

Digger

OCTOBER 2020

THE ADVOCACY ISSUE

OAN members speak out on
behalf of the industry

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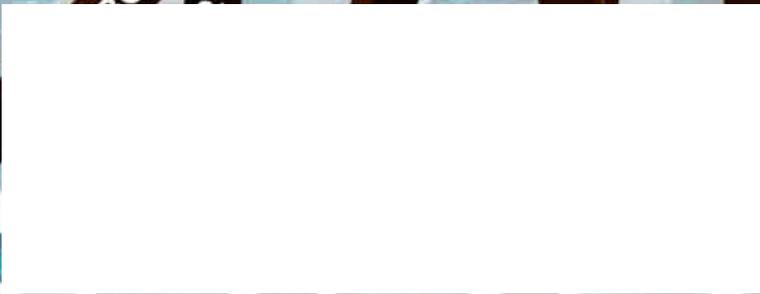
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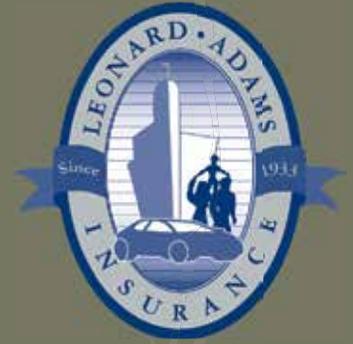
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October 2020 Vol. 64 No. 10

Digger



THE ADVOCACY ISSUE

OAN members speak out on behalf of the nursery industry. In this special issue, we take you inside the process.

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On the cover: Political issues that impact the nursery industry are often propped up on rickety policy decisions. ILLUSTRATION BY BILL GOLOSKI **On this page:** Left: The 2019 Government Relations team met with legislators in Washington DC. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OAN Right: A sweat bee and a ladybug visiting a yarrow cultivar (*Achillea millefolium* 'Salmon Beauty'). PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



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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



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*.

OCTOBER 1-31

PORTLAND FALL HOME & GARDEN SHOW

The home and garden show has been reimagined with the new theme "In Your Neighborhood." The month-long virtual show will create "touchless" window displays throughout Portland's neighborhoods in collaboration with several designers and skilled professionals. The online trade show coincides with Portland Housing Month, and will feature designers, remodelers, garden centers, and other services and supplies. Virtual booths may offer video presentations, webinars, and panel discussions. Visit www.homeshowpdx.com for details.

OCTOBER 5, 7, 14

FIRST AID AND CPR CLASSES

The OAN Safety and Insurance Committee is presenting First Aid and CPR classes as a service to members and the industry. Successful completion results in a certification that is good for two years. Each class runs from 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the Cascade Training Center, 6755 N.E. Bennett Street Building B, Suite 150, Hillsboro, Oregon. Classes on October 5 and 14 will be conducted in English; October 7 will be in Spanish. Seating is limited due to COVID-19 social distancing protocols. The cost is \$45 per person for those renewing their certification (two years) and for those taking the class for the first time. Register and pay at www.oan.org/cprclass, or call Zen Landis, 503-582-2011.

OCTOBER 7-8

CANADIAN GREENHOUSE CONFERENCE, VIRTUAL EVENT

Four online speaker sessions across two days will be discuss topics important to the greenhouse industry, including lighting, irrigation, and more. There will also be an online poster session with new research topics and a new varieties showcase. For more information and to register, go to www.canadiangreenhouseconference.com

MID-OCTOBER

WILLAMETTE CHAPTER POSTPONES MEETINGS, SEEKS NOMINATIONS

Willamette Chapter has put all activities on hold until further notice. Planning ahead, they are seeking a few new directors to join the chapter's board of directors. Please contact Janet Poot at janet@growers-inc.com or 503-393-6411 if you are interested.

OCTOBER 20-21

HORTICANN LIGHT + TECH CONFERENCE

This conference attracts an broad audience, including cannabis and other commercial growers, greenhouse manufacturers, urban and vertical farmers, horticultural lighting specialists and more. Attendees will learn about



OCTOBER 15

OAN BOARD ELECTION BALLOTS DUE

The OAN Board of Directors has approved a slate of candidates for six open positions on the 2021 board. Members may vote for the candidates listed on the ballot, or write in a candidate of their choice. Ballots will be mailed to members next week and must be returned by mail or fax by October 15 to be valid. The OAN board includes 10 directors who represent industry segments as determined proportionally by USDA statistics. These are voted on by the members, and they serve two-year terms. Terms are staggered, with half up for election each year.

the latest advances, research, and case-study findings regarding lighting optimization and efficacy, energy and cost savings, operations and environmental control systems, and strategies for integrating multiple ag-tech management technology platforms. Registration is available online at www.horticannlt.com

OCTOBER 29

IPPS NORTH AMERICAN VIRTUAL SUMMIT

International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS), Western region will be host a virtual summit between 3-6 p.m. Dr. Dave Creech, Regent's professor and professor emeritus, Dr. Michael Dirr, professor emeritus of horticulture at University of Georgia, and Dr. Dennis Werner, emeritus professor at NCSU, will be presenting information during an online format for registered attendees. For more information, visit www.ipps.org

NOVEMBER 3-5

AMERICANHORT HOSTS DIG CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER

AmericanHort will be hosting an online DIG Conference: Disease, Insects, and Growth Regulators on November 3-5, 2020, according to a release from the association. The conferences is composed of four education tracks that

cover disease, insect and pest management, biocontrols, growth regulator best practices, new technology, sanitation, IPM strategies, and more. There will also be networking opportunities through coffee chats, panel discussions, and roundtables. For more information or to register, visit AmericanHort.org/DIG.

DECEMBER 4-5

OAN CONVENTION

The 2020 Convention will be held online Friday-Saturday, December 4-5, 2020. The event will include a happy hour on Friday, and four hours of engaging presentations on Saturday. Registration will open in November. Please save the date and watch for details on www.oan.org. Contact Allan Niemi at aniemi@oan.org or 503-682-5089 for details about sponsorship opportunities.

DECEMBER 7-9

NW HORT EXPO

The NW Hort Expo and Washington State Fruit Tree Association will host a virtual platform of their show. Companies will be showcasing their innovative solutions for the production, storage, packaging, shipping, and automation tools for fruit trees. Visit nwhortexpo.com for further details.

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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.



Garden Trends Report for 2021 explores 'The Great Reset'

As the world battles through the COVID-19 pandemic, Garden Media Group has released its new Garden Trends Report for 2021 for horticultural businesses. The theme is "The Great Reset."

The report has been issued annually since 2001. This year's edition identifies eight different developing trends for lawn, gardening and nursery professionals looking to prepare their businesses and careers for what is coming next.

The report is divided into six sections. They explore how businesses are offering delivery and curbside pickup convenience options; the future urban planning changes and demands for interiorscapes; the increase in popularity of home gardening and environmental stewardship; a budding trend for tiny plants; the need to invest and develop cohabitational greenspaces; and reducing the impact of light pollution on wildlife.

Downloaded the FREE report (contact information required) from grow.gardenmediagroup.com/2021-garden-trends-report.

WILDFIRES CAUSE EVACUATIONS AND DAMAGE IN OREGON

In what will surely go down as the state's worst fire season on record, Oregon was hit by a spate of at least 37 wildfires across the state during the month of September. Several of the fires affected the Cascade Mountain foothills near the Willamette Valley, which is the center of Oregon nursery production.

A major windstorm after Labor Day transformed a typical fire season into something much more severe, as abnormally high winds fanned the flames and spread flaming matter through tinder-dry forests. The fires spread quickly, polluting the air and turning the skies an otherworldly orange hue.

A few nurseries located in the Cascade foothills had to evacuate due to the encroaching flames. Still others in the Willamette Valley scrambled to irrigate their crops and prevent them from catching fire. Many more nurseries adjusted their operations to protect workers against air quality that officially reached hazardous levels of 301 or greater on the air quality index (AQI).

As of September 14, more than 1 million acres had burned statewide, according to the Oregon Department of Forestry. As of mid-September, state emergency managers had counted 10 people deceased and 22 missing, but they were prepared to discover more fatalities as they re-entered evacuated and destroyed areas.

"This could be the greatest loss of human lives and property due to wildfire in our state's



history," Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said. She invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act, enabling state resources to join the fight along with local firefighters. Additionally, Gov. Brown requested and received a federal disaster declaration from President Trump.

Several counties were partially under mandatory evacuation orders, including Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Linn, Yamhill, Lane and Jackson counties. Nine Oregon towns were reported to be either extensively damaged or fully destroyed, including Detroit, Mill City, Lyons, Gates and Idanha in the Santiam Canyon out-

More COVID-19 coverage online

Further updates on how the COVID-19 virus is impacting the greenhouse and nursery industry is online at www.diggermagazine.com/category/coronavirus. We are reporting on the most current information as of press time, but please check online for the most up-to-date information.





Previous page: The Willamette Valley was threatened by massive wildfires across the Cascade range.

PHOTO BY SHEILA SUND/WIKIMEDIA

Growers have been seeking varieties of boxwoods for their resistance to blight. PHOTO BY BILL GOLOSKI

side of Salem; Vida and Blue River in the McKenzie River valley outside of Eugene, and Talent and Phoenix, located between Medford and Ashland in Jackson County (Southern Oregon).

Individuals from multiple companies, including OAN member Blue Heron Farms, helped defend the small town of Scotts Mills, population 400, against encroaching fire. Nearly 100 volunteers in all joined in. The companies offered

trees and create fire lines. Read the full story at tinyurl.com/y4ng6rry.

PAPER RANKS BLIGHT-RESISTANT BOXWOOD OPTIONS

The Horticultural Research Institute, which is organized by AmericanHort and funded by the nursery industry, has published a new paper ranking 131 boxwood varieties by their susceptibil-

ity to boxwood blight (*Calonectria pseudonaviculata* and *C. henricotiae*). *Ranking Resistance of Buxus Cultivars to Boxwood Blight – an Integrated Analysis* was published in the *Journal of Environmental Horticulture*.

