growers **Adam Farley (Countryside Nursery)**, **Ron Kinney (Monrovia)** and **Amanda Staehely (Columbia Nursery)**; field/bare root growers **Jesse Nelson (Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.)** and **Chris Robinson (Robinson Nursery Inc.)**; field/B&B grower **Jay Sanders (KG Farms Inc.)**; greenhouse growers **Lorne Blackman (Walla Walla Nursery Co. Inc.)** and **Ben Verhoeven (Peoria Gardens Inc.)**; and retailer **Gary English (Landsystems Nursery)**.

Blackman and Bailey are new to the board. Departing the board are **Mark Leichty** of **Little Prince of Oregon Nursery**, who completed his term as greenhouse representative, and **Josh Zielinski** of **Alpha Nursery**, who completed his term as immediate past president.

See more photos of the annual meeting at tinyurl.com/y2g8jysb 

Next page: from left: Awards presenters and recipients (or their representatives): outgoing president Mike Hiller, Gary English, Mark Bigej, Scott Renfro, Pete Brentano, Amanda Staehely, Chris Robinson, Ryan Contreras, Maurice Horn, Mike Smith, Jim Simnitt, Jolly Krautmann, Mark Krautmann and Aaron Guffey. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

FRIENDS OF NURSERIES AWARDS PRESENTED TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Oregon Association of Nurseries cultivates positive relationships with elected officials on both sides of the political aisle. Nurseries and greenhouses are Oregon's number one agricultural sector, with nearly \$1 billion in sales annually, and the OAN is here to make sure they get the representation they deserve at the state and federal levels.

As part of this mission, the OAN recognizes elected officials from both parties for listening to concerns and helping to protect the interests of the nursery and greenhouse industry.

Annually, the OAN gives out Friend of Nurseries awards to recognize such officials. The association selected nine officials for this honor for 2019:

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) was chosen for his efforts to secure federal funding for the money-saving Smart Sprayer. "He has been a staunch ally on resolving the labor crisis through immigration reform," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. It is his second time winning a Friend of Nurseries Award.



U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Oregon-1st district) has been a consistent voice in support of industry priorities. "She has toured numerous nursery operations to learn more about the industry," Stone said. The congresswoman, who served in the Oregon Legislature before her election to federal office, has demonstrated a willingness to cross party lines to support nursery priorities.



U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Oregon-5th district) has been a stalwart partner on numerous issues. "Balanced and solution oriented, the congressman exemplifies OAN's ideals of working across party lines to solve the state's most vexing problems," Stone said. It is the third time he has won a Friend of Nurseries Award.



State Sen. Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose) was tabbed "for her strong advocacy for industry concerns and objections regarding the business activity tax that harms agricultural operations," Stone said. "She also was an advocate for reasonable solutions to the debate on climate/carbon legislation."



State Rep. Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles) was appointed to serve in the legislature and right away dove into complex issues facing agriculture. "Rep. Bonham was an influential figure in the climate debate and was active on many of the OAN's priorities," Stone said. "Balanced and fair, the representative deserves recognition."



State Rep. Christine Drazan (R-Canby) was selected for her consistent outreach to the nursery industry during her first term in office. "Her quick mind and forceful presence was very helpful in achieving the successes OAN accomplished this past year," Stone said. "Rep. Drazan listened very carefully to the nursery and greenhouse industry concerns and worked hard to help."



State Rep. Rick Lewis (R-Silverton) was chosen "for his consistent advocacy, understanding and support for the nursery industry, which has a large presence in his district that includes not just nursery growers, but also an abundance of Christmas tree growers," Stone said.



State Rep. Caddy McKeown (D-Coos Bay) is "a trusted ally to the nursery and greenhouse industry for consistent advocacy for reasoned policy," Stone said. "A central figure in an effort to pass the driver's license bill, Rep. McKeown has led on critical issues facing the state." Rep. McKeown has won this award twice for her bipartisan and "solutions first" approach.



State Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis (R-Tangent) was chosen as New Legislator of the Year for her strong efforts to listen to and represent nursery industry concerns. "The representative was a critical player in the debate on carbon and was an effective voice for agriculture," Stone said. "She demonstrated tenacity of commitment to agriculture and her strong support and understanding of the nursery and greenhouse industry."



PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS BANQUET HONORS THE INDUSTRY'S BEST

Past president **Carson Lord of Tree Frog Nursery** served as the master of ceremonies at this year's President's Awards Banquet, which took place November 2 at the OAN Convention in Hood River.

Several awards were given out to outstanding people nominated by members and selected by the OAN Awards Committee.

Amanda Staehely was named New Nursery Professional of the Year. She has served on the OAN Board of Directors since 2015. She and her husband, Wayne Staehely, own **Columbia Nursery** in Canby.

The **OAN Research Committee** was named Committee or Chapter of the Year. Committee members **Leigh Geschwill**, **Chris Robinson** and **Scott Renfro** accepted the award on the committee's behalf.

Joy Creek Nursery, a destination retail nursery located in Scappoose, was chosen as Retailer of the Year. Owners **Mike Smith** and **Maurice Horn** were present to accept the award.

Aaron Guffey of the **East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District** was selected for the Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Allied Trades Award for his work in preserving natural resources and keeping them in nursery production.

Mark and Jolly Krautmann, owners of **Heritage Seedlings & Liners**, received the Outstanding Stewardship Award for their work preserving habitats in the Willamette Valley.



Joe Dula of Moana Nursery was chosen for the Clayton W. Hannon Distinguished Service Award, which represents a specific, notable service to the industry. Dula has been a longtime committee member and volunteer for the Farwest Show.

Mark Bigej, an owner of **Al's Garden & Home**, was chosen for the Political Awareness Award, given to someone who has shown exceptional political awareness in support of the nursery industry.

Pete Brentano, an owner of **Brentano Tree Farm**, was given the Outstanding Service Award, given in recognition of long-term service to the industry and association. Brentano served

as OAN president in 2006 and currently serves on the 10-member Oregon Board of Agriculture as representative for the state's \$1 billion nursery industry.

Art Anderson, general manager of **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.**, was announced as an Honorary Life Member of OAN. Anderson is retiring at the end of this year. He served as OAN President in 1994.

Gary English, owner of **Landsystems Nursery** in Bend, was presented with an Honorary Life Membership. English is the longest continuously-serving member of the OAN Board of Directors with 20-years-plus and counting. He currently serves as a retail representative and previously served as representative for Central

Oregon Chapter when the board was on a chapter-representation model.

Outgoing president Mike Hiller presented his selections for Five Star Awards, given to those who provided outstanding service or support during his term of office. The recipients included:

- Wife and daughter **Kirsten and Lola Hiller**;
- OAN Executive Director **Jeff Stone**;
- OAN Publications Manager **Bill Goloski**;
- **Dr. Jill Calabro** of the **Horticultural Research Institute**; and
- **Dr. Ryan Contreras**, plant breeder and professor of horticulture at **Oregon State University**. ➤




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Northwest News

EPA PROPOSES UPDATES TO WPS, AEZ REQUIREMENTS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing updates to the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) pesticide Application Exclusion Zone (AEZ), according to a release from the agency available at tinyurl.com/y67ry38y. The goal of these changes is to alleviate the burden growers face in order to meet the federal requirements.

The proposal seeks to change the regulations so the AEZ is only applicable and enforceable to the farm owner's property, making immediate family members exempt from the requirements, adding clarifying language to streamline interruptions to the application process, and simplifying the criteria for zone area ranges.



Pesticide labels are often published in English only. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

EPA RELEASES SPANISH TRANSLATION GUIDE FOR PESTICIDE LABELS

In response to industry feedback, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has published the *Spanish Translation Guide for Pesticide Labeling*, according to a release by the federal agency.

Many pesticide handlers, applicators, and workers do not speak English as a first language, so English-only chemical labels risk the health and safety of these groups. The resource provides pesticide registrants the translation of EPA-accepted terminology in Spanish for their product labels.

Download a PDF of the labeling guide online at tinyurl.com/y2hckq26.

