

# MEET THE LEADER

The voices of Oregon's nursery industry

## TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

My dream ever since I was little was to manage the nursery. When I was 8, I started pruning trees to earn a pair of rollerblades. Throughout high school, I worked in propagation on my family's nursery ... in 6 feet of snow, uphill both ways, of course! After high school graduation, I spent two years working every job in the nursery. Following a two-year internship, my parents approached me to let me know in order to fulfill my dream and manage the nursery, I would need to get a business degree. I graduated from Linfield College in 2008 and found my home in the nursery industry. I fell in love with the plants and the people. I have been blessed with great learning opportunities with some of the best growers in the world. I am proud to have this in my blood. I was born to do this.

## WHAT'S YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE?

Do the right thing — every time.

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

Well, the best business decision I ever made was joining the family business, but a close second would be the decision to start a Lean transformation at Robinson Nursery Inc.

## WHO IS YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT MENTOR?

I have a few mentors for different things — my mom, my brother, my wife, and a few close colleagues — but my dad is the most significant one. His commitment to discipline and hard work is beyond anyone I've ever seen, and yet he still knows how to truly live. He has an insatiable thirst for growth; this man has no ceiling. My dad taught me that the most valuable return on investment has nothing to do with the money. He also taught me how to ethically run a business, how community is global, and the importance of cultivating a meaningful life. Most importantly, he taught me to marry above my pay grade.

## BEST BUSINESS ADVICE:

Grow the number of trees you are going to sell.



**Chris Robinson**  
Nursery Manager  
Robinson Nursery Inc.  
OAN member since 1987

- Field/Bare Root representative, OAN Board of Directors
- Sunset Chapter President
- Research Committee member
- New Nursery Professional of the Year (2017)

## WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE NURSERY INDUSTRY?

**I love the people. When my brother Josh and I first entered the industry, it was during a recession, so we took a lot of field trips to other growing operations. It didn't matter if it was a customer or a competitor or not — we were welcomed with open arms. It was almost like everyone was rooting for us from the start. It felt like home.**

## WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

Many things drive my passion for nursery work. Progression. The pursuit of perfection. Research and development. Changing the game. I honestly just want to create a better tree while continuing to add value to our products.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I'm proud of the team at Robinson Nursery. I'm proud of my family's ability to work together to grow our business. I'm proud of our managers and supervisors for continually pushing progression. I'm proud of the younger generations who are stepping up to follow in the footsteps of their mothers and fathers. And, I am proud of all our team members that devote their lives to creating a product that changes the world for the better.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING INVOLVED WITH THE OREGON ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES?

The nursery industry has given me a lot. I believe in what the OAN is doing. They really have our backs. One small example of their dedication to us all is the way they have fought tirelessly for our industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. That is just one of many ways they help keep our industry alive.

What a person puts into the OAN they receive back ten-fold. If you ever have the opportunity to serve on an OAN committee or the board, you will find yourself sitting next to knowledgeable and passionate leaders of their field. The networking alone will accelerate your personal and professional growth, but you also become a part of something bigger. Through the OAN, I have an amazing opportunity to contribute to the success of the entire Oregon nursery industry.

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

For our industry, uncertainty is a constant challenge. We fight extreme variables annually and it inevitably ends in feast or famine. In the wake of the pandemic, we feel that the stress is amplified. We are going to need to learn to pivot. Our 3–5-year plans, pre- and post-COVID-19, are going to look completely different. ©