USDA scientists Matthew Kramer, Yong Hong Guo and Margaret Pooler combined the data from a total of six studies based on the inoculation of stem cuttings from the National Boxwood Collection, and created a matrix of each cultivar. A table ranks their relative susceptibility, with the least susceptible at the top in the research page.

“Boxwood is a valuable nursery commodity, with more than 11 million plants sold in the United States each year at a market value of \$126 million,” the authors stated. Read the report at tinyurl.com/y2evgqrk. ➤




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Lumber Products for All Nursery Needs

The plant is a significant crop for several of Oregon's nursery producers, and OAN has held several meetings to assist growers and provide them with helpful information, including a resource page at www.oan.org/boxwoodblight.

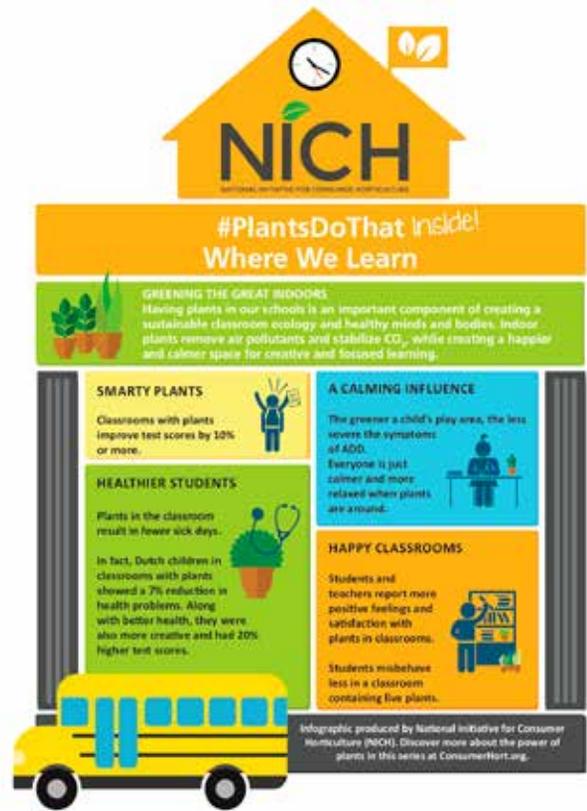
OSU PROVIDES DETAILS ON ASIAN GIANT HORNET

Oregon State University entomologists has released a publication on the Asian giant hornets (*Vespa mandarinia*) for beekeepers. The five-page piece discusses the native distribution and spread of the pest in North America. It's also provides a detailed description the pest and life cycle for identification and looks into the damage it can cause honeybee colonies. The public has been encouraged to keep an eye out for Asian giant hornets

and reporting tools are included in the publication. Trapping is not recommended at this time.

INDOOR PLANTS PROMOTED IN NEW NICH INFOGRAPHIC

The National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture (NICH) released a new educational infographic poster that businesses can use to spread share the social and economic importance of the green industry. The poster focuses on indoor plants and their ability to improve the spaces where people live, learn and work.



With many students learning remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, #PlantsDoThat Inside: Where We Learn



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The Cultural Village at the Portland Japanese Garden and its entry garden was honored by the American Society of Landscape Architects.

PHOTO BY JAMES FLORIO.JPG

is a valuable marketing tool to share with customers kids at home: It provides good reasons to add indoor plants in schools and home schools.

Two previously published posters in 2018 expand on the idea of plants improving indoor environments.

- #PlantsDoThat: At Home: Add

indoor plants to your home to improve the interior ecology of your space, helping your mind and body stay healthy.

- #PlantsDoThat: Where We Heal: Add indoor plants to reduce blood pressure and manage their pain and stress.

These resources are available for download and redistribution at consumerhort.org/plantsdothat.

Announcements

PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN HONORED BY ASLA

Portland Japanese Garden has received the Award of Excellence from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) — the highest honor offered by the professional design awards program, according to a release by the garden.

The garden's curator, Sadafumi



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Northwest News

Uchiyama, and landscape architect, Walker Macy, collaborated with Kengo Kuma Associates, Hacker Architects, KPFF Consulting Engineers, Hoffman Construction, and a team of skilled landscape and gardening craftspeople to create one of the most authentic Japanese gardens outside of Japan.

Named the Cultural Crossing Project, the expansion of the existing garden received the recognition for the team's cohesive, place-based and landscape-led design approach; the interweaving of design excellence and technical problem-solving; and the team's articulate balance between traditional Japanese and contemporary design and construction methodologies.

WHITE HOUSE ROSE GARDEN UPDATED WITH NEWGEN BOXWOODS

In June, a team from Saunders Brothers, Inc. have consulted with landscape architecture firms Perry Guillot, Inc. and Oehme, van Sweden and Associates to provide boxwood recommendations for the White House Rose Garden, according to a release by the company.

The company has been working to supply and consult with the White House for two generations.

The breeders and growers recommended blight-resistant NewGen Independence® for the formal parterre hedges, and supplied more than 50 large 'Green Beauty' boxwoods to frame the sides of the Presidents step landing outside the Oval Office.

"The Rose Garden is an American treasure that has been spectacularly restored to a classic design similar to the original design of 1962," said Robert Saunders, general manager of Saunders Brothers. "It is an honor for our company to continue a 58-year tradition of assistance to the White House Rose Garden." Read more at tinyurl.com/y55qdh6w. ©

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COVID-19 lessons from plant societies



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.

IN THIS UNPRECEDENTED period of a COVID-19 pandemic, several forest fires with lingering air pollution, and a very dry summer that has stressed all our plants, garden centers have also had to make many adjustments to retain their current customer base. On top of that, they also need to attract new customers.

Some garden centers have been more successful at this than others. Unfortunately, plant societies have also had to contend with many of these same issues.

Many societies were struggling with declining membership prior to COVID-19 and now there are even more difficulties facing them in order to remain viable. Perhaps some of the innovations that plant societies have made can be of use — with some adaptation — to garden centers.

Hardy Plant Society of Oregon

When I asked Jim Rondone why he joined the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon (HPSO), he said, “I came for the plants and stayed because of the gardeners.” He now serves as its president. With a membership of 2,500 plus, HPSO is one of the larger plant societies in the Pacific Northwest and perhaps the United States.

According to Jim, many members are passionate about gardening and want to meet other like-minded people. This was easy to do in the pre-pandemic days, but now with no actual meetings, it is rather difficult to gather members.

The HPSO board of directors is going through a daunting challenge. How do they conduct activities that would allow them to retain their current membership and also attract new members?

There are four primary reasons why people join HPSO: to meet with other gardeners, attend the speaker series, go to plant sales, and take part in the Open Garden Program. Unfortunately, all of

these had to be canceled or modified.

Hortlandia, the HPSO spring plant sale and one of the largest plant sales in the region, was canceled. Canceling the event was a tough decision to make because it is not only their largest fundraiser but also because many small growers rely on it as a major component of their income. This was a significant loss, especially for those growers who do not have a retail outlook.

The HPSO Open Garden Program is immensely popular. Members receive a booklet listing the private gardens around the area members can visit, and the dates and times they will be open. This year, however, program had to be severely altered after the booklet was sent. Visits were by appointment only, and the number of visitors at any one time was capped to comply with social distancing. The mandatory isolation imposed by COVID actually made various HPSO social media programs busier and more active, because they provided a way for members to be engaged.

Some years ago, HPSO Study Groups were created so that members could have smaller meetings within the geographic area in which they lived. This option proved to be quite popular, and today some of these Study Groups are having Zoom meetings. Whether there will be a plant sale next spring or in-person meetings remains to be seen.

American Rhododendron Society

The Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is facing similar challenges. Even with a smaller membership of passionate gardeners, (100+ members), the task of adapting to meet the challenging conditions of today is no less easy. I talked with Steve McCormick and John Stephens, membership chairs of the local chapter, to under-

stand the changes they are making.

Steve told me that the importance of publishing a healthy and content-heavy newsletter cannot be stressed enough. It provides a source for local and international information and has many color photographs to keep readers engaged. It is only available electronically. However, there are also quarterly journals published which expand the informational base.

The Portland Chapter’s social and top fund-raising event is the Mother’s Day Plant Sale at Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. This year, the in-person event was canceled. However, changes were made to bring it online to accommodate members and the public and it seemed to work. The plant sale was held virtually, with pictures of each plant and the price. People could pay online and pick up their plants at Crystal Springs.

In the end, every plant was sold. One of the reasons for this is that the sale at Crystal Springs used to last three days, but this online sale ran until June. Members were happy because they could buy the plants they wanted and the growers were happy because they did not have to take any back. What could have been a negative turned into a positive, and the chapter continues to adapt.

Portland Rose Society

The Portland Rose Society was established in 1889 and these days, it has about 650 members. The society meets at Oaks Park and the last meeting this year was held in February. »

WHAT I'M HEARING

The Portland Rose Society Spring Rose Show displays thousands of roses.

PHOTO BY RICH BAER



The Rose Society's major event each year is the Annual Rose Show, held in June to coincide with the Portland Rose Festival. This rose show draws entries of more than 3,000 roses from members and other rose growing gardeners. There is also a Fall Rose Show and a Mini Rose Show, which features miniature roses. All of these were canceled this year. There are two major fundraisers: the sale of their own specialty fertilizer and their rose calendars — which are very popular.

I talked with Rich and Dr. Charold Baer, who have both been president of the Portland Rose Society and are avid rose growers, with over 1,000 roses in their garden. I wanted to know what changes they have made, or will make, in our current environment to maintain the membership they have.

The Rose Society will have virtual

meetings beginning in the fall. They have a comprehensive website and are active on social media. One of the reasons for becoming a member is their excellent newsletter, *Rose Chatter*, which is written and edited by Rich and Charold, and published eight times a year. It is available in electronic or paper format. The electronic format is ideal because there are many photos of roses and they are all in color, as compared to the black and white print version.

The society does outreach into the community with their many pruning demonstrations that are held each spring at local garden centers. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, that will probably not happen and the society is producing a film "How to Prune Roses." There have been many

changes since 1889!

There is no crystal ball

We do not have a crystal ball to predict what 2021 will bring. Hopefully, there will be a vaccine and no forest fires. Whatever it is, we need to try to be prepared and to be open to new ideas.