In Oregon, the WPS and the AEZ are enforced by Oregon OSHA — an arrangement that isn't in place in any other state. Regulators already do not enforce any AEZ off of the grower's property, or into public rights of way, but federal regulations have always forbidden chemical applicators from causing spray drift. *Digger* will follow up in a future issue on how this proposed regulatory change will affect Oregon growers.



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PESTICIDE LEVELS DROPPED IN KEY OREGON WATERWAYS

Environmental regulators for Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality found that the pesticide concentration levels in key Oregon waterways have dropped to a fraction of their former measurements, according to a report by *Capital Press* (Salem, Oregon).

Local farmers voluntarily altered their pesticide application standards as part of an interagency pesticide stewardship program. Proactive efforts to keep chemicals out of the water help deter the need for regulatory action in the future.

Some 50 percent of waterway sites that were tested between 2015 and 2017 showed an improvement in water quality compared to the two previous years. Additionally, 27 percent of the sites recorded a decline in water quality, and 23 percent showed no change.

MYCORRHIZAL APPLICATIONS LAUNCHES CYTOFLOR

CytoFlor™, a formulation of a plant growth regulator (PGR) for use on ornamental plants has been introduced by Mycorrhizal Applications (MA) for professional use, according to a release by the company. The plant hormone product promotes cell growth and differentiation in plant roots and shoots to produce full, compact plants. It is recommended for containerized annual and perennial flowering and foliage plants, tropical plants, non-edible fruit trees.

The active ingredient, PGR 6-benzyladenine (6-BA) has been used for many years under various brand names by Valent BioSciences LLC, which owns MA.

Visit tinyurl.com/uky5fq1 for details.

HARRELLS PURCHASES RIGHTS TO POLYON BRAND

Harrell's LLC has acquired the POLYON® brand from Koch Agronomic Services LLC, according to a release from the company. The employee-owned company will retain the current workforce >>

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“We’ve been so closely associated with it that folks mistakenly thought we already owned it,” said Jack Harrell Jr, CEO of Harrell’s. “Those little green BBs have been at the heart of our business and a big part of our growth and success over the years.”

Koch Agronomic Services will continue to own the rights to the brand in certain international markets. For more information, visit www.harrells.com.

DRAMM HIRES REGIONAL TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVES

Dramm Corporation has hired two regional technical representatives to serve on their commercial sales team, according to a release from the company.

Marc Radsma has been hired as the western technical representative. He will work with greenhouse growers and distributors needing assistance with irrigation and water management, greenhouse air movement, and chemical applications. He will cover Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, and Montana. He comes to the company with more than 28 years of experience, having previously held positions at Skagit Horticulture, Northern Innovators and Monrovia.

Scott Sterling will serve as the central U.S. technical representative. He has experience as a grower, plant sales representa-

tive, and supply chain management from a variety of green industry companies.

Visit www.dramm.com for more details

MARION AG SERVICES, INC. HIRES AGRONOMIC TECHNICAL SERVICES MANAGER

Anne Iskra has been appointed to the newly-created position of agronomic technical services manager for Marion Ag Service, Inc. She will conduct research on emerging chemical, biological, nutritional, genetic tools and cultural practices for tree, vine, broad-acre, turf, and ornamental crops.

Iskra holds a master’s degree from Oregon State University in food science, botany and plant pathology. Gale Gingrich will help transition Iskra into the company’s professional network and industry partners.

Visit www.marionag.com for details. ©

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Knowing your customers

LOCATION, LOCATION, location.” I have often heard that those three words are paramount for any brick-and-mortar retail business. I do not dispute their importance.

Location matters for garden centers, too, but I think that three other words have greater importance: “Know your customers.”

Knowing your customers — where they are coming from and what kinds of dwellings they live in, for starters — will certainly have an impact on the goods that you decide to carry in your store.

Are you in a neighborhood where many customers would walk to your garden center? Is your neighborhood comprised of apartments, condominiums and small single-family homes with small lots? Is your customer base from areas that are comprised of large, older homes with established gardens?

Are you located in an area where it is obvious that gardening is a very popular leisure activity? Is your customer base from newly built homes with little or no landscaping? Is your customer base primarily from a rural area? Is your customer base a mix of all of these, perhaps?

Whatever your market area looks like, the goods that you sell in your garden center need to reflect the living environments of your customers.

If only we had a crystal ball to predict what the best-sellers are going to be next year, that would be convenient. We don't. We have to base our buying projections on information we gather and our experiences in business. What are we hearing from our customers and other gardeners?

Limited space, unlimited options

Several times in this column, we have mentioned the continuing strong demand for house plants. Several garden center employees have told me that, this enthusiasm has not begun to taper like they expected. In fact, it continues to be huge.

Last year, a local garden center chain, Dennis' 7 Dees, opened an “urban plant, gift and design shop” at Bridgeport Village, which is an upscale regional lifestyle center serving the Portland area. While this store sells decorative containers and garden-related gift items, the primary focus is house plants.

Unlike all of the other Dennis' 7 Dees locations, there's no traditional outdoor nursery component. This one was something of an experiment, which the company pursued based on the strong house plant trend.

After a year, the jury is in. This shop just celebrated its first anniversary, and according to Kelley Kenyon of Dennis' 7 Dees, the company is happy with the results and recently extended the store's lease.

House plants are just one option that allow people to enjoy plant life even if they lack the traditional large outdoor garden spaces available with older homes.

Many newer homes are built on narrow lots with little space in which to plant between the dwellings. Apartment and condominium units are often built in a narrow space with a small deck or patio. Many residents of such units want to have some plants, and if the plants can be both ornamental and have edible fruits, that is a bonus.



Dennis' 7 Dees suits has successfully opened a new house plant-only store in response to changing customer needs and wants. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP



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 itmikedarcy@comcast.net.

Espaliered plants that have been grown on a trellis and will fit in a narrow space have been very popular. Often espaliered plants are ready-made for that instant effect that many young people want. An espaliered plant has been grown on a trellis is attractive looking and fits nicely into a narrow space. It may be the perfect plant for instant gratification.

Dwarf edibles are another group of plants that continue to grow in popularity. There is now a line of bush cherries that are self-pollinating and provide spring flowers of white or pink, depending on the specific variety. They are attractive as ornamental plants with their shiny green leaves and have the added bonus of producing edible fruit.

Dwarf blueberry, raspberry and blackberry plants are also available on the market for those with limited garden space.

Herbs have long been a favored container plant and customers need ideas on how to use and grow them. Perhaps popular culinary herbs such as basil, thyme, parsley, rosemary and others, grouped together, would suggest to customers ideas on their placement. Pre-planted herb containers are often an inspiration for customers because they are ready to go.

Columnar plants are another group that have continued to gain in popularity. Columnar apples can provide a gardener with a fruit tree that produces an abundance of fruit on a very narrow tree in very little space.

On the subject of columnar >>

WHAT I'M HEARING

plants, several garden center personnel told me that *Ilex crenata* "Sky Pencil" has become a very good seller. This columnar holly is easy to grow, evergreen, and has a narrow profile that makes it perfect for a container plant — which also does well in a garden setting.

The features customers want

Meeting the needs of those gardeners with little space is very important, but the desires they have are often just as important as the space they have to work with.

Many of them also have a desire to benefit the environment with everything that they plant. While the word "neonicotinoid" is probably not in many gardeners' vocabulary, many gardeners are aware of the importance of honey bees and have a desire to encourage them.

If a garden center is selling plants that

have not been treated with a neonicotinoid, this could be turned into a selling point. All it would take is a label that says the plant is bee-friendly and has not been treated with any potential bee-toxic chemicals.

Containers, and the plants in them, continue to be excellent sellers. I often hear that customers, especially novice gardeners, will buy a container already planted. They want instant gratification. A planted container gives it to them.

Many new gardeners are not familiar with groupings of plants, but they trust their garden center. Their thinking may be that if the garden center put this together, it must be the right mix of plants. A container filled and labeled as containing hummingbird attracting plants could create much interest. Plants that attract hummingbirds have long been good sellers and continue to be.

And definitely do not forget about

fragrance. For many gardeners, fragrance is a very desirable feature. Do not overlook the fragrance and disease resistance of many of the new roses being introduced. Many roses are ideal for containers. In our Northwest climate, they can provide flowers from late spring throughout the summer and fall.

