

## 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@landssystemsnursery.com  
541-382-7646

## Complete the picture The Oregon Association of Nurseries is our trade association that helps keep us working and growing.

The volunteer leaders and professional staff that make up the OAN connect us, market our plants, and above all else advocate on our behalf to the politicians and government officials in Salem and Washington DC.

I am really excited about this month's *Digger* issue, as it is a comprehensive look at the OAN's advocacy work — who leads the charge, what we are pushing for, and how we bring our issues to the table.

Being political is not in my nature. It takes me some thought and time to arrive at my conclusions. And once my opinion is forged, I tend not to share too widely, since it is only my opinion. But those opinions and views are important.

The OAN Government Relations Committee exposed me to the benefit of sharing those opinions. They may not be the popular one in the room, but they matter. Every one of our opinions helps color and complete a picture of how our industry works.

Our executive director, Jeff Stone, and Elizabeth Remley, contract lobbyist with Thorn Run Partners, do a wonderful job getting our members ready to tell our stories to government officials. Nothing is better than a business owner or employee explaining how government regulations will make our job harder or less profitable with undue regulations.

For me, talking one-on-one with a politician is fairly comfortable; in front of a committee, not so much. The first time I testified in front of a committee at the capitol building in Salem was, I felt, a disaster.

It didn't help that the committee was disorganized. We didn't know who or when we would be called up to speak — or even if we would have the chance. I fumbled through my introduction, said what I wanted to get across, and was done. It felt like a blink of an eye, and I hoped I made sense.

That experience, along with Jeff and Elizabeth's guidance has helped and am now a much stronger voice on our issues.

Our advocacy brings partners together. The ag community in Oregon is strong and the OAN is one of its leaders. On like-minded issues, we work with Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Cattlemen's Association, and other ag groups that want to work in concert with us. These partners make sense on paper, but other partners can be a surprise.

When the driver's license bill was being discussed in Salem, we joined with worker's rights groups and faith-based groups to make our appeal. It was an issue we all agreed on and could work together on. It was the right thing to do. And we were successful.

The advocacy the OAN does is financed by our members. Our dues and ONPAC donations go towards protecting our nursery businesses and employees. This means that those who invest in the association pay the freight for others who don't join — who just sit back and reap the benefits. That's tough to square. We are one industry, and everyone should do their fair share by supporting the OAN.

Advocacy is one of the hardest things to put an ROI on. Some of the best advocacy work is protecting us from onerous regulations. If a bill or rule does not see the light of day because of work our team and members did, then how do you put a value on that?

Just this year alone, with the struggles from imminent business closures due to COVID, employment pressures, and now wildfire outbreaks, would be enough for my business to make sure we are members of the OAN, the trade association representing the largest sector in Oregon agriculture.

Enjoy as this issue "pulls back the curtain" on how we advocate for you, but also contemplate getting involved. By joining the advocacy team, sharing your story and offering your views, you can help complete the picture of Oregon nurseries. ©



**Jim Simnitt**  
OAN PRESIDENT