Garden centers have instituted some innovations this year that are very impressive and they should be commended for them. It has not been an easy time and whether things ever return to normal remains to be seen. However, one thing that we are certain of is that the human ability to overcome difficulties through continuous innovation. We are limitless, and gardeners exemplify that strong characteristic. ☺

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THE ADVOCACY ISSUE

Part 1: THE NEED

With a season on the brink, OAN responds

STORIES BY CURT KIPP

THE SEASON WAS on the line, and everyone knew it. Normally, the word “season” might refer to collegiate or professional athletics. But for nurseries this past March, it meant something else.

Spring shipping.

With the proliferation of the COVID-19 pathogen, states were restricting businesses and their ability to operate. Numerous mandates and shutdowns were imposed in a matter of days. All this as growers were sending first shipments, and retailers were greeting the spring rush.

“I was sweating bullets waiting for our governor to release the mandates,” said Mark Bigej, an owner of Al’s Garden & Home (Woodburn, Oregon), which operates four retail garden centers and three nursery growing operations in the Portland area. “I was on the phone hearing how all the other garden centers in California and Michigan were having to shut down.”

A full shutdown in Oregon would have been disastrous for nurseries. The state sells close to \$1 billion in nursery stock annually, with most of it shipping in the spring.

“We easily could have had the economic carnage that is happening with our hotels and restaurants,” said Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN). “That easily could have been us.”

Responding to a crisis

As the possibility of a nursery shutdown swirled, the OAN scrambled its jets — professional staff, legal counsel, member leaders and contract lobbyists — to prevent an industry-crippling closure. Everything was on the line.

It’s not usually *everything* that’s on the line, but it’s always something, as Rod Park is well aware.

The second-generation nursery owner, who grows specimen trees at Park’s Nursery (Gresham, Oregon), has been involved in OAN advocacy efforts for close to 35 years. He first got involved in 1986, when a quarantine issue was affecting his business. One of the association leaders asked him to chair a committee to address the matter.

And that’s how it began.

Park went on to serve in a variety of roles, ultimately becoming OAN president in 1991. Following that, he ran for political office in 1998 and served 12 years on the Metro Council, which

makes land-use planning decisions for the Portland metropolitan region. Thus, Park has had a front row seat as both private business owner and as a government official.

That’s why he sees a need for nurseries to always be represented in government decision-making.

“It’s going to go on, whether we’re there at the table or not,” Park said. “And it has to go on because you need labor, you need transportation, you need regulation. You need government. It’s part of the system. Without the government, you’d have people pulling all sorts of shenanigans.”

Kathy LeCompte, who owns seedling grower Brooks Tree Farm (Salem, Oregon) with her husband, Dave, served as OAN president in 2001. She later went on to run for the Oregon Legislature on two occasions, narrowly losing her bid for election both times. She, too, sees the value in speaking out.

“I just think it’s completely unfair of us as growers to expect that everyone will understand our business,” she said. “Those people who are elected might know a lot about taxes or schools or education or some other aspect of our day-to-day life, but they might not understand the impact of a vote on my business if I’m too lazy to explain to them what that might be.”

A full-court press

The OAN Government Relations Team exists to serve as a coordinated advocate for nurseries, greenhouse operators, landscapers, and associated suppliers and service providers whenever needed. Similar to basketball players running full defense across the entire basketball court, the OAN has pressure points throughout the capitol building.

“The power of one accumulated voice for the entire industry, up and down the supply chain, is far more convincing to a decision maker than just a single person speaking out,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “The ability to make a policy suggestion, or speak in opposition, or advocate for something more helpful to the industry, carries more weight when you have many voices instead of just one.”

With the shipping season on the line due to COVID-19, the OAN made use of its many available voices.

Jim Simnitt (Simnitt Nursery) had his business to run in the middle of shipping season, but he knew that without a full-court political press, there would be no season to worry about. ➤



As the current president of the OAN Board of Directors, it fell to Simnitt to serve as the voice of the growers. He made personal appeals to government officials, imbuing the OAN's message with an authenticity that can only come from walking the nursery, interacting with his

workers and touching the dirt every day.

Those involved feel that Simnitt's efforts were key.

"I sent emails to different members of the governor's staff," he said. "I sent an email to Nik Blosser, the governor's chief of staff. There was no reason for him to get back to me, but he did get back to me, to say 'We're listening to you and we hear your concerns.' I was impressed. I thought, 'They really do hear us.'"

Soon, the word came down that the governor would be ordering certain business sectors to shut down indefinitely because the risk of spreading disease was too great under the circumstances. Nurseries, however, weren't among them. They could keep shipping.

The season was saved.

When the word came down to Bigej, who served as OAN president in 2017,

he was greatly relieved. "We were able to show how the industry could operate, and we convinced them to allow us to remain open," he said. "That was no accident. And had we done nothing, I have no doubt we would have been shut down, which would have been catastrophic for our industry."

Right team, right time

Saving the season came down to having a team in place ready to act on the industry's behalf. The right players had to be in place, with the right strategy to get results and a total commitment to securing the best outcome possible.

"When the situation is that unsettled, you can either stop and watch the paint dry or you can do something about it," Stone said. "Stopping and watching the paint dry is not what we do." ☺

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THE ADVOCACY ISSUE

Part 2: THE TEAM

OAN members and experts work in tandem to protect nurseries

MEN AND WOMEN roaming marble hallways in expensive attire — that’s what people may envision when they think of lobbying. And while professional advocates play a role, the OAN Advocacy Team has more players — and more layers. According to OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone, it takes everyone to advance the interests of the nursery industry, with members playing a pivotal role as citizen lobbyists.

“We try to encourage constituents to have conversations with their legislators, while giving them the full backing to help shape policy through the association,” he said.

Steve Shropshire, a shareholder with the Jordan Ramis P.C. law firm, who serves as the OAN’s legal counsel, agreed.

“The members do a great job of telling real-life stories and creating compelling reasons for legislators to listen,” he said. “They’re used to listening to lobbyists all day long, so when we get our members in the building, it’s incredibly powerful.”

Here are the key players and their roles.

The executive — Jeff Stone

Stone is a seasoned political operative who cut his teeth working for U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood (R-Oregon), then served as the chief of staff for the Metro regional government in Portland, Oregon. He manages the association on behalf of the OAN Board of Directors, which represents the members and serves as his ultimate boss.

Stone was brought on board as the OAN director of government relations in 2007. In 2011, the board chose him to be the new executive director. He became responsible for all association functions, but he still devotes a large chunk of his time to government relations because it is one of the most important things OAN does.

But he knows from experience that any outreach is meaningless without an honest, credible and respectful approach. “I want to have the association earn their trust (as a resource),” he said.

Stone will frequently tell new legislators, “Talk to others about what it’s like to deal with us. We will talk to you about both sides of the issue, but if we have a viewpoint, you’re not going to leave a meeting without knowing it.”

Leigh Geschwill, an owner at F&B Farms & Nursery (Woodburn, Oregon), served as OAN president in 2016, and then served as OAN Government Relations Committee chair in 2017.

“Jeff, in some respects, creates the master outline of issues that we’re interested in, and avenues that we work within to

address those,” she said. “He’s sort of, as he says, the gatekeeper. He’s keeping an eye on the master outline of what is important.”

The lobbyist — Elizabeth Remley

Remley is a partner with Thorn Run Partners, a lobbying firm with offices in Salem, Oregon, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. The firm lobbies on behalf of the OAN, with Remley serving as the association’s primary representative in the Oregon State Capitol building.

Remley tracks legislation and rulemaking processes, whether the Legislature is in or out of session and builds relationships with decision makers. Other firm members, including vice president Miles Pengilly and partner Dan Bates, also help as needed.

“We end up being the liaison or the spokesperson or the watchful eye for any client we have,” she said. “Our job is to be in the middle of everything, all the time. OAN may not need to be in the middle of everything. We are in rooms that maybe OAN doesn’t get invited in, but maybe that’s where we learn about things that may be impactful for nurseries.”

During the session, Thorn Run will supply its in-house briefings on bills that are working their way through the Legislature. The firm will track bills and, in conjunction with the team, assign labels such as “monitor,” “support,” “oppose” or “don’t care.”

“Thorn Run will attend hearings and work sessions on the bills as they move and keep the rest of the team advised about proposed amendments and changes in language,” Shropshire said.

He added: “Their primary role is to be the day-to-day political operatives and understand the political and interpersonal dynamics at the Legislature, and to use that knowledge to our advantage to be able to accomplish our objectives.”

The legal counsel — Steve Shropshire

Shropshire is a shareholder with Jordan Ramis PC, a legal firm with offices in Lake Oswego and Bend, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington.

“We serve as lobby counsel and political counsel, evaluating legislation, policy, rule-making, offering support and developing testimony, and providing direct testimony ourselves,” Shropshire said.

Shropshire takes the lead for the firm on OAN-related matters, but other attorneys also work on the association’s behalf



Part 2: The team

as the situation demands. As needed, the attorneys will look at bill language to ensure the industry is protected.

His work extends beyond short-term objectives, however. He monitors legislative trends affecting the nursery industry, and the ongoing evolution of issues for the long term.

According to Geschwill: “Steve’s really a good one for saying if we do this here, then (these things) could happen later. I think he works really well in concert with Jeff. He will alert Jeff that we’re starting to see these kinds of changes and these kinds of actions are coming up for customers in the court system.”

The president — Jim Simnitt

The OAN president is a member who serves for one year and chairs the OAN Board of Directors, but their duties aren’t limited to meetings. They also day-to-day involvement in the nonprofit’s political outreach, monitoring issues, providing input to the Advocacy Team, and getting involved with testimony when required, or even talking to the news media.



The current president is Jim Simnitt. Kyle Fessler will take at the annual convention in December, which this year will take place online.

“The president’s job is to represent all of the members,” Geschwill said. “They’re really trying to make the issues that we care about personal and real to our elected officials.”

The GR chairman — Kyle Fessler

In addition to the board, the OAN has a variety of committees, and the Government Relations Committee is perhaps the most active. It meets monthly, hearing updates on various issues. Legislators, state officials and even



members of Congress are frequent guests.