Making it easy

Obviously, knowing your customer base cannot be overemphasized. With the busy lives that we live — especially young families with children that are involved in sports, school, and social activities — we need to make plant selection easy.

Most of these customers have probably not come from a gardening background and need help, ideas and suggestions. They want an attractive environment but need inspiration and guidance in getting it. ☺



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MEET THE LEADER

The voices of Oregon's nursery industry

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I graduated from Clackamas Community College and Mount Hood Community College with degrees in horticulture and Spanish, which I used to develop my nursery skills. I was able to prove to myself that I could see and accomplish a goal, regardless how small or large. Today, I work to move Ekstrom Nursery forward as a business. I can handle anything, from crew management, propagation, watering, forecasting, taking orders. I'm even the occasional grease monkey. Any task that needs to be done on the farm, I can do it.

WHAT'S YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE?

I hope to follow the example of Godly men like Grandpa Carl, my father Don. I will give my best effort to respect and encourage people and leave a good legacy as they did.

GOAL YET TO BE ACHIEVED?

If I'm as moveable and active as my patriarchs in their well-seasoned years, I will be a happy man.

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

After I graduated, I developed the first container yard for Ekstrom Nursery. It was a struggle, but I broke even on the investment. I learned to be more successful from that undertaking, and now we have a full



Scott Ekstrom

Co-owner

Ekstrom Nursery

OAN member since 2011

- Two-time OAN Mt. Hood Chapter President.

in-house soil mixer and potting machine that we put together from scratch.

HARDEST BUSINESS DECISION?

Getting a human resources department — enough said!

WHO IS YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT MENTOR?

My father.

BEST BUSINESS ADVICE:

I have two pieces of advice: "Slow and steady wins the race," and in the words of Greg Pilcher, "Be you because if you try and be everything for everyone you will be nothing for anyone."

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE NURSERY INDUSTRY?

The people are so nice and helpful. Also, I love the time we get to spend outside where I thrive — instead of sitting behind a computer.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE?

I need to be ever vigilant about my health, as I have been living with Lyme's Disease for the past 21 years. I make an effort every morning to be thankful for every day God has given me, and to count my blessings to have a beautiful wife and two boys of our own.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO TO WORK EVERYDAY?

I love my job — I love playing in the mud, implementing changes for the future. And, I love seeing my family.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

My family is my greatest accomplishment. It is thrilling to see my adopted boys have a chance to flourish on my great grandfather's original homestead. It's great to be an apple that doesn't fall too far from the tree.

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

The older generation of growers is aging in our industry. There is an opportunity for the younger generation to fill the voids — from owners to the field labors — if some new blood is willing to do the hard work. This summer, my children learned to the meaning of a hard day's work, along with the personal reward that accompanies accomplishment. ©



Brothers-in-law Scott Ekstrom and Brandon Schmidt co-own Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery.

PHOTO BY BILL GOLOSKI



In the beginning

Startup nurseries draw on inspiration, entrepreneurial desire and the mentorship of others

BY TRACY ILENE MILLER

EVERY NURSERY HAS A different story, and every story has a beginning.

Although one of every five small business is family run, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration, the percentage of nurseries that are family run is undoubtedly might higher.

The ownership of these businesses is aging. According to a Guidant Financial and Lending Club report, 57 percent of small-business owners are also over the age of 50, compared with 20 percent

nearly 25 years ago. But as some businesses are preparing to hand things over, others are bucking the trend by just getting started.

We visited with a number of Oregon nurseries that had fairly recent beginnings. Starting a nursery requires the right resources, the right experience and the right assistance, plus a safety net to consult when something goes wrong.

The experiences of these newer nursery owners are instructive for those considering starting a new nursery.

Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery LLC

Brandon Schmidt got his entry into the nursery industry when he married into the Ekstrom family, which owns **Ekstrom Nursery**.

At first, he lived in Hood River, where he and his wife, Heidi, were funeral directors. However, he visited the Ekstrom farm regularly, and in 2006, at age 26, he joined the nursery after a foreman gave his notice.

Three years later, while still working for Ekstrom, Brandon started his own small nursery, which would eventually become Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery LLC.

Schmidt started his nursery under the auspices of Carl Ekstrom (known as Grandpa Carl), who believed in supporting the next generation of nursery owners and managers within the ranks of employees.

Carl set up a structure allowing the new nursery to rent tractors and equipment and buy extra fertilizer at specific rates.

For Schmidt, the arrangement gave him his grounding. He had the customer service skills from his funeral director job, but it was the rest of the business he admitted he needed to learn, and he did so on the job.

He worked nights and weekends at the startup, in addition to his regular duties at Ekstrom. “[The arrangement allowed us] to learn how to run a business on a small scale, learn from our mistakes on our own,” he said.

Schmidt was able to run his own crew, learn how to do his own books, decide which plants to grow and put some skin in the game without getting in too deep.

Ekstrom Nursery received benefits in exchange. Schmidt was able to fill the holes in the Ekstrom inventory, growing plants that it didn’t sell or needed to be grown in different sizes to provide for Ekstrom customers and its catalog. Ekstrom Nursery, in a way, served as a broker for the plants Schmidt grew.

But if Ekstrom was undersold on a plant, it would not buy Schmidt’s. The responsibility for management of inventory and sales lay still squarely with Schmidt.

That kind of mentoring and support gave him an opportunity to succeed and build confidence. He learned fertilizers, sprays, fungicides, plant problems, when to trim and more as hands-on activities. “Without that opportunity, it would have been a way slower start to getting established as a nursery,” Schmidt said.

As Ekstrom had no plans at the

The yard at Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery is full of containerized product. PHOTO COURTESY OF EKSTROM & SCHMIDT NURSERY



time to transition the business to the third generation, Schmidt's brother-in-law, Steve Ekstrom joined him in 2013 to form Ekstrom and Schmidt Nursery LLC. In 2015, they were joined by Steve's father, Jim.

The younger partners had 20 acres they had cleared and groomed for production. Jim brought in another 100 acres. They made do with the equipment they had and borrowed machinery as needed, until they could buy their own.

"One thing we are proud of is taking the land that was run down and making it into something," Schmidt said.

Taking a different business approach to maximize efficiency, the partners made a decision to move away from the Ekstrom model of ball and burlap to containers.

"An overnight success takes about ten years," Grandpa Carl used to say,"

Schmidt said. Although it hasn't quite taken that long, with Grandpa Carl's mentorship and the support of Jim Ekstrom as the second generation, Steve and Brandon

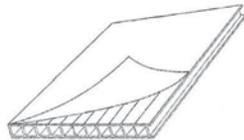
are finding their successes.

"[We are] seeing the fruits of our labor and vision of our business coming to fruition," Steve said. >>

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Noname Nursery

Robb Sloan of **Noname Nursery** (Forest Grove, Oregon) started as a hobby grower in Sacramento, California in the mid-1990s, when he was working as propagation manager of **Village Nurseries Wholesale LLC**.

By 2002, his eclectic collection — which included 175 Japanese maples, ten mondo grasses, ten varieties of *Loropetalum* and more — had gotten so big, he had to make a choice: Go pro with a nursery, or shut it down.

Because of family commitments, he gave up growing plants. But he stayed close to his passion, working in the green industry through landscape construction and design and wholesale sales.

In 2009, Sloan moved to Oregon and eventually landed a job at McMenemy's Grand Lodge in Forest Grove as head gardener. His sights were set on working in the nursery industry.

In Sloan's case, family matters once again influenced his next move. In 2015, while visiting his 22-year-old son in Japan, Sloan joked they should start a nursery. His son said yes, and the business began the following year.

