

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
denece messenger@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@landsystems nursery.com
541-382-7646

Our voice matters

In February, I joined a group of the OAN's Government Relations Committee members on a trip to Salem.

We met with legislators to talk about the current session and how multiple bills directly relate to, and impact, our nursery industry.

Ten or more years ago, this would have been an "off year" — the legislature would not have been in session, and this group of engaged members would have been at their nurseries working.

In 2010, however, an important change happened. A proposal for annual legislative sessions was referred to the voters and passed. In 2012, the Oregon Legislature started meeting every year. This meant the traditional, long session in odd years and a 35-day, short session in even years.

Originally, the short session was intended for budget and financial fixes, or short-term stopgap measures. The long sessions were still considered the proper venue for more in-depth legislation. That has changed, and major bills with far and wide implications are now being debated in the short session. That's unfortunate, because there is limited time in a short session for public engagement and discourse.

That is why it was so important for our OAN group to meet with legislative leaders last month on Lobby Day. We had to make sure they heard our point of view.

We met with people on both sides of the political aisle and had good discussions. At this writing, the Legislature is still considering several bills we have our eye on, and nothing's been decided yet. I can tell you, however, that several bills have real ramifications for growers.

For example, the proposed cap and trade bill would see our fuel and energy prices increase up and down the supply chain. Meanwhile, a proposed bill to ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos would remove an available tool some Northwest nurseries rely on.

If our voice is not heard, we may not like the outcome. As a group, we are solution-oriented. This means we bring our concerns, but we also bring our fixes.

I'll be honest — the environment is difficult. The last few years in Oregon have seen a shift in political power. It can be referred to as a state government trifecta — a single party controls the governorship, as well as both the House and Senate.

There's a cherry to top it off: supermajorities in both chambers. That is a lot of power to control the conversation, and to determine which bills really have a chance to move forward. It also means one party can pass tax increases without any bipartisan buy-in at all. It doesn't matter which party holds this power — this much control is problematic.

When the party in power stops having electoral consequences, it is a recipe for unchecked agendas. A balanced legislature is a better governing body. Otherwise, stakeholders can come to the table with problems and solutions, and legislators may listen, but they may not feel motivated to help. This is where we find ourselves in today's. We are striving to help representatives who are nursery friendly. We try to be part of a solution to make things tolerable, if not necessarily the best. This is not a good place to be in.

After multiple years of new fees and taxes, and coming off a 2019 Legislature that brought us an annual \$1 billion Corporate Activities Tax, we're seeing many layers of accumulated tax burdens that cut into our bottom line. It is almost like our Oregon economy is being engineered to push us away from agriculture and small businesses, and into large corporations and high tech which can weather these increases.

As the short session ends and we get back to focusing on our businesses, we need to remember what happens in Salem is a direct result of our votes in elections. Elections have consequences. We can't sit on our hands. We need to be engaged. It's worth our time to join our fellow nurseries and advocate for a better small business environment for our Oregon nurseries. ☺



Jim Simnitt
OAN PRESIDENT