Kyle Fessler of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas chairs the committee. Mark Bigej, an owner of grower-retailer Al’s Garden & Home, will take over when Fessler becomes OAN president in November.

“I look at the role as just coming in as a member voice and being able to speak on behalf of the other members,” Fessler said. “[Speaking as a grower] has a greater impact when you talk to legislators. They hear it from someone who experiences the

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impact on a daily basis.”

With COVID-19, the OAN was forced to stop holding Government Relations Committee meetings in person. The meetings were moved to Zoom and became more frequent. Officials that didn't have

time to drive to the OAN office had time to log on and chat, and several did. More members participated, too.

“Those meetings gave access to a wider scope of the membership to the things we do and the types of meetings we

conduct,” Geschwill said. “Those were all well done and the members conducted themselves to their credit in terms of representing the breadth of issues that we encounter. In person is great as well, but a good case could be made for using that type of format going ahead, particularly if we're focusing on a particular issue.”

The 'sounding board'

In addition to member leaders with specific roles, OAN also has an informal “sounding board” that Stone consults frequently. In addition to the president and the GR chair, it includes OAN Executive Committee members and sometimes past presidents. The association's primary legal counsel (Shropshire) and lobbyist (Remley) also take part in the discussion, which is almost always over e-mail.

“Jeff has his group which is the ready team during the legislative session, and that group is on the 12-email-a-day chain, and is asked to be the team that looks at legislation as it is introduced and known to us,” Shropshire said. “It shows the value the members involved place on that process, because of their willingness to contribute their volunteer time.”

Because of this rapid-response approach, the OAN can be nimble and more responsive to an ever-changing legislative process, communicating with elected officials and state and federal staff in real-time. “Other groups do it in committees and have to do in a pedantic way,” Shropshire said.

Remley, the lobbyist, finds the member input essential to her job.

“We know members are busy,” she said. “I'm always impressed and grateful the members take so much time to respond to an inquiry that I make because I know how much time it takes to run a business. We don't have a lot of clients where the members are as involved as they are at the OAN.”

Building new leaders

Even with professionals on board, member involvement is the fuel that keeps the OAN Advocacy Team running.

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Part 2: The team

involved can take part in OAN's annual advocacy training sessions. They can then take on larger roles to benefit the industry.

"I think we are reaching further into the membership," Geschwill said. "Anytime you can develop more leadership and put more leadership in the pipeline, it's always helpful."

Bigej served as OAN president in 2017. Early on, he was nervous about testifying at hearings. Then he attended his first OAN Advocacy Training.

"I was deeply impacted," he said. "Thorn Run (the lobbying firm) did a good job running through the process and explaining how everything happens, but then they taught us how to be able to speak our mind and be effective doing that."

As Remley noted, the key to effective testimony is authenticity. "You have to tell a story a legislator can remember and that

they can repeat again to their colleagues, that doesn't go in one ear and out the other," she said. "We have to give real-life examples, and they have to be really compelling."

Stone coaches members in giving testimony that is concise, honest and effective, and being prepared to answer questions.

In a live situation, the OAN's professional team is always there to back them up.

"We'll never throw a member to the wolves," Remley said. "We're going to make it as easy for that member to participate as possible, both from a comfort level standpoint and a time commitment standpoint."

The trainings finish with members getting a chance to practice their new skills in a safe environment. Fessler credits the experience with helping him be a strong voice.

"I would have never stepped in and testified on a bill at the capital had it not been for my training and giving me the

confidence and go do that," he said.

The OAN continues to look for members willing to get involved — previous experience not required.

"We need people of all different types of abilities," Geschwill said. "Sometimes members don't realize they have talents or abilities that might be useful. We don't know about that, unless someone gets involved."

The investment of time often proves worthwhile for all involved.

"I get to watch people come into the leadership process of the GR Committee as relative novices," Shropshire said. "They may not have a lot of confidence speaking in public or putting issue arguments forward, but we see them blossom over the years to become not just powerful advocates, but better businesspeople as a result." ☺



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Part 3: THE APPROACH

OAN focuses on issues rather than party politics

IT'S 2020, AND Americans are more polarized than ever. Their political institutions certainly reflect it. That was true even before COVID-19 and other unusual events of this year layered on an added patina of surreality.

OAN Government Relations Committee member Leigh Geschwill described the landscape as “treacherous, like we’ve gone to Afghanistan.”

“We’re at a time where the political divisiveness is nearing an extreme,” she said. “It makes it hard for anyone like us who really wants to focus on an issue to get any attention. It’s not what’s selling votes at the moment, for either side. There’s not a lot of air in the room to make even reasoned cases for things we need.”

“You have this new trend in Congress, where you can’t get anything done, because compromise is a dirty word,” OAN contract lobbyist Elizabeth Remley said.

But although there are challenges, OAN keeps friendly lines of communication open with Republicans as well as Democrats. A focus on issues rather than partisan fortunes helps the association stand apart from the fray. “Our voice is always there and we’re always at the table,” incoming Government Relations Committee Chairman Mark Bigej, an owner of Al’s Garden & Home, said. “We’re able to negotiate and so things are not as bad as they could have been. That tends to go unnoticed. It looks like we have all those failures, but these can be considered wins.”

Staying united as an industry

The success of the OAN advocacy approach comes down to several key principles. The association strives to be united, solution-oriented, strategic, creative and far-reaching.

And being united is at the top of the list.

“You get all these people in the room [at our Government Relations Committee meetings],” OAN President Jim Simnitt said. “They’re all different sizes. They all grow things a little differently. But when we all get on the side of an issue, even though

it may not affect me, I’m going to back it because we’re all in this together. It’s a unified voice.”

Geschwill likes the diversity of viewpoints. “It just resonates really well and makes us more effective,” she said. “We have members in all different districts and different walks of life. I think that adds up to a really strong whole, together.” The more feedback from members, the more complete the picture.

“You’ll see something and say, ‘This doesn’t impact us too much,’ and then you’ll get a group of members saying, ‘This impacts us greatly,’” Geschwill said.

Conventional wisdom says the makeup of the OAN membership might be roughly 60 percent Republican, 40 percent Democratic. This was former Executive Director Clayton Hannon’s rule of thumb back in the 1990s. Rod Park, who served as OAN president in that decade, doesn’t believe it has changed. It’s one of the reasons a nonpartisan approach still makes the most sense for OAN, he said. Another is that natural alliances will change from issue to issue. “It’s about trying to make sure you get your issues taken care of,” Park said. “We haven’t fallen into the trap of partisanship in most cases.”

Last fall, the OAN Government Relations Committee invited Oregon House Minority Leader Christine Drazan (R-Canby) and Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland) to participate in the same OAN Government Relations Committee meeting.

Although one is a Republican and the other a Democrat, what resulted was a cordial exchange of ideas.

“It wasn’t a debate,” Simnitt said. “We weren’t trying to put them head to head and make it adversarial, jockeying against each other. It was, let’s talk about both sides of this and get the issues on the table. It was a good discussion.”

Working for solutions

One of the keys to the Oregon nursery industry’s strong reputation among lawmakers and officials is the industry’s interest in finding solutions to problems.

“It’s the relationship that Jeff has with a lot of these people,” Simnitt said. “It’s the relationship that Elizabeth brings. And it’s the relationship that we’ve cultivated throughout the whole government relations (GR) history, like Rod and Leigh, who have been great leaders and have a reputation for not



From left: OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone, OAN Government Relations Chair Kyle Fessler, Oregon House Minority Leader Christine Drazan and House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner.

PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

having knee jerk reactions. We're solution oriented, not just willing to complain about issues, but work on them."

Nurseries are willing to solve problems in a way that doesn't hurt them.

"No one knows the business better than us," Park said. "We know what the problems are. We know what the issues are. What we don't know, and this is where our communication with our legislators and state regulators comes in, is what they need to accommodate in terms of the state regulation. Give us the goal, but don't tell us how to do it, and we'll come up with a solution."

Finding creative answers

Creativity is also key to the OAN's approach, and it goes hand-in-hand with problem solving.

One of the biggest examples Park remembers is back in the 1990s, when state officials were trying to solve the issue of runoff pollution from container nurseries.

"We had an [Oregon Department of Environmental Quality] regulator basically say — how do I phrase this? — 'We don't care if we put you out of business. You're not going to pollute,'" Park said. "It certainly caught people's attention."

Rather than wait to see what that entailed, OAN and its member growers worked with state officials to create the first voluntary water runoff control program in the U.S. with regulatory backup. This program gave growers the responsibility to contain and treat their runoff, while giving them the freedom to do it in a way that worked best for their property and their business.

"You can do your program, contain your runoff however you work it out," Park said. "Some capture it, others let it run onto their other fields. It's not cookie cutter. Some people have flat ground. Some people have rolling ground. Some people have porous ground. Some people have tight ground. But by doing that it allowed the industry to be innovative, especially the amount of water they're conserving now."

The conserved, treated water became

an important source of irrigation water for many growers.

"We took something that was a disadvantage and made it an advantage," Park said.

Keeping strategy in mind

In the years since, Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry has used creative, solution-oriented approaches to solving sudden oak death, water rights issues, the driver's card issue and many more.

Often, the OAN builds ad hoc coalitions to solve these problems. To win approval of legislation allowing undocumented people to obtain driver's licenses legally, the OAN organized a coalition of business groups, faith leaders, unions, advocates for the Latino community, and even some law enforcement agencies.

All saw that allowing drivers to be licensed would result in safer roads and stronger communities, and all drew on their unique ability to swing certain legislators and secure passage.

"We'll work with people on an issue where we might totally disagree with them on something else," Bigej said. "I think that's super important given the political environment that we're in currently. If we dug our heels in and only sided with the Republicans who probably side with the majority of our members, we would be in a world of hurt. If we weren't able to talk to the Democrats, then we would be shut out."

On water supply issues, the OAN brought together the major water user groups — municipalities, agriculture and conservationists — to find common ground on long-term water supply issues. As with the driver's license coalition, these are groups that normally may not work together.

It's not just an example of being strategic, but of looking to the long term.