After trying it for a few months,

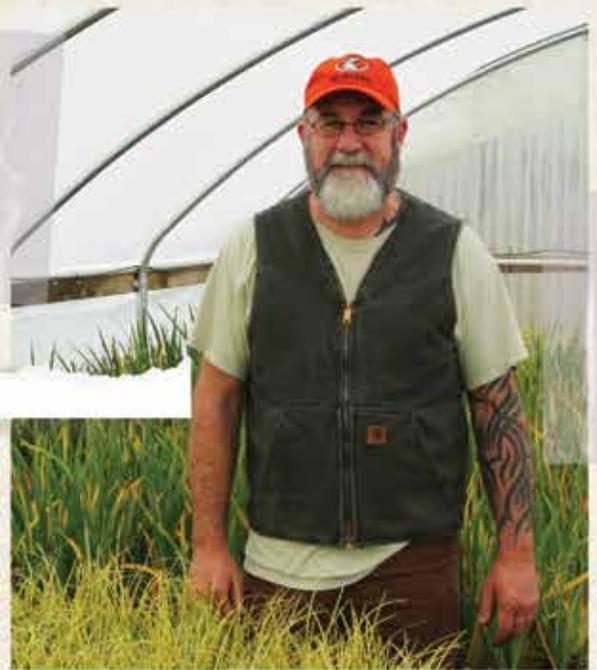
his son opted out, following his true passion to become an auto mechanic. But Sloan had landed again with his passion. He was in for the long haul.

Within 12 months, he had collected enough material that he needed a place to grow.

Within two years, he had three greenhouses, and by the end of 2019, up to 5,000 trees were planted.

Years of working with plants had led to this point, but so has Sloan's networking in the industry. A good friend leases him acreage, other nurseries let him collect scion wood, and his generous friends are credited with helping him with everything else. From clearing fields, stretching plastic, potting up plants and installing solar powered greenhouse fans, lights and heaters — friends helped design and install everything.

Sloan has learned that the greatest successes come from persistence, having fun, cultivating relationships, and facing the monotony of the job. He also learned from experimenting. He set up a 1,000-square-foot pop-up store



in downtown Forest Grove last year, which cost more money than it made.

Operating a business off the grid was more of a challenge than Sloan thought.

"There was no way to heat the greenhouse the first winter, and we lost 70% of the plants," he said. "The second winter, there was no bottom heat, and we lost 90% of our cuttings because we couldn't find reliable heat."

But his experiences helped him know how to economize and keep going. Noname recently hired a part-time person to do inventory and sales, and the third greenhouse went in last month.

"The greatest reward is going somewhere and seeing my plants, and the relationships you build," Sloan said. He's made friends, he's integrated into the nursery community and he's in Forest Grove — all rewards of doing business.

J Farms LLC

Jenni Burkhead and **Jim Lewis** are co-owners of **J Farms LLC** (Amity, Oregon), although it was rather unexpected. "I don't think we ever felt that was our goal [to be owners]," Burkhead said. But, based on friendship and mentorship with the previous owners, that's exactly what happened.

After graduating with a horticulture degree from Kansas State University and then working for landscape companies and in sales management for Ralston Purina, Burkhead relocated to Oregon to join **Carlton Plants LLC** in the early 1980s.

She had various nursery industry-

related positions over the next 20 years, and eventually began selling for a select group of growers with a particular focus on deciduous and conifer liners in the Northwest. At that time, she met her partner, Jim Lewis, who worked as a production manager for several nurseries.

In 2002, Burkhead began selling liners for **Jeddeloh Farms LLC** (Gresham, Oregon), which had an



Previous page: Top: Robb Sloan started Noname Nursery after dreaming about it for years.
Bottom: From left: Jim Lewis and Jenni Burkhead started J Farms LLC as a successor nursery to noted conifer grower Jeddelloh Farms. PHOTOS BY CURT KIPP

immense conifer palette and cultivars specific to the urban landscaping market. Lewis was instrumental in helping her to understand production needs on a grower level. Horst and Linda Jeddelloh became friends and mentors.

By 2006, they would become different kinds of mentors, as they approached Burkhead and Lewis with the idea of being their business successors. With more than the desire to be their own bosses, Burkhead said the friendship was a big impetus for moving forward, as well as the desire to see the business continue.

Plus, the customer base was well-established and Burkhead had been working it already for four years. Because it was a contract business where customers place their orders 18 months in advance, she knew what the business could yield. "Having customers was the gold mine, along with the great plant material," Burkhead said.

The only issue was property — Burkhead and Lewis didn't have any, and they wanted to stay in Yamhill County where they lived.

"With the encouragement and tutelage of the Jeddellohs, we borrowed money from family members and were able to find the Farm Service Agency's Beginning Farmers program through the USDA," Burkhead said. "They work with new clients who

might not have the collateral but can provide orders and history to support operating loan requirements."

Looking back, the manner in which they drew up their property lease is the one thing they would have done differently. "Instead of paying an attorney and using someone else's expertise, we put the lease together ourselves," she said.

It left them less protected over the long term. Nonetheless, the weak lease became the impetus to find land, and after three years of good sales they were able to purchase acreage in Amity in 2008.

Becoming business owners, Burkhead and Lewis had sales and production skills in abundance, and the Jeddellohs taught them not to put any money into labor or materials until it is presold. "That has always worked real well," Burkhead said.

But the challenge was running a business, learning bookkeeping and managing state and federal regulations.

"That part I had to learn," Burkhead said, "and frankly, I had never even balanced a checkbook before we had our business. It was almost overwhelming."

The saving grace was the valuable accounting lessons offered by Linda and the Agribusiness Management program at Chemeketa Community College in Salem.

"The biggest thing about being in busi-

ness is being able to navigate banking, insurance and safety. It's unending," Burkhead said. "And they cover all of it."

The instructors even come out before tax time and spend time in QuickBooks.

"And every year when the regs change, they bring in speakers to let you know about [the changes]," she said.

In addition to loyal customers, Burkhead said the program helped the business survive the economic downturn. And she's such a fan, she's in her eighth year of classes and serves on the board.

"Succession is a mind-boggling concept. We were very fortunate to have more help than most from our predecessors," Burkhead said. "My hope is that we can 'pay it forward' and continue to keep the passion alive for the next nursery person, or someone who enjoys a very rewarding lifestyle."

Backyard Natives LLC

Jonathan Eymann of Backyard Natives (Estacada, Oregon) was raised among trees. His father, David, had a Christmas tree farm of four acres, and Eymann can remember planting about 8,000 trees when he was 16 years old.

Like many other nursery owners, Eymann's route to starting his own nursery began by working for someone else. When he was 20 years old, in 2007, he went to work at Eagle Creek, a broker of landscape plants.

He started at the bottom, working his way through the various jobs and departments — yard maintenance, propa-

gation, driving, ordering, scheduling and logistics. Working at Eagle Creek was his work-study experience, and the owner, his mentor.

"I learned about just about everything," he said.

A request by a regular customer of Eagle Creek for natives led Eymann to his business, and its name, when he realized those plants were growing directly in his backyard.

Eymann began selling ornamentals and natives to Eagle Creek under his father's business name. He dug up plants at first, but then learned how to transition into seed collection in 2014, and >>



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In the beginning

Jonathan Eymann started Backyard Natives LLC in Estacada, Oregon.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BACKYARD NATIVES LLC



finally cuttings two years after later. Both made his operation more cost efficient.

By last year, he was ready to set up his own business on about one acre of land. He maintains about 50 species of plants — half ornamental, half native. 4,000–5,000 of his product are sold in one-gallon containers. His incense cedar is sold in 5 gallons, and he also offers some bigger trees in 10- and 15-gallon sizes.

The biggest obstacle he has is developing his own customer list separate from Eagle Creek, although he still sells his plants there. He has turned his attention to the Portland metro area, and is a member of the OAN.

He's not quite at the point of the nursery sustaining him financially, and is work-

ing a second job at a gas station, which has its benefits: lots of potential customer traffic and an audience for his business cards that get his name out there.

With no loans and completely self-funded, Eymann is ready to continue to build his empire while working a second job, for the reward of growing plants to potentially earn a living. Plus, there is the added benefit of working with his family

— two brothers, three sisters and 10 nieces and nephews. There are always plenty of hands to pitch in at his nursery.

“The nephews and nieces enjoy it, the big pile of dirt,” Eymann said. “And even if they're not working, they like to see what I'm doing. They're learning themselves, what these plants are doing, about this job of growing

and selling, and perhaps it's putting a light bulb in their head.”

Perhaps it is — allowing Eymann to mentor and encourage the next generation of Oregon growers. ☺

Tracy Ilene Miller is a freelance writer and editor who covers several topics, including gardening. She can be reached at tracyilenemiller@gmail.com.

