

2019-2020 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What a long, strange run it's been

One year ago, I assumed the position of OAN president.

I likened it to starting a long training run. I felt apprehension about my readiness, but I was excited for the challenge.

Boy, I had no idea what was in store.

The first major obstacle was like going up the first hill in a run. I just did not know how long and arduous that hill would be.

In February, we started hearing a lot about the COVID-19 pathogen.

On a Tuesday in the beginning of March, our OAN Board of Directors met in person. By that Friday, schools were closed, the NBA season was suspended, and our spring shipping and selling season was on the brink of closure.

There was no playbook to follow in this situation, but our executive director, Jeff Stone, immediately put us on offense. We sent emails and made calls to every official who would listen, explaining how our industry could continue to function safely. We laid out how the nursery industry would play an essential role for the public's well-being, as stay-at-home orders came into effect and people had nothing else to do but bake and work in their gardens.

Once we got confirmation from the governor's office that our industry would not be forced to close, our focus turned to other states and shipping lanes. Would customers in other states be open, and able to receive their spring shipments from us? Would the roads through closed states be open?

Many questions were being thrown around, but fewer answers. Each of the 50 states — not to mention the various Canadian provinces — had their own rules and emergency orders. Oregon, again, led the way. Working with Minnesota's association and the Nursery and Landscape Association Executives of North America, we set up an all-in-one map with real-time information on the status of each state. It was a game-changer for the whole industry.

Once we got through what ended up being a robust spring shipping season, we turned our attention to figuring out what the age of COVID would mean for our day-to-day operations. In numerous Zoom meetings within our association, as well as with the department directors at the State of Oregon, we talked about OSHA rules changing, lack of PPE availability, and liability concerns.

This started to feel like the middle doldrums of a run where you are doing the same thing over and over. In this case, we kept explaining how we have been dealing with COVID at the workplace since March, and doing a good job without state oversight.

It has amazed me how much work goes into getting what we know on the ground to those who regulate our operations. The loss of the Farwest Show was a big financial hit to the association. The subsequent revenue campaign to shore up OAN finances was an outright success because our members believe in what the association does. That positive energy has buoyed us into the fall and set up a much better outlook than I had imagined at midsummer.

Now that I am coming to the end of my presidential year, it feels just like ending a long run. It feels like it was just starting, and also like it would never end!

When I finish a run, I usually feel accomplished and excited — a runner's high — and ready for the next one. I am very excited for this next year. We have a great Executive Committee, with a wide range of voices, led by our next president, Kyle Fessler of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas.

Our full Board of Directors that will be sworn in at the online convention in December is dynamic and engaged. The OAN staff has shown it is the gold standard in the industry by continuing to serve the members at an extremely high level during a tumultuous year. I am grateful and honored to have served as OAN president in 2020. Thank you. ☺



Jim Simnitt
OAN PRESIDENT