"You can't just fight the issues that are going up for a vote now," Bigej said. "You have to work on important issues like water years and years ahead. If you wait until an issue becomes a critical issue for you, you are too late. There's a long-term strategy that really has to be played out."

Playing at the national level

The OAN doesn't stick to just state issues. National issues also get attention. The association works with AmericanHort, the national green industry trade association, to advocate on federal issues. At the same time, OAN also conducts its own outreach to members of federal officials as well as members of Congress. The latter are not limited to Oregon's delegation, but can also include committee chairs and their staff.

The OAN has built a strong reputation on the federal level, thanks to the consistent building of relationships.

"Our Government Relations arm is definitely seen in a positive light nationwide, and we have a lot of respect," Bigej said. "As Jeff says, we hit above our weight nationally."

Annually, a contingent comprised of Stone, Shropshire, the current president and the current GR chair travels to Washington, D.C. to visit with federal representatives, committee staff, administration staff, industry allies and others. (The 2020 visit was, of course, canceled.)

Bigej remembers traveling to D.C. for the first time. He was surprised to find that lobbying at the federal level was not all that different from doing at the state level, which he had already done.

"It was a great education for me in how the system works," Bigej said. "We were just a small contingent from Oregon, but we were able to get into a lot of doors that I was surprised we would. A lot of people were able to hear our input and our ideas."

Sometimes relationships turn out differently than the members expect. Geschwill remembers meeting with U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Oregon) in Washington, D.C. during her year as president. She was expecting to encounter a, in her words, "Portland liberal that doesn't care about farming."

"She didn't really seem to know hardly anything about agriculture, even ag in her district, or nurseries," Geschwill said. "Now, she often talks about ag employers and businesses in her district. She will come and ask us about issues. That's a good example of building a relationship with someone based on respect." ©

THE ADVOCACY ISSUE

Part 4: THE ISSUES

The OAN engages in a wide variety of issues affecting members

EVERY LEGENDARY BAND or musician with a deep repertoire still has a song, like Lynrd Skynrd's "Freebird," they must play at every concert, usually during the encore.

The Rolling Stones always end with "Gimme Shelter." Bob Dylan plays "Blowin' in the Wind." Andy Williams always finished with "Moon River."

Jeff Stone often breaks out the "signature song" metaphor when talking about the issues the Oregon Association of Nurseries tackles. There are many, but the OAN does have its "Freebird" — the long-unsolved immigration and workforce issue.

The need for a legal and willing workforce is essential for all nurseries. The OAN, in conjunction with national allies, has continued to try to advance a bipartisan immigration bill in the U.S. Congress that results in a legal workforce, border security and resolution for people already in the country.

"No one leads more on the immigration side of this issue than us," Stone said. "We don't do that because we want cheap labor. We do it because there's a labor crisis and something needs to be done."

But immigration is not the only issue OAN works on.

"Our true north for the association's political activity is what is in the best interest of the long-term health of the nursery and greenhouse industry," Stone said. "That set of issues can change from year to year. We're not just a single-issue industry, such as the gun industry, which is focused on gun rights. We have one of the widest selections of issues that we engage in. We're not just anti-tax, but pro-immigration. We need to look at everything, from growers being able to start a plant to grow a plant to ship a plant."

The way past president Leigh Gechwill sees it, it's an unpredictable world, and nurseries need to be defended on a variety of fronts these days, from taxation to labor regulations to proposed climate change legislation.

"Most of us want to be able to do some short term and long-range planning for our businesses, and we just literally don't

know what's coming at us next," she said. "It used to be we had a 2-3-year heads up (on what was coming). That's still true to an extent, but there is so much that just comes out of the blue.

Uncertainty to me is the worst. I can respond to a lot of things if I have time to plan for it, but I don't have time to plan for the things they're throwing at us.

According to OAN contract lobbyist Elizabeth Remley, legislators know their supporters expect them to deliver outcomes, so OAN needs a broad set of relationships and alliances to avoid being steamrolled. "With the big ideas the legislature's been having, it's more important to have relationships outside the traditional agricultural space in the capitol," she said.

A multifaceted labor issue

For nurseries, the labor issue is complicated. They continue to work for an adequate labor supply while fighting against rules that increase employment costs.

The immigration issue is federal, so there's very little the state can do. "We know the Oregon Legislature would do what we need on workforce, but they can't," Remley said.

Meanwhile, regulations setting the ground rules for employers can be either state or federal. The OAN generally prefers a federal approach, so producers in different states can compete on a level playing field.

"What we need is Congress to step in, to overcome their petty differences, and get some modern workforce policies in place so the state doesn't need to step in," Remley said.

That hasn't happened, so the Oregon Legislature has devoted a great deal of attention to imposing employee benefit mandates in the past few years. Democrats have a supermajority in both legislative chambers, and the ability to pass almost any legislation without Republican support.

"The legislature's focus is on employee rights and benefits and expanding those pretty aggressively in Oregon," Remley said.

For Kathy LeCompte, a past president and longtime





Government Relations Committee member, it really has hurt the relationship between workers and nurseries.

“There seems to be an assumption that we abuse our employees and it’s up to government to catch us, and it couldn’t be further from the truth,” she said. “We depend

would have been a true nightmare for us.”

Another is the minimum wage.

The 2016 Oregon Legislature passed a new minimum wage law. The OAN was active on the issue from the beginning, taking part in a governor’s workgroup with union and business representatives. Although

nurseries largely pay above the minimum wage, they are concerned about wage compression if the starter wage goes up — others must go up along with it.

The unions had a ballot measure ready if the Legislature didn’t act.

“I saw the polling,”

Stone said. “The business community saw the polling and if it went to the November election, it was

going to pass 70–30. It would have been a jump from \$9.25 an hour to \$15. It’s not unusual for forces to brandish a ballot measure in order to get people to compromise. And so the unions held these cards, and the bigger question was, ‘How do we make it less crappy? What’s the best worst alternative?’”

The OAN successfully pushed for a law that phased in the increase over a period of six years and broke it down by regions — urban (highest), rural (lowest) and standard (in the middle). “The signature win was the recognition that the urban and rural economies are different and have different cost structures, and they need time to adjust,” Stone said. “We wanted a 10-year phase-in, they wanted two years, and we settled on six.”

The OAN and other business groups could have fought it head-on, but chose not to. They saw that the political winds weren’t favorable.

“We weren’t going to win on saying people should be poor,” Stone said. “It further divides worker versus employer. But the other side needs to realize there’s

a lot of investment and risk by employers that a lot of people don’t take into consideration, including legislators.”

Natural resources and trade



Bills related to natural resources are huge for the nursery industry. Whether it is proposed climate change legislation, or actions dealing with plant pests and diseases, the OAN must be involved.

“We are an industry that bridges the urban-rural divide,” OAN legal counsel Steve Shropshire said. “Many of our final customers tend to be in urban areas, whether it’s professional landscapers or individual homeowners.”

OAN advocates frequently remind legislators that nurseries provide solutions to the climate change issue.

“We’re a very green industry that produces plants that live for years and suck up carbon dioxide,” Shropshire said. “We should be viewed by those urban legislators who have a burning desire to address climate

TIPS ON TESTIFYING

“I try to keep it simple. Sometimes I’ll relate it to my personal family’s way of handling things, because everybody understands how income and expenses affect their family ... If they understand agriculture, sometimes I can be more technical ...

“It’s no harder than talking to your neighbor. The legislators are not trying to trick them into saying something they wish they hadn’t. They may not agree, but they listen.

— Kathy LeCompte

on our employees and we need them and we treat them as well as we can.”

New rules have required more documentation of processes already, such as vacations, time off for sick pay, health plan and retirement plans.

“Any legislation that affects how we work with our employees can have a huge impact on our daily business,” incoming OAN president Kyle Fessler said. “Administrative costs — we have been giving our employees health insurance, retirement plans and paid time off, years before any of it was required. All the requirements have done is put more stress on us to fill out paperwork ... to prove to the government that we are doing them. It doesn’t add any plants to the production or any dollars to the bottom line.”

Major wins on labor

In spite of the bleak landscape, the OAN has won some major victories on employer issues. One is predictive scheduling, which requires employers to notify employees when they’ll be working. The Oregon Legislature passed the law, but in a way that held nurseries harmless.

“We were able to negotiate it to a threshold well above where it would have affected anyone in OAN,” Bigej said. “That

TIPS ON TESTIFYING

“I feel like we’ve been crisis mode for the last four years. Polite politics have gone out the window. Whoever’s in power is going to push through their policies. We’ve had to [engage] in more direct conversations. There doesn’t seem to be as much consensus anymore. Things seem to be more emotional. We as an industry have had to be aggressive and make sure that how these policies affect us is at the forefront of these legislators’ minds.

— Kyle Fessler

change as a very holistic solution that knits together the urban-rural divide.”

Unfortunately, efforts to make climate change legislation more nursery-friendly have failed so far. The Oregon Legislature attempted to pass a climate change bill that would have included funding for plants as a carbon offset, but it also didn’t do enough to mitigate cost impacts. Nurseries cried foul, saying they couldn’t sequester carbon if they couldn’t afford to grow the plants.

YOUR SUPPORT

Means everything

TO THE OAN



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES™

THANK YOU

The OAN is your vigorous advocate for the nursery industry. It matters every year, but this year it mattered like never before. Coronavirus threatened to shut the industry down. The OAN prevented that from happening, but in the process still lost this year's Farwest Show — a major revenue driver for the association — due to the pandemic. It left a major gap in the association's budget, even after budget adjustments, including the layoff of three staff members, reduced hours and salary for the rest.

So many of you stepped up in response. You donated your Farwest Show booth payments to OAN, made direct cash donations, and responded to our call for supplemental dues funds. So far we have raised **\$190,348 towards our \$250,000** fundraising target, thanks to the kind generosity of our member businesses.

76%

Although we have made impressive progress, we still have not reached our goal. Please chip in with a donation to OAN! Your donation will mitigate the impacts of the OAN's budgetary shortfall and help restore the association to healthier footing.

If we all chip in, we will **keep the OAN healthy, vital, intact** — and working for us.