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Making the handoff

Family-owned nurseries follow a variety of models to transition to the next generation of ownership

BY CURT KIPP

THEY SAY TWO THINGS in life are certain — death and taxes — but death also implies a third certainty, and that’s retirement.

If one doesn’t choose a retirement date, sooner or later it will be chosen for them. It’s better to plan ahead before the day arrives.

While a retiring employee is responsible mainly for themselves, a retiring owner must consider the effect on family members, mentees, employees, customers, and the legacy they are leaving behind. That’s why many business owners find it preferable to choose one’s exit plan, rather than leaving successors to sort things out on the fly.

Robinson Nursery (Amity, Oregon) is one nursery that took advantage of careful transition planning. They started down this path after seeing what happened to other nurseries that failed to plan for the future.

“My dad has seen several very successful nurseries disappear because they didn’t have good succession planning,” said Josh Robinson, one of two sons of founders Rick and Roxanne Robinson that are taking over the nursery. “He didn’t feel it was fair to those who have invested into the business, to have it go away just because there wasn’t good planning.”

A completed transition

Several Oregon nurseries have started or completed the succession process, each choosing the unique path they found best suited to meet their goals and situations. One of them is **Peoria Gardens** (Albany, Oregon), a well-regarded annuals grower whose branded

containers can be found at retailers all across the Northwest.

Ben Verhoeven purchased Peoria Gardens from his father, Tom Verhoeven, who founded the nursery in 1983.

Ben worked at the nursery off and on throughout childhood. He left in young adulthood because it was important that he get experience outside the family business. He returned to the nursery in 2010, as his father was preparing for retirement. The transition to Ben’s ownership started in 2012, and by 2014 he became the sole shareholder.

To purchase the nursery, Ben agreed to a loan and continues to pay principal and interest to his father. “It helps Dad with a reliable source of income,” he said.

During the four-year transition period, he worked in a variety of capacities to learn all the jobs at the nursery. He wanted to “live” this work and better empathize with the people performing it.

“I did pretty much six months to a year doing every job at the nursery, from driving trucks to sales, to growing to shipping, to transplanting,” Ben said. “I did pesticide application, I did production management, and then I started to move more and more into general management roles, HR stuff, accounts payable and receivable, and payroll. At some point I had to do everything.”

For him, the transition period induced both apprehension and excitement.

“It was a huge decision to make to take over a family business,” Ben said. “There’s a lot wrapped up in it. There was a little anxiousness but also excitement. Now 



Making the handoff

Previous page: Top: Employees at Eshraghi Nursery are partial owners of their business as an employee stock ownership plan. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP **Bottom:** Ben Verhoeven purchased Peoria Gardens to continue the family business. PHOTO BY BILL GOLOSKI

Below: Darin and Katie Cox eased into ownership of Pacific Nursery. PHOTOS BY CURT KIPP

I'm really glad and couldn't be happier. I really enjoy the work I do and the people I work with."

As the transition was planned, father and son each had separate attorneys representing them.

"It was strange, but it was necessary," Ben said. "It would have been a conflict of interest for one attorney to represent both of us, so it's pretty much a necessity for each side to have their own attorney. It wasn't contentious, but it was just necessary."

A transition between friends

In 2016, Darin Cox purchased **Pacific Nursery Inc.** (Dayton, Oregon) from Gary Brooks, who founded the nursery in 1984.

Brooks is part of the family that founded **Carlton Nursery**. His father and three uncles — Kent, Gene, Lyle and Lynn Brooks — are in the Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame. Cox had known Brooks since he was a child, as Cox's father and Brooks had a specimen tree business together.

As a student at **Oregon State University** (OSU), Cox served as an intern for Brooks. Upon graduation, Cox went to work for Brooks at **Grand Island Nursery LLC**, just down the road from Pacific. He was hired to finish construction of the production operation, including the pot-in-pot, filtration, and greenhouse watering systems. Once that was in place, he moved on to growing material, which included shade trees and a limited line of shrub material.

"That was my introduction to the nursery business in a real way — first construction and then growing," Cox said. "You name it, I did it."

After working at Grand Island Nursery, Cox moved to Pacific Nursery in 2011 as a sales manager. By that time, he had offers from other big nurseries to come work for them. He stayed with Brooks and Pacific. He felt that provided the opportunity to get the broadest

experience possible. "My goal was not to be slotted in," he said. "I didn't want to do just one thing. I wanted the whole scope, be involved in everything, from construction to the costing to planning."

Ownership hadn't occurred to him yet, but it soon did. "If I'm going to work this hard, I want to be an owner," he said. "That was in the back of my mind."

When Brooks wanted to step away from being the top manager of the day-to-day operations, Cox was the natural choice. He knew the business and had a lifelong relationship with Brooks.

It took almost two years to craft a deal. Although Cox had to come up with a down payment, the impact of the 2008 recession was still being felt. Brooks didn't want to hand over the business until it was on firm footing.

"I was already, saying 'Let's go,' but Gary held back," Cox said. "He couldn't sell something that was out of balance and expect me to magically bring it back. It had to be ready for sale."

The nursery had far more plants than could be sold, and the grafting of Japanese maples and shade trees, in particular, had to be reduced.

"We had to slow things down, and that takes a few years," Cox said.

Cox became owner in 2016, and knows the role of owner is different from that of employee or even manager. "No matter how ready you think you are to own a company, once you sign the personal guarantee, it is a different feeling," he said.

Owners bear the weight of responsibility for employees, who are dependent on the business for their livelihood. "I wasn't totally prepared for that pressure," Cox said. "As an employee, I didn't know what to be scared of, but I do now."

Even while there are pressures, there's no doubt of the rewards.

"I feel very fortunate that I have a great customer base and crew to work with," he said. "And, it's important that I continue what Gary started, and make it better along the way."

A work in progress

Brothers Chris and Josh Robinson are in the process of purchasing **Robinson Nursery** (Amity, Oregon), a top quality liner production nursery, from their parents, Rick and Roxanne.

The arrangement allows Rick and Roxanne to experience the joys of retirement while still helping the business when needed, and it lets Chris and Josh operate and position the business for the future. It's all by design.

At Robinson Nursery, sons Chris and Josh hold just over 50 percent of ownership stock, but their mom and dad retain a majority of the voting stock. This transition structure was chosen due to the tax benefits that it confers.

Each brother has responsibility for a particular part of the nursery. Chris concentrates on the production end of things, while Josh works primarily on sales. Decisions are made together; disagreements are few.

Transition planning began early.

"[Our parents] had recognized that Josh and I



From left: Josh, Roxanne, Rick and Chris Robinson are in the transition process. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBINSON NURSERY



were fully invested here and eventually wanted to take the company over,” Chris said. “My dad has always been very proactive as a person and is very good financially. They were getting older and wanted to spend their time doing other things. It was a win-win. It allowed [them] to meet their retirement goals and allowed Josh and I to further meet our career goals.”

It was a step by step process. First, the family established fair market value for the company by consulting with several experts. Next came work on the financial structure of the deal, so that the brothers would have the

resources to purchase the business without adverse tax implications.

Attorneys for each side then went over the proposed terms of the deal to make sure all were treated fairly. “We did it the best way that we knew how,” Chris said. “It allowed us all to feel like the deal was fair.”

In moving Robinson Nursery forward into the future, the brothers are not content to merely run their parents’ playbook. They have implemented Lean processes, worked on product lines and continued the work their parents did in raising the company’s profile.

“We’ve been in training our whole lives,” Chris said. “Mom and Dad always communicated with us really well, and gave us a long leash in the business to figure out what we’re really good at. We have good advisers to go to for help, and our parents are good examples.”



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Making the handoff

Changing the management

Some nurseries are opting not to hand the business off just yet, but instead prepare for the future by changing the business's structure.

Fall Creek Farm & Nursery Inc. (Lowell, Oregon) is one example. Founded in 1978 by Dave and Barbara Brazelton, the nursery has become a global powerhouse in blueberry plant breeding, introduction and production for fruit producers.

In order to help deal with the challenges and opportunities of international growth, the Brazeltons decided first to recruit a board of directors that includes experts from outside the family. This past January, they took the next step on the pathway to Fall Creek's future.

