

B2B interaction meets the next horizon

The Oregon Association of Nurseries exists for one purpose — to help the members succeed in growing the best plants in the world.

Oregon's growers are doing their part. Recent data show the industry once again surpassing the \$1 billion mark in sales.

Resiliency never had a better example than our members. They got knocked down by a near depression and fought against emerging pests and diseases never seen in Oregon due to climate change. Now they must persevere against a global pandemic.

Our OAN staff is dedicated to supporting your success. We offer carefully tailored affinity programs that help big and small growers alike. We deliver published and webinar content regularly and at an elite level — *Digger* is the gold standard in the industry. We trigger political advocacy that is on a mission to protect and defend the industry. And through the business-to-business (B2B) relationships that we facilitate, much like the “back end of the bar,” we help you construct the many bridges of business opportunity to enhance your existing prowess.

In other words, the staff doesn't “wait for the paint to dry” to be at the ready to serve.

Helping you generate revenue

The OAN mission statement says that we are “the community dedicated to the long-term success, profitability and excellence of Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry.” Two of the main vision statements are “Plant buyers have an enduring preference for Oregon product,” and “Our members adopt practices that lead to their long-term success.”

We have seen it over the past 15 years — the days of “plant it and they will buy” are treasured memories. It was never that simple, as you all know, but the rapid change in the buying environment makes the most seasoned and vertically integrated operation shake their heads in wonderment.

It's necessary to take strategic steps connecting product and buyer. That's where our *Nursery Guide* comes into play.

The *Nursery Guide* is both a print book and a website. The book includes 300+ pages of listings and content. The website is available 24/7/365, and offers a powerful search tool for various plants, services and supplies. It has nearly 20,000 listings shown online covering 4,428 different plants and 430 services and supplies.

Anyone can search; only members may list. Some 60% of the growers who list are Oregon-based. The website exceeded 700,000 pageviews in the last year and growing, as buyers move online.

Facilitating connections

Trade shows continue to be a place where Oregon growers expand their footprint and show their superior plant material to buyers and sellers. The person-to-person aspect of sales continues to be the main conduit for getting product into the market.

The obvious difference is that the pandemic has forced trade shows to go virtual. AmericanHort was the first to do this with Cultivate'20 — they did a lot of things well. The Northern Green Virtual Show, led by the always innovative Cassie Larson in Minnesota, was phenomenal. MANTS, the granddaddy of them all — virtual.

Nursery association executives from around the country and Canadian provinces are working together, comparing notes as they guide their memberships into the age of virtual platforms. This month, the OAN is taking its own virtual green marketplace out for a first spin, with *Nursery Guide LIVE*.

The next horizon of B2B

Nursery Guide LIVE — a virtual marketplace bringing together green industry buyers with the top providers of plants, products and services — will take place Wednesday and Thursday, February 17–18, 2021 on www.NurseryGuideLive.com. The OAN Board of Directors charged the staff to find additional ways to increase the opportunities for members to engage in networking and sales — something everyone could plan around as an annual event. It made sense to use our trusted and robust *Nursery Guide* as a “turn-key” transition to the virtual world.

The professional staff of the OAN scoured the virtual platform vendors, utilized my connections with the other nursery executives, and received achievable direction



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

from the member leaders to come to this point. I only asked that it be simple, that it build on what we already do, and most of all, that it work. It will.

Nursery Guide LIVE is not a replacement for the book or website — it complements them with a two-day interactive, virtual event. Exhibitors can even populate their existing *Nursery Guide* listings into their virtual booth.

In creating the virtual event, OAN partnered with Showmetry, a virtual events platform that offers an easy and intuitive layout with powerful features. These include: a visually robust booth layout with simple setup; unlimited product listings with multiple images and videos for each product; live video chat to interact with numerous visitors in a booth at the same time (or schedule private video chats); the ability to give live presentations for up to 30 attendees at a time; and the ability for attendees to search live to find what they're looking for in the marketplace, then connect directly with the exhibitor.

Hybrids are here

When I debriefed with my three-sport athlete daughter, Carolyn Rose, when she was in high school, I said there are people who do things and act and others who watch and react. You may not be the first to the ball, but you certainly can know what do with it when you get it.

It is my opinion that the virtual platform is here to stay and very well could be, over time, blended with any in-person show in the coming years. The good news is that the OAN has a game plan, it is approved by our leadership, and it is the next big thing.

Join us for the *Nursery Guide LIVE* this month! ☺