Warm regards,

Mark Bigej, Al's Garden & Home
OAN Past President (2017)

Pete Brentano, Brentano's Tree Farm LLC
OAN Past President (2006)

Tom Fessler, Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.
OAN Past President (1996)

Leigh Geschwill, F & B Farms and Nursery
OAN Past President (2016)

Rod Park, Park's Nursery
OAN Past President (1991)

Doug Zielinski, Alpha Nursery Inc.
OAN Past President (1999)

OUR AMAZING CONTRIBUTORS

DIAMOND LEVEL*

Alpha Nursery Inc.	Miles Nursery
Arrowhead Ornamentals LLC	Park's Nursery
Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc.	Phillips' Soil Products Inc.
Brooks Tree Farm	Smith Gardens Inc.
Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery Inc.	Van Essen Nursery Co.
Iseli Nursery	Walla Walla Nursery Co. Inc.
Jordan Ramis PC	Willamette Nurseries Inc.
Microplant Nurseries Inc.	Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.

PLATINUM LEVEL*

Advanced Vineyard Systems Inc.	Lowell Hall
Al's Garden & Home	Marion Ag Service Inc.
Amethyst Hill Nursery / Hydrangeas Plus®	McKenzie River Nursery
Anderson Pots	Miller Factors
Bartlett Tree Experts	Monrovia
Blooming Nursery Inc.	Motz & Son Nursery
Blue Heron Farm	Mountain Valley Gardens LLC
Brentano's Tree Farm LLC	N & M Herb Nursery Inc.
Columbia Nursery LLC	North American Plants Inc.
CompuPlants	Northwest Farm Credit Services
Dancing Oaks Nursery and Gardens	OAN - Emerald Empire Chapter
Decorative Bark Products	OAN - Willamette Chapter
Don Marjama Nursery Co. Inc.	Obersinner Nursery Inc.
East Creek Nursery	OHP Inc.
Egan Gardens Inc.	Oregon Flowers Inc.
Engel's Evergreens LLC	Oregon Pride Nurseries Inc.
Eshraghi Nursery	Oregon Turf and Tree Farms
Evergreen Growers Supply LLC	Pacific Nursery Inc.
F & B Farms & Nursery	Patterson Nursery Sales Inc.
Fairdale Nursery	Peoria Gardens Inc.
Farmington Gardens	Pohlschneider Nursery
Fessler Nursery Co.	Portland Nursery
Fleming Nursery Sales Inc.	Powell Nursery Co.
Garland Nursery	Rickel's Tree Farm
Gaston Nursery LLC / Fisher Farms	Robinson Nursery Inc.
Gold Family Farms, Inc.	Schiedel Nursery
Heritage Seedlings & Liners Inc.	Schiedler Family Nursery Inc.
Iwasaki Bros. Inc.	Simnitt Nursery
Jaycee Newman Inc.	Spring Creek Gardens Inc.
JR Frelich & Associates	Swan Island Dahlias
Kelleygreen Nursery	The Nursery Stock Market Inc.
KG Farms Inc.	Twin Springs Nursery
Klupenger Nurseries Inc.	Valley Pacific Floral Inc.
Landsystems	Wilbur-Ellis Company
Leonard Adams Insurance Inc.	Windy Ridge Nursery
	Youngblood Nursery Inc.

Donations can be made online at

www.oan.org/donate

*Diamond level: Companies that donated part or all of their 2020 Farwest Show booth costs AND paid supplemental dues. **Platinum level: Companies that donated part or all of their 2020 Farwest Show booth costs OR paid supplemental dues.



“The carbon tax was a big one for us,” Fessler said. “That was the first bill I ever testified on. It was such a controversial issue, and there was so much information flying around. The Democrats had control and they were going to see it happen regardless.”

Ultimately, the bill didn’t pass after Republican legislators walked out of the state capital, refusing to allow a quorum.

“The nurseries stood up and said ‘We

him, the practical challenges are formidable, but so are the political ones.

“Water supply and water quality issues generally don’t resonate very well with urban legislators because their constituents tend to think water comes from the tap, and don’t need to think about what influences whether they get clean water to drink,” he said.

“Because the legislature is dominated by urban legislators, it’s challenging to get the legislature to think about water as anything but a short-term issue.”

The OAN has tried to work with other water users on long-term solutions for increased water storage, so nursery supplies are protected.

“We are interested in sort of futureproofing our supplies with cli-

mate change,” Shropshire said. “The general consensus at this point is that we will see our precipitation convert from winter snow to winter rain. In Oregon, because we don’t have many storage reservoirs, we rely on winter snowpack. If that means water hits the ground and runs away, we’re going to be left with less water.”

OAN doesn’t want that to happen.

“We are up against foes in the form of environmental groups that would like to yes, take water rights out of agricultural use and convert them to environmental uses,” Shropshire said. “And so while we are not principally opposed to win-win solutions — and I’ve promoted that from time to time where farms, families and fish all come out ahead — we actively oppose legislation that seeks to prioritize in-stream flows and endangered species over agricultural production.”

Pests, diseases and regulations

The nursery industry frequently encounters pest and disease issues in its production processes. It’s the nature of the game. Pests and pathogens will attack plants any chance they get, rendering

them damaged and unmarketable.

The OAN regularly leads the charge for research funding to tackle these challenges.

Part of the pest and disease battle is keeping control tools available when they are needed. There is rising concern over pesticides, some of which is driven by a marketplace that increasingly demands chemical-free plants. The OAN has kept its focus on allowing nurseries to safely use approved chemicals at the grower’s discretion, in conjunction with integrated pest management programs.

But one of the association’s most significant victories didn’t involve pesticides.

It involved reversing a shipping prenotification requirement that the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service imposed in 2012 for nurseries located in Oregon, Washington and most of California. Nurseries had to notify the receiving states anytime they shipped any of five genera deemed high risk for *Phytophthora ramorum*.

Growers found the requirement impractical. Worse, they felt it gave East Coast growers an unfair market advantage. East coast trade groups and the national association did little to fight it, because it didn’t hurt them as badly.

“We’re in a competitive interstate climate and we are about as far from Washington, D.C. as you can get,” Shropshire said. “Based on the size of our industry nationwide, our relative share of the nationwide market, our voice is not equally as loud.”

The OAN and several partners already had been in the process of developing a systems approach for nursery production, which identifies and isolates disease threats early in the production process rather than at shipping time. Funding for the research came from state nursery license fees. The OAN successfully lobbied the USDA to end its prenotification requirement and adopt the systems approach, arguing it would keep plants safer, and without all the red tape.

“It has allowed us to keep markets open and allowed our members to sell to whoever they wish,” Shropshire said. ©

TIPS ON TESTIFYING

“I think the best approach is always just telling what your experience is. I don’t say all nurseries are like me or all have the same experience, but this is what my experience is ... [I avoid] gross generalizations. No one can argue with you about how something is impacting you personally. I have never had any elected official not be genuinely responsive to that.”

— Leigh Geschwill

can’t support this,’ not because we don’t love our environment, but it’s going to harm our growers and our ability to compete on the national stage,” Fessler said. “That sort of pushed events forward and, we believe, contributed to the downfall of the bill.”

Water supply issues

Among the natural resource issues most important to nurseries is water, as plants can’t be grown without it.



“It’s a precious resource that we try to keep, we try to recycle as much as we can, we try to keep it clean, because if it disappears, we’re out of business,” Fessler said.

According to Shropshire, water supply is a long-term issue. Even a relatively water-rich area like Western Oregon has finite supplies and multiple users interested in tapping in.

“It’s so easy to say, ‘I’m turning on the well and water’s coming out, so I’m not worried about that,’” Bigej said. “Ten years later, it’s going to be a different story and if we don’t start working on it now, it’s going to be too late.”

Shropshire is the OAN’s foremost expert on long-term water supply issues. To



Part 5: THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

ROD PARK ONCE met a cattleman. The nurseryman and OAN past president was attending a conference years ago, talking to aggies from other sectors. The rancher reported that he had grown from raising 500 head of cattle to 1,000 head, but he was making the same net income.

It was, essentially, double the risk, double the costs, and the same profit.

“I hope the nursery industry never does that,” Park told himself.

It illustrated why, even with the time demands of his business, Park has invested so much of his time in having a strong association with an effective government relations program.

“You can spend all your time at the nursery producing the best crop, doing your sales, and something will come along and knock it out from underneath you,” Park said. “Or, you can spend some of that time helping the association plug the leaks in the bottom of the cup. It’s not what you make, it’s what you get to keep. That’s where the association comes along, trying to figure out how to keep more of it.”

More of what you make

One of the greatest challenges for nurseries is added non-discretionary business expenses.

“We’re in a political environment where my fear is a lot of our legislators are not business owners themselves,” OAN legal counsel Steve Shropshire said. “They don’t understand the cumulative impact that years of tax policy, labor policy and the like have on a business’s ability or even desire to remain in business in Oregon. There’s a good reason we only have one Fortune 500 company headquartered in the state. If the ties that Nike has to Oregon were not as important as they are to its founder (Phil Knight), I don’t think they would be here, either.”

Mark Bigej, an owner at Woodburn-based retailer-grower Al’s Garden & Home and a past president of OAN, has seen a steady erosion of profit due to taxes and regulations.

“In the past five years, our revenues have grown and we’ve added another store, but our expenses have increased at a rate 11% faster than our revenues have,” he said. “That goes to all the costs of doing business.

“Certainly, labor is part of that. We’ve seen the cost of labor going up. Taxation increases get passed on to us, minimum wage increases get passed on to us for products as well as our own labor,

and it’s exceeding our pace at which we can grow our revenue.”

A few miles down the road, fellow past president Leigh Gescwhill of F & B Farms & Nursery has observed the same thing as Bigej.

“Over the past 5–6 years at least, I’ve been watching our profit margins just erode,” she said. “Even with increasing sales, they just keep eroding away. I increase sales, I increase pricing and still my profit margins keep eroding.”

Bit by bit

Several components are part of this overall picture.

In the past several years, the Oregon Legislature has increased its minimum wage, added a family medical leave requirement, passed a statewide transportation package (which OAN supported), and passed a corporate activities tax (CAT) to fund stronger schools, among others.