Dave stepped down as chief executive officer (CEO), moving into a chairman role. The company appointed Dave and Barbara's son, Cort Brazelton, and their daughter, Amelie Brazelton Aust, as co-CEOs. The company also elevated Oscar Verges to the role of president. He had already been serving as chief operating officer.

The arrangement was recommended by the company board as the best way to incorporate everyone's talents and serve the interests of the overall business.

"A co-CEO model had never occurred to us, but it should have," Amelie Brazelton Aust said. "We spent most of 2018 diving into what this would look like, studying the pitfalls, and gaining vision into how this has worked well for other global companies, we are excited.

"Cort and I are as different and as similar as can be," she added. "We challenge each other and hold each other accountable to focus opportunities, manage risk, and protect our company values. At the same time, Oscar brings decades of global corporate experience that is essential for us to enrich strategy and to bring what's most special about Fall Creek to the entire organization and the people we serve, everywhere in the world."



From left, COO & President Oscar Verges, CEO Amelie Aust, and CEO Cort Brazelton took over Fall Creek Farm & Nursery. PHOTO COURTESY OF FALL CREEK FARM & NURSERY

Going employee-owned

Linda Eshraghi, co-founder of wholesale grower **Eshraghi Nursery** (founded 1988) and its retail arm, Farmington Gardens (founded 1992), is following a different and unique path to planning a future for her businesses.

Following a divorce, she is now the sole owner of both businesses, which are located in Beaverton and Hillsboro, Oregon. Although she has no heirs wanting to take over, she still wants her business and legacy to survive. She also wants her employees to have good jobs after she retires.

Her chosen solution is to set up an employee stock ownership plan, or ESOP. Once implemented, the plan will gradually transfer ownership to qualifying employees, while providing her — and down the line, those same employees — with retirement income.

Tom Whitelaw was brought on board as chief financial officer to help set up the ESOP. He came with experience helping Oregon Vineyard Supply set up a similar employee ownership plan (although that business was later merged with another).

"An ESOP is an option where you get to reward your employees who have been there a long time for their efforts that have made the company successful, but without hurting yourself," Whitelaw said. "It's a way for the owner to finance the sale of the company to the employees."

Under an ESOP, the company makes contributions, similar to the employer match on a 401(k) plan, to a trust. These contributions are part of the employee's compensation.

The trust then purchases shares in

the company from the owner. Employees don't own the company directly; rather, they own shares in the trust that owns the shares. This setup has several tax advantages for both owner and employee.

"As a transitional tool, there's a multitude of ways it can be structured to the mutual benefit of everyone," Whitelaw said.

The trust can borrow money to increase its ownership share in the company, but it need not own the entire company. The selling owner can retain majority or minority ownership.

"It's excellent for employee retention," Whitelaw said. "It gets the employee to think like an owner. Every dollar you save, some portion of it goes into your pocket."

For more information on how ESOPs work, log on to www.esop.org and www.nceo.org.

Planning ahead

The common thread throughout these transition stories is the importance of planning ahead. Every transition must rest on a solid foundation. The business must prepare for the transition, as must those taking over.

Chris Robinson, of Robinson Nursery, said discussion is key. "Every step you make, open communication between all the stakeholders is really important, that you make sure you're all on the same page," he said.

According to his brother, Josh, it doesn't hurt to ask around for advice. Name any nursery — if it has been around for long enough, chances are good that it too will have been through a transition.

"Talk to others who have been through it as well, so you can learn from what they've done," he said. ☺

Editor's note: Tracy Ilene Miller contributed to this story.

Curt Kipp is the director of publications and communications at the Oregon Association of Nurseries, and the editor of Digger magazine.



Planting seeds for the future

To achieve the desired outcomes, business transition planning should begin early and cover all the bases

BY RYAN KUENZI

NO MATTER HOW you've built and grown your nursery, there's one milestone you'll eventually approach: transitioning business ownership to someone else. Whether that successor is a family member, management group, or a third party, succession affects your business, family, wealth, and future.

To be successful, your plan must be developed well in advance, regardless of when you're planning to transition ownership — now or in 20 years. This will help ensure that your business not only survives, but provides a return on all the hard work and time that you invested.

Why succession planning matters

Few owners adequately plan the exit from their business. However, a succession plan is just as critical as a business plan. Succession plans map out the transfer of

ownership, allowing for a business' future success and helping business owners achieve personal goals.

Succession planning is also critical for avoiding undesirable transfer or succession results. The sooner planning begins, the greater the likelihood that your business and personal objectives will be met.

Without a succession plan, creditors and others will create a plan for you, or the federal and state government may take a large portion of your business assets to satisfy estate taxes.

However, many business owners avoid planning for succession because the process can bring up personally sensitive topics, such as family dynamics, retirement, or mortality. This can result in inadequate succession planning that reduces future taxes but doesn't fulfill the owner's vision for the family and business.

Great succession planning takes the needs of the business, owner, and family into account. When done well, it can empower you to build a lasting legacy.

Key elements of succession planning

A thorough succession plan will address the following five elements. For each of these areas, it's important to evaluate your current plans and determine if any areas require long-term assistance or immediate action.

- **Business finances:** Securing and growing your company's transferable value.
- **Personal finances:** Creating sufficient personal liquidity and net worth to fund your lifestyle and tend to your family's needs and interests.
- **Management succession:** Developing key successors to enhance long-term performance, value, and transferability. >>

Planting seeds for the future

- **Estate planning:** Planning for the family legacy while helping to reduce the estate tax burden.

- **Ownership transition:** Structuring the transfer of the business to a successor.

Typically, the two most complex elements are management succession planning and estate planning.

Management succession steps

A quality management team is critical to the ongoing success of your business. To build a quality team, you can take the following steps:

1: Discover your preliminary objectives

- Define goals and a schedule for stepping away from the business. These will serve as milestones for tracking progress and decision-making.

- Identify successor candidates.
- Evaluate your candidates' strengths

and weaknesses by benchmarking them against an inventory of the ideal skills, talents, and abilities required for management positions.

- Determine the action steps — such as training, mentoring, or personnel changes — needed to build the new management team.

2: Evaluate your team

Your plan should address whether your business has the right people in the right positions. If current management isn't performing at an optimal level, succession planning provides a good opportunity to enact changes to strengthen team performance.

3: Review your structure

It's also important to evaluate your organizational structure and culture, and ask some key questions to make sure you're on track with your goals:

- Do your top managers want to be part of the future of the business?

- If not, how do you build a culture where key personnel want to stay?

Answering these questions will help drive the long-term success of your business as well as the economic viability of your overall transition planning.

Estate planning

It's essential to integrate your estate plan with your business succession plan. Your largest asset is likely your business, and the wealth generated from transitioning your ownership interests helps fund your estate.

Your estate plan should be as unique as the people it aims to protect. Taxes, family issues, asset protection, and effective wealth transfer all factor heavily into estate-planning decisions. You may wish to control the timing or criteria for distributions from your estate through trusts, gifting, or other tax-saving and asset-protection tools.

If you already have an estate plan, evaluate it periodically by considering the following:

- Does it fit your current financial and personal situation?
- Does your estate plan leverage estate tax rates and exemptions effectively?

Understanding your strengths

By focusing on the five key elements of succession planning early on and understanding your strengths and weaknesses, you can increase the likelihood of a successful future transition. ☺

Ryan Kuenzi, MBA, CPA, has practiced public accounting since 2004. He provides tax compliance, consulting, and planning services. He can be reached at ryan.kuenzi@mossadams.com or 503-478-2119. Assurance, tax, and consulting offered through Moss Adams LLP. Investment advisory services offered through Moss Adams Wealth Advisors LLC. Investment banking offered through Moss Adams Capital LLC.

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The elements of a transition

A nursery transition plan must consider the optimal timing to change ownership, management, control – or ultimately, all three

A NURSERY BUSINESS IS often nurtured, grown, and sold much like the plants raised in the nursery. One big difference is that the succession planning cycle happens over many years — not just one or two growing seasons.

When it comes time to sell, a nursery presents challenges that are unique, as compared to other businesses. When the owners decide it is time to transition out of the business and to engage in succession planning of the company and a smooth exit for the owners, careful planning and preparation are necessary.

Succession planning can be viewed as the art of structuring the transition of several elements of the business: the ownership, the management, and the control. Each of these elements requires careful planning, structuring, and implementation to assure the succession plan is successful.

Timing the exit

Nurseries are a cyclical business. Cash flow, working capital, and profitability ebb and flow during those cycles. The length of those cycles can also vary greatly depending upon the plant stock of the nursery.

Taking those natural cycles into account when timing the implementation of a succession plan will have a significant impact on the success of the plan and also on the terms and conditions upon which the owners are able to transition out of the business. It often takes several years of analysis of the business cycle to determine the best time to implement a plan, so advance thought and preparation are necessary.

The ownership element

Often, the nursery business is a family affair. The owners may want to keep the nursery in the family, which will limit the universe of potential buyers. However,

potential buyers may also include key employees or a competing company. Each option comes with its own challenges.

Internal Buyers: If family members or key employees are the preferred buyers, consideration must be given to the fact that few family members or employees will have the financial resources to purchase the company outright.



Often, family or employees will need to acquire their ownership of the company over time. That can be accomplished through a variety of tools, from bonus plans to buy-sell agreements funded with insurance, or deferred compensation plans.

The funding of the transition of the company to family or employees can be a five- to 10-year process. Additionally, not all family members or employees will stay with the company for the duration of the succession plan, requiring some recalibration of the plan over time.

External Buyers: If the company is to be sold to a competing nursery, confidentiality is a key component of the transition. If it becomes known in the industry that the company is for sale, competitors may use that information to attempt to pick off valuable employees and clients.

During the due diligence phase of



Thomas B. Eriksen

Thomas B. Eriksen is an attorney in Jordan Ramis PC's Business Law practice group. He represents business and corporate clients in all aspects of business operations. You can contact him at 503-598-5590 or by email at brad.eriksen@jordanramis.com

a transaction, financial information and other proprietary information is often shared with the potential buyer. If this information is not properly protected, it could be used against the company in the event that the transaction is not completed.

Valuing the business

How much is the company worth? Clearly, the in-ground inventory has a value that can be established at market.

But what about the other aspects of the business, including its in-place workforce, equipment, fixtures, and any real property? What about intangibles such as goodwill or a below-market lease?

Equipment and fixtures may be fully depreciated and in need of replacement or like-new condition. An appraiser may be necessary to accurately assess the value of the tangible assets.

Intangibles may comprise a substantial part of the value of the company. These intangibles will include such items as the anticipated future profits of the company, below-market lease rates, the skill level of the in-place workforce, special areas of expertise or products, and market share.

Determining the value of these intangibles often requires an appraiser or consultant with expertise and experience in the nursery business.

The target buyer, whether internal or external, can also impact the value of the company. When transitioning the own- ➤

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ership to family or key employees, these smaller portions of ownership will often be subject to minority interest and lack of control discounts, resulting in an overall smaller payoff to the departing owners.

Sale of the entire company to an external buyer often allows the departing owners to obtain the full enterprise value for the company without discounts for lack of marketability or minority interest. Additionally, a strategic buyer may be willing to pay a premium for the company if the acquired company complements its current business through acquired geographical reach, product mix, or distribution channels.

Tax considerations may also impact the value of the business. If the nursery happens to be located in an opportunity zone created by the 2017 tax reform, the tax advantages to the buyer may increase what the buyer is willing to pay.

Transferring control

Designing and implementing a succession plan does not necessarily mean giving up control of the company. If an internal succession plan is preferred, transitioning family or key employees into ownership and management of the company can occur over time.

While family members or key employees that are likely candidates are identified and trained over time, current ownership can retain control of the company by retaining the key officer positions within the company, even as their ownership interest in the company decreases.

Securing and monetizing the value that a nursery has is much like harvesting a crop and seeing it safely to market. Starting the process well before the need to exit the company is not unlike the planning necessary for the care, planting, and nurturing of a new crop. This will help assure the success of the company, both in terms of the continued longevity and returning value to the departing owners. ☺

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Candidate will have good communication and organizational skills, be highly motivated and goal oriented as well as being aware of and practicing safety in the workplace. Candidate must also possess knowledge of electronic diagnostic equipment and be open to further training and use of electronic data and labor management software platforms. The ability to maintain accurate records by recording service and repairs completed with parts and product usage is vital to the position. Must be able to handle and carry objects up to 80 lbs.

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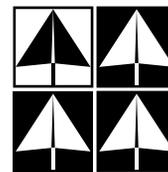
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GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Series content is coordinated by Dr. Jay Pscheidt, professor of botany and plant pathology at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon.



An ongoing series provided by Oregon State University in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture and in partnership with the Oregon Association of Nurseries



Robinson Nursery is an example of a nursery that transitioned ownership. PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

The generational cycle of success

Proper farm transition planning, including timing, protects the viability of the business going forward

BY SHERRI NOXEL

AGRICULTURE, WITH ITS continuous cycle of planting and harvest rooted in valley soil, becomes a way of life. Leaving that rhythm behind to retire from the farm can be difficult. Farm leadership brings prominence and identity in an important profession, often in a cherished rural community.

The financial requirements are challenging if separate retirement income sources have not been set aside. Running a complex enterprise provides satisfaction in building business relationships to execute smart deals.

When someone uses the expression “die with my boots on,” it may be seen as warning to others that they don’t want to retire anytime soon — if ever. This sentiment may suggest fortitude — but in reality, it puts the future of the farm at great risk.

The big picture

Oregon’s farm owners are older than at any time in history. At an average age of 60 years, they are two years older than national figures. Over the last decade, each edition of the *State of Oregon Agriculture* issued by the Oregon Board of Agriculture included farmer succession as a top strategic issue.

The 2019 legislative session saw the first request, through the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, for funds to target farm succession planning and education.

Prior generations had a straightforward path to retirement described by farm succession planning consultant Dick Wittman as “grunt to assistant manager,” and finally to “boss” — assuming that the previous farm leader was willing to pass the baton.

In this system, the incumbent chief executive made most operational decisions, and finances were shared on a need-to-know basis.

This pattern of a “succession ladder” was measured in John Baker’s work with the International Farm Transition Network (see table 1, next page). Across five U.S. states, farm CEOs were asked to rank the order of decision-making authority retained by the older generation.

In most states, the last tasks shifted to the next generation leaders were key financial controls. This data, when considering Oregon farm owner age, suggests significant risks to farm continuity when retirement is delayed. For the sake of continuity, it is critical that successors have knowledge of the financials and the reasoning behind the decisions that are made. ➤

The generational cycle of success

Table 1. Succession Task Delegation (U.S.-only) ranking which decision-making tasks are retained by the older generation. "1" means the activity most identified as retained by the older generation.

Activity or Decision	Iowa 2006	Virginia 2001	North Carolina 2005	Pennsylvania 2005	New Jersey 2005
Decides when to pay bills	2	1	1	1	1
Identifies sources and negotiates loans and finance	1	2	2	2	2
Decides long-term balance and type of enterprises	12	5	7	12	13
Decides and plans capital projects	3	7	4	7	8
Negotiates purchase of machines and equipment	8	8	5	5	5
Decides when to sell crops or livestock	3	5	6	8	9
Negotiates sales of crops or livestock	3	4	3	6	6
Makes annual crop or livestock plans	7	9	10	11	8
Decides level of inputs used	6	3	NI	9	10
Plans day-to-day work	10	12	9	9	7
Decides timing of operations or activities	11	10	8	7	7
Decides type and make of machines and equipment	13	10	12	10	9
Decides work method or way jobs are done	9	13	11	12	12

In addition to financial instability, farms are also at risk of losing human capital. Entrepreneurial next generation “assistant managers,” who have been studying new technologies, and farming methods, may not wait for succession. There is a serious risk of losing talented family employees who do not see a path to career advancement on the family farm.

Alternatively, succession is changing to reduce unplanned retirements that limit business development as new multigenerational business models emerge. Successful family-run operations are shifting from a business to an enterprise structure to be more intentional about stewardship.

Under such a model, long-term strategic planning is often led by the former CEOs. Supported by sound governance with differentiated management and ownership responsibilities, the farm CEO retirement adds tremendous value to the enterprise. The chairman role is the next step after a rewarding career as a farm CEO.