The CAT, passed in 2019, applies to business revenue above and beyond the \$1 million per year level. The OAN said it was unfair to nurseries, which often operate with high volume and low margins. “In a small margin business such as ag, it’s not that hard to cross over the \$1 million threshold, even if you aren’t making much profit at all,” Shropshire said.

The advocacy team told legislators that if they insisted on a new tax, they should at least tax profit rather than revenue. They didn’t listen.

“The CAT tax is going to be a lasting problem,” Simnitt said, noting that it will affect supply and fuel costs even for those nurseries that won’t be directly liable for paying the tax themselves. “We’re going to pay for it in higher cost of our goods.”

Implementation has been a mess.

“The CAT tax was effective immediately, before rules even came out,”

Geschwill said. “We have no idea. We just

know we have to pay something.”

The OAN heads off as many cost increases as it can, to the degree that the political landscape allows. “Some of them don’t even see the light of day,” OAN President Jim Simnitt said.

A proposed hoop house tax is one example. About a decade ago, county assessors in Oregon made a move to tax hoop houses as if they were real property, which would have cost growers \$1,000–\$2,000 per structure just for starters.

“That would have been devastating to any container grower,” he said. “It’s not just what you would have paid (initially), but that tax was going to go up. It would have become a tax grab.”

“I would be flabbergasted if people said the return on investment for the association this year was not sufficient.”

— Jeff Stone, executive director of the OAN





COVID-19 costs

More recently, Oregon OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) has added worker protection rules designed to head off the spread of the COVID-19 pathogen in the workplace. Growers don't disagree with the objective, but say the new regulations are inflexible and, in nursery production environments, not necessarily helpful.

"It's things like having to add extra bathrooms," said Kathy LeCompte, an OAN past president and co-owner of Brooks Tree Farm in Salem, Oregon. "We had to buy three new bathrooms at \$5,000 each and they have to be cleaned three times a day. We have to document when and who, and we have to provide the supplies, which promptly got stolen because nobody could find the sterilizing

wipes on any grocery shelf It wasn't helpful, and now it looks like it's going to become permanent law."

The OAN is working to prevent that from happening, arguing that regulations should end when the pandemic does.

"I wish the legislators would believe us when we tell them we are tapped out with regulation and the cost of regulation," LeCompte said.

Strong return on investment

The OAN may not win every battle. That's seldom in the cards for anyone engaged in the political arena. However, it makes a difference, and nowhere was that more clearly seen than this past spring with a possible coronavirus-related shutdown.

"The members had every right to say, 'You need to protect us. I have no sway

whether or not the state of Minnesota or the state of Michigan is open. I grow plants. I sell plants and I need to be able to do it,'" Stone said.

It was a do or die situation where the OAN prevailed by working around the clock. The result benefited everyone in the Oregon nursery industry — not just those who make the dues investment — but without member support, it couldn't have happened. "It is in our DNA to work tirelessly to protect the industry," Stone said. "Do I wish everyone was a member? Yes. The membership allows us to protect them. I would be flabbergasted if people said the return on investment for the association this year was not sufficient. I would venture to guess that without the OAN, we would look radically different as an industry." ☺



Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee

Separate from the OAN, but also important to nurseries, is the Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee (ONPAC). The committee raises money through the annual Duffers Classic golf tournament and a silent auction at the annual OAN Convention.

The proceeds are then used to support nursery-friendly candidates for office through campaign contributions.

ONPAC isn't partisan. It typically endorses candidates from both parties, and has a strong track record for endorsing candidates who go on to win office. The endorsement is often as valuable as the campaign cash. As member Rod Park noted, "Our former contract lobbyist, Ted Hughes, had a saying: 'It's not our job to get Democrats elected or Republicans elected. It's our job to get our friends elected.'"

As the election approaches, ONPAC conducts interviews with selected candidates for the Oregon Legislature, as well as other offices that are strategically chosen.

"Picking candidates is sort of like picking stocks,"

ONPAC member Leigh Geschwill said. "Sometimes we choose wisely and sometimes we think we've got a good choice and we don't."

OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone helps coordinate the interviews, which allow the candidates to become familiar with the nursery issue and its concerns.

"The ONPAC process helps surface why we care about a particular issue," he said. "You get to earn that endorsement through a conversation, not based on whether you agree with us on the issue necessarily. There is not a solid red line between policy and the endorsement process of the ONPAC, but they are married."

New candidates don't have a track record and ONPAC can only go by the interview. If the candidate is running for another term, then past votes do matter.

"If you do everything you can to hurt the industry, we're going to ask you why," Stone said.

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 - General: "Employment," "Plant Material," "Service/Supply," "Real Estate."
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EMPLOYMENT

INSIDE SALES MANAGER

DCA Outdoor, Inc. is a national, vertically integrated green industry company that has locations throughout the United States. We currently have a need in Oregon for a Sales Manager.

Rio Verde sits on 300 acres full of evergreen shrubs and trees and Schwope Brothers West Coast sits on 500 acres with high quality bareroot, fruit, shade, and deciduous trees.

We have an immediate need for a proactive, assertive and driven Inside Sales Manager who has the ability to motivate, manage to results and thrives in a quick-paced environment. The ideal candidate will be solutions focused while driving Oregon's sales and marketing process through shipping.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Lead, Manage and hold Accountable - Manage a team that consists of Customer Service, Account Representatives, and inside sales.
2. Strategy - Manage pricing, discount and promotional strategies for both nurseries.
3. Process Management- Manage the Rio Verde and Schwope Brothers West Coast entire sales process through shipping.
4. Marketing of Products- Create and set marketing campaigns, manage product promotions, and take pictures of products in our inventory.

Minimum Qualifications:

- BS/BA degree in a relevant field or substitution of degree with 7+ years of directly related experience.
- Successful experience managing inside sales, customer service and/or account representatives.
- Technology: Experience with a CRM (preferably Salesforce) and with using an ERP system.

Application requirements:

- To submit your application for this position, please go to www.dcaoutdoor.com/careers.
- Completion of Culture Index survey. Without survey completion, your application is considered incomplete and will not be considered. Copy and paste the following into your browser in order to complete the survey: www.cindexinc.com/c/A550CC.

EMPLOYMENT

INSIDE SALES REPRESENTATIVE

TSW Nursery Sales Inc. is seeking a plant-knowledgeable inside sales representative with 3-5 years of sales experience. The perfect candidate must be proficient in MS Office Suite and Quickbooks software, provide excellent customer service, have strong verbal and written communication skills, manage their time, and be organized. Salary commensurate with experience.

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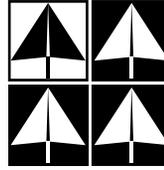
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Series content is coordinated by Dr. Jay Pscheidt, professor of botany and plant pathology at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon.



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Image 1: A sweat bee inside of a red cultivar of California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica* 'California Mikado') PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

Pollinator plant trials

Researchers test the value of Willamette Valley natives and nativars

BY JEN HAYES AND GAIL LANGELLOTTO

INTEREST IN NATIVE PLANT gardening is at an all-time high. For example, native plants were ranked as the top landscape garden trend for 2017–2018 by the American Society of Landscape Architects, and for 2018–2019 by Garden Media Group's Garden Trends Report.

The demand is such that consumers are willing to pay premiums for plants labeled as native (Yue *et al.*, 2011) and for landscape designs that include natives (Helfand *et al.*, 2006). This growing interest in native plants is largely related to their purported benefits to wildlife (Brzuszek *et al.*, 2010; Becker, 2015; Halleck, 2015; Narem *et al.*, 2018) and in particular, bees (Halleck, 2015; Khachatryan *et al.*, 2017).

Despite increased demand, the native plant market represents a relatively small segment of overall nursery plant sales (Becker, 2015). In a previous *Digger* article, Oregon State University (OSU) doctoral student Aaron Anderson detailed the barriers that both consumers and producers face to growing the native plant market (Anderson,

2019). These barriers include the niche nature of the native plant market, which makes it difficult for even the most motivated consumers to find natives at retail nurseries (Brzuszek *et al.*, 2010).

In terms of barriers faced by producers, many native plants do not respond well to nursery plant production: they perform poorly in retail containers and fail to meet customers' expectations (Halleck, 2015). In addition, native plant species often lack efficient and scalable propagation methods, which limits their ability to be worked into nursery plant production systems.

The development of improved native cultivars ("nativars") is one potential solution to this barrier of native plant production. Native cultivars are often easier to propagate in large numbers, and are perceived as being more attractive in containers and in landscapes (Lubell, 2017).

However, there are perceived drawbacks of native cultivar use. Native cultivars may not support wildlife, especially pollinators, as well as true natives (Halleck, 2015; Lubell, 2017). Research



Pollinator plant trials



From left: *Nemophila menziesii* native, aka Baby Blue Eyes; *Nemophila menziesii* 'Penny Black', native cultivar #1; *Nemophila menziesii* 'Snow White', native cultivar #2.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

evaluating the ecological value of native plants versus native cultivars has yet to be published in the peer-reviewed literature, and no project has yet examined these concerns for plants native to the Pacific Northwest.

One notable study on pollinator preferences for native plants and their cultivated counterparts was conducted by Dr. Annie White, as part of her dissertation work at the University of Vermont. Her study of 14 native, herbaceous perennials had mixed results.

Across all pollinating insects, the native plants were preferred in nine instances, the native cultivar was preferred in one instance, and there was no significant preference for

either the native or native cultivar in four instances (White, 2016).

Additional work has been conducted by Jessica Lubell-Brand, who established a USDA-funded native shrub and cultivar trial at the University of Connecticut in 2016 (Lubell-Brand, 2019). However, recent work from her lab, a thesis by Ricker (2019), had similarly inconclusive results. Additional ongoing research on the native-nativar issue includes a citizen-science effort by the Chicago Botanic Garden, evaluating palettes of native plants and cultivars for three hardiness zones (budburst.org, 2020), as well as a trial of shrubs and trees at the Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware (Eirman, 2015).