Specifically, the farm CEO retires away from daily operational decision-making to chair the board where family and nonfamily directors or advisors strengthen the farm’s long-term viability.

Farm benefits of CEO retirement

The challenge of the next economic cycle is never far away. The lure of continuing to run the operation in good times is strong — and even stronger in tough times.

The business case for installing next-generation leadership, even in the face of

trying times, focuses on shared learning. A new successor can experience intensive learning on the job while the farm still has an emergency support system. There is both a knowledgeable next generation CEO running current operations backed, when needed, by a highly experienced chair who is planning for the next 50 years of farm growth.

A board chair disconnects from farm operations to focus on the strategic issues of developing a deep bench of leaders and evaluating long-term acquisitions and investment alternatives for the future of the farm. At the end of a manager’s full workday, these strategic questions would receive less attention or be delayed. The chair’s role is unencumbered by the intensive time requirements of daily decisions.

The founding director of the Austin Family Business Program, Dr. Pat Frishkoff, has retired from private consulting practice. After more than 20 years helping family farms with succession, she noted, “If I had to do it all over again, I would forget everything I read. The success of a transition all comes down to the transparency of the senior generation.”

Planning for the retirement of the CEO to a board chair position is an opportunity for the generations to work together to build executive job descriptions, farm strategic plans and timelines.

Installing a board chair benefits the family as well. Chairs hold a well-defined role in stewardship of the family legacy and in reinforcing the family values that

are the foundation of the business.

Sharing family stories and milestones inspire the youngest in the family and strengthen the bond that will unite the future generations as potential business partners.

Four steps to launch retirement

1. The family farm CEO’s first essential step toward retirement requires a workable financial plan. Finding time to collect household and personal expense histories, investment statements and insurance documents as a starting point for estimating future retirement income needs should become a priority. These financial requirements drive the options for the farm sale or gift transactions to younger generations.

2. The retirement funding plan can also be used to generate a time horizon. Identifying a date for retirement will create an urgency to get plans and successors prepared. This is an opportunity to be transparent in planning the future of the farm. The target date should be shared with advisors and family members.

Example: *A next generation farm owner first learned of her father’s retirement date during an Austin Family Business Program management succession seminar. Dad’s intended retirement date was two years earlier than she had been assuming. She was committed to taking over the family farm, but it meant moving her family back to her hometown sooner than she had been planning. Thankfully they had a shared target to work toward.*

In that same workshop we asked

family members in each farming operation to review Baker's Succession Task Delegation (Table 1) list for their own farm and for each task identify:

A. The person currently responsible for the task, and

B. The person who would be responsible for the task in five years and

C. The person who would be responsible for the task in 10 years.

Individuals in the family farm then compared answers to see if they were similar in their perceptions of the CEO's transition. The responses always prompted productive discussion in setting timelines for succession.

3. Create ongoing opportunities for private discussions of the farm business with the successors. The most frequent request reported by next generation farm leaders is the need for more time set aside to talk with their parents about the farm leadership experience. Include successors in meetings with farm business advisors, suppliers, bankers, accountants and attorneys. Schedule uninterrupted sessions for detailing the decision-making that has become intuitive to the seasoned CEO.

4. Build or reactivate an advisory board if it does not currently exist. Review the 2017 *Digger* article, "Starting a board of directors for your family business," for more information (tinyurl.com/v27jvo4). The chair's job description should define responsibilities that keep a retired CEO out of the daily affairs.

All generations have a responsibility to the farm and the family. Young cousins learn the values and meaning of being part of an enterprising family. Middle generations commit to education and professional development to extend their entrepreneurial success. However, the oldest generation, with the deepest knowledge and experience, has much to share to ensure the farm's future and continue the cycle. ☺

In: Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development. Loble, M., Baker, J. R., & Whitehead, I. (2010). Farm succession and retirement: Some international comparisons. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 1(1), 49-64. Retrieved from <https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/10/3>



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Cumulative impacts have consequences

The nursery and greenhouse industry is once again Oregon's top agricultural commodity by value, according to a sales estimate for 2018.

High-quality plants and green goods continue to be in demand here and abroad.

With this momentum at our back, we now must turn the page to 2020. The new year promises a tumultuous presidential campaign, the possibility of harmful laws at the state and federal level, and the specter of a looming economic recession.

As the Great Recession taught us, it is seldom just one thing that contributes to hard times. When one thing stacks on top of the next, the cumulative impact can decimate an industry.

OAN members play important roles in all stages of the nursery industry supply chain. Our members hold diverse opinions on critical issues, and that is a strength. It means we can be solution oriented. No one can pigeon-hole us as liberal or conservative.

OAN members care about their employees, paying decent wages and providing benefits that contribute to a good standard of living. Members are part of the community and support fair taxation, public services, and schools. However, they also care about a healthy regulatory climate for business — which is seldom guaranteed.

The fall of NORPAC Foods

As I write this, NORPAC Foods — an agricultural cooperative that sells fruits and vegetables from more than 200 growers — has announced that it will close all of its plants in Oregon. NORPAC's crops are harvested on more than 40,000 acres of Willamette Valley soil. The resulting layoffs will put more than 900 employees out of work, right before the Christmas holiday.

It was not just one thing. NORPAC earlier filed for bankruptcy and struck a deal to sell its assets, but the agreement fell apart. Selling a complicated asset, such as a cooperative, is tough under any circumstances.

This will have a large impact on farmers. OAN has two influential members serving on the NORPAC board. They suffered from making this decision.

In situations like these, fingers get pointed. However, I have often stated that when something like this happens, there were usually warning signs that someone raised, and someone else in power dismissed. The common retort is, "You really won't go anywhere, or close your operation."

When the chickens come home to roost, the lack of accountability by policymakers is disheartening. Our sector is not fully enjoying the benefits of the booming economy. We may not pack up and leave, but we can lose important businesses such as NORPAC.

Losing ag operations isn't just about us as producers. The community loses jobs, secondary services and the carbon sequestration our operations provide. The foundations of many rural communities are further eroded. NORPAC had some unique issues, but their demise shows our collective vulnerability as high-volume, low-margin operators.

Runaway cost of doing business

When policies are discussed outside a partisan context, we can assess the merits and the likely impacts on OAN members of all sizes, markets and types. Reasonable minds can project different outcomes. The association welcomes these discussions.

We have been through the implementation of the Obama Administration's Affordable Care Act, Oregon's paid sick leave requirement, the state's new paid family leave, the state's mandatory retirement accounts requirement, and many others. All of these create an administrative burden for businesses. Big corporations can absorb these cost inputs or pass them on, but smaller operations must either add people or consultants to do this work.

In Oregon, we also have one of the highest minimum wages in the country. Adding to that, the 2019 Legislature passed a tax that will directly harm agriculture. The new commercial activities tax, which taxes Oregon businesses based on in-state gross (not net) sales of greater than \$1 million, takes effect after the first of the year.

In the 2020 Legislature, we expect to another attempt at passing a carbon bill. This will significantly increase the cost of fuel to move products, as well as the natural gas nurseries need to heat greenhouses.

New employer mandates are queued up



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

for 2020 and 2021. If passed, these will burden nursery operations even more.

Many of our nursery and greenhouse operators compete against growers that have much lower cost burdens, and are closer to the same markets. At what point does Oregon's ace in the hole — the highest quality plant material — lose its competitive edge? What then? Who will be accountable and take responsibility?

Lending your voice

We all have a voice, and a stake in the communities we share. When we are part of an association, that voice is magnified. It carries greater weight with policymakers.

Our association's mission statement is simple: *The Oregon Association of Nurseries is the community dedicated to the long-term success, profitability and excellence of Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry.*

Please lend your voice to the discussions that impact your business. We need you.

Complex issues rarely have a clean answer. The nursery and greenhouse industry should continue to work with all interests to make our state and nation a better place to live and work.

But it is critical that we do not allow public sector decisions to encourage private sector failures. Policymakers need to recognize that policies do not act in isolation. It's not "just one thing" when they impose new costs and regulations on our family operations. It's "one more thing." The burden is cumulative. At some point, that "one more thing" is the difference between staying viable, and going out of business.

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