Our project at OSU, to the best of our knowledge, will be the first to trial both annual and perennial natives and native cultivars, and also be the first to focus on plants native to Oregon's Willamette Valley. We selected eight native plant species that are suitable for use in home gardens and had at least one native cultivar available in the retail market. Native plant species selection was guided by Aaron Anderson's 2017–2019 study of Oregon native plants.

From Aaron's collection of 23 Oregon natives, we selected a subset of eight plants that were found to be highly attractive (e.g. *Symphytotrichum subspicatum*, *Eschscholzia californica*, *Clarkia amoena*), moderately attractive (e.g. *Sidalcea malviflora*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Nemophila menziesii*), and less attractive (e.g.



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Image 2: Experimental garden plots at Oak Creek Center for Urban Horticulture in Corvallis, Oregon.

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Camassia leichtlinii, *Aquilegia formosa*) to pollinators (Anderson, in prep.).

Our study includes plants with low, moderate, and high levels of attractiveness to pollinators in order to understand how selection for specific plant traits (e.g. color or bloom size) might increase or decrease pollinator visitation to native cultivars. Native cultivars may receive increased pollinator visitation (relative to wild types) by increasing the visibility of plants to pollinators via increases in bloom size, bloom duration, and color saturation.

Alternatively, changes in bloom morphology or color hue may decrease visitation by negatively altering pollinator recognition of a plant. We have included one non-native plant, *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Grosso', as a benchmark species; many studies have documented that lavender is highly attractive to pollinators (Balfour *et al.*, 2013; Garbuzov & Ratnieks 2014; Frankie *et al.*, 2019) and it can commonly be found on pollinator plant lists. We will compare pollinator abundance on native plants and cultivars in relation to lavender.

In November of 2019, we established four (1-meter by 30-meter) experimental garden beds at the Oak Creek Center for Urban Horticulture in Corvallis. Plants were started using a combination of bulbs, seeds, and plugs; bulbs and seeds were planted in the fall and 4-inch pots were transplanted in the spring. Each plant was randomly planted in five different 1-meter by 1-meter plots, located at least one meter away from a plot with the same plant type. We began our >>

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Pollinator plant trials

Native species	Native cultivar #1 (or hybrid)	Native cultivar #2
Yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	<i>A. millefolium</i> ‘Calistoga’	<i>A. millefolium</i> ‘Salmon Beauty’
Western Red Columbine <i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	<i>Aquilegia</i> × <i>viridiflora</i> ‘Xera Tones’	n/a
Great Camas <i>Camassia leichtlinii</i>	<i>C. leichtlinii</i> ‘Caerulea’	<i>C. leichtlinii</i> ‘Sacajawea’
Farewell-to-spring <i>Clarkia amoena</i>	<i>C. amoena</i> ‘Aurora’	<i>C. amoena</i> ‘Dwarf White’
California Poppy <i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	<i>E. californica</i> ‘California Mikado’	<i>E. californica</i> ‘California White’
Baby Blue Eyes <i>Nemophila menziesii</i>	<i>N. menziesii</i> ‘Penny Black’	<i>N. menziesii</i> ‘Snow White’
Rosy checker-mallow <i>Sidalcea malviflora</i>	<i>S. malviflora</i> ‘Party Girl’	<i>S. malviflora</i> ‘Purpetta’
Douglas Aster <i>Symphotrichum subspicatum</i>	<i>S. subspicatum</i> ‘Sauvie Sky’	<i>S. subspicatum</i> ‘Sauvie Snow’
Benchmark species		
Lavender <i>Lavandula</i> × <i>intermedia</i> ‘Grosso’		

observations in April, when the first plants (great camas) began flowering.

Twice a week we conduct bloom counts for all flowering plots. Once the number of flowering plants in a plot exceeds two, we performed weekly pollinator observations and sampling.

Observations and sampling occur between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on days when the weather is favorable to pollinator activity (temperature at least 60 degrees, minimal cloud cover, and wind gusts less than four meters/second). We record and identify insect visitors within a plot during five-minute observation periods, and note the activities they exhibit (foraging, resting, basking, mating, etc).

Butterflies are identified to the species

level, and all other insects are identified to the lowest taxonomic level possible. For example, we identify honey bees to species (e.g. *Apis mellifera*), whereas bumblebees may be recorded only to the genus level (e.g. *Bombus*), syrphid flies to the family level (e.g. *Syrphidae*), and true bugs to order, (e.g. *Hemiptera*). Plots are vacuum sampled using a modified Ryobi hand vacuum until all pollinators have been collected (except for honeybees, of which only one is collected per plot).

Once per season, when a plant reaches peak bloom across all five of its plots, we measure floral traits. Two open flowers from each plot are selected and measurements for corolla width, corolla depth, and approximate nectar tube length are recorded. These

factors influence the types, specifically in size and tongue length, of pollinators that are able to access a plant’s floral resources.

We additionally plan to analyze flower color and appearance to pollinators through a combination of methods, including converting measurements from a colorimeter to the nearest Royal Horticultural Society Color Chart chip and ultra-violet photography. Our goal in combining abundance and diversity sampling with measurements of floral traits is to better understand what, if any, changes in floral morphology between native species and native cultivars are associated with changes in pollinator visitation.

In addition to noting the attractiveness of study plants to insect pollinators, we also intend to ask gardeners their opinion on the native plants and native cultivars in our study. Aaron Anderson’s Ph.D. research found that some of the most bee-attractive plants in his study were the least attractive to home gardeners.

This is our first summer of data collection, and we anticipate collecting data for at least two years. Thus, it is too early for us to share any first impressions with you. However, we hope that you’ll stay tuned and visit our lab website (tinyurl.com/y5pphn27) to follow our progress.

This project has received support from a Garden Club of America scholarship. ©



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Image 3: A sweat bee (*Agapostemon* sp.) visiting a Great Camas flower.

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Welcome to the Advocacy

Issue of Digger.

We have devoted most of this issue to showing you how the Oregon Association of Nurseries gets involved in policymaking and advocacy on behalf of the members.

We wanted to take you “inside” and show you our mindset as well as the process and methods we follow. We are strong, engaged and reasoned. We hope more industry members will get involved, because involvement matters.

Recently, I spoke with Oregon Rep. Rob Nosse (D-Portland) about the upcoming 2021 legislative session. While we do not agree on most issues, he offered praise for OAN members. We put aside ego and we do what is in the best interest of the industry.

And people notice.

Several years ago, Rep. Nosse and I went on the campaign circuit to debate the increases in minimum wage. In mostly urban Oregon, our message was not the prevailing sentiment, but Rep. Nosse and I did the three things that needed to be done.

1. We debated vigorously. 2. We treated the other side with respect. 3. We never got personal.

The nursery community steps up

What a year. First the pandemic. Then the economic fragility and economic disruptions that resulted. After all that, the biggest wildfire in Oregon history, dwarfing the infamous Tillamook Burn that scorched 335,000 acres.

This one burned 1 million acres at press time and counting, all over the state, but the worst damage occurred in the foothills not too far from Oregon’s prime nursery production areas. Our fertile forests were transformed into post-apocalyptic landscapes resembling the planet Mars, like something we would see in a movie.

But when the chips are down, the nursery industry steps up. We saw this firsthand in places that many outside our state may not be familiar with — like the small town of Scotts Mills, population 400, where people joined together to hold off the blaze.

I have heard accounts of great caring and rapid assistance all throughout our state. Disasters bring out the peacock in a lot of people. Not nursery folks. We have seen

good people doing it to help a community, and not for social stature.

The chips are down in this election

Every election cycle, we hear from pundits that this “is the most important election in our lifetime.” As a veteran of many campaigns, I can tell you each election has a personality, and they all have consequences.

The 2020 ballot is its own brand of a wildfire. We have a presidential election, a state amid its worst budget situation in memory, a pandemic that has separated neighbors from each other, and the normal dose of doubt and poison as we careen toward November.

You have a voice. You are respected. We must act and vote in numbers that show that democracy is not just for those who happen to show up. Democracy, as an institution, is forged in active citizenry. If you don’t vote, you become a passive participant even as possible harm is done.

Oregon proves voting by mail works

There’s been some degree of fingernail gnawing over vote by mail. People conjure up visions of Russian interference or rampant fraud. Some fear we may not end up with a valid election.

Let’s not kid ourselves. Our election officials must remain vigilant. Most of the states are trying to figure out ways to put their absentee ballot process on steroids, so the vote is accessible to all, regardless of the circumstances of COVID-19.

Here in Oregon, remote voting is old hat. Our state’s voters settled the issue in 1998, when we overwhelmingly voted to expand mail-in voting to primary and general elections. Two years later, Oregon became the first state in the U.S. to conduct a presidential election with mail-in voting.

If any state could discern if there has been voter fraud, it stands to reason it would be the Beaver State. Candidly, every Secretary of State — no matter the party affiliation — has certified our electoral process as legitimate. There are significant precautions against fraud. Each voter receives one, and only one, ballot. Ballot return signatures are verified against state records.

The good news around the country is that more people have asked for their absen-



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

tee ballots than ever before. No amount of doubt about the United States Postal Service can erase the basic duty to cast a ballot.

A new population of voters

Across the U.S., the 13,238 Americans born on September 11, 2001, represented the few rays of promise on a dark day. Now this cohort of voters, shaped by terror attacks, school shootings and a pandemic, will vote in their first presidential election.

My youngest daughter, Carolyn, was born shortly after 9/11 in November and is engaged. Now this group can be more than simple bystanders. Rather, they can wield an incredible force of self-determination. This 56-year-old hopes they jump at the chance.

Use your voice

We have seen the “rigged election” movie before. The nation endured it and learned from it.

The 1864 presidential race between Grover Cleveland — New York’s Democratic governor — and James Blaine — a Republican former speaker of the House, senator from Maine and secretary of state — was an especially ugly one. Accusations of ballot box stuffing ensued, and the nation was not clear on the winner.

The only winner in the 2020 election if you do not vote is apathy.

An old, effective political ploy is if you doubt the result, create pandemonium on the process. Voter suppression takes many forms. This election cycle has enough challenges in it without falling prey to conspiracy theories.

Here is one thing you can control. It does not matter where you land as a Democrat, a Republican or neither — we are all Americans. Get out and vote! ©

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