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Smart stewardship It's tough to think about the future when we're trying to keep up with solving the problems of the day.

This is something we face nearly every spring, when the most important thing is getting plants out the door to our customers.

We do, however, need to set aside time to strategically plan for the future.

I feel very fortunate to be part of an operation that places a high priority on sustainability and managing our raw materials well into the future. That kind of planning makes the best use of our limited resources, and helps alleviate some of the difficulties we may face before they become major problems.

I see the evidence of forward-thinking tactics every day. Some of the first greenhouses that my grandfather built decades ago are still standing tall. Many have had retrofits or modifications over the years, but the bones are very much the same and they were built to last for generations.

Along with our workforce, water seems to be at the forefront of every planning discussion we have. We've been able to grow over the years by focusing on conserving that precious resource. From the design of our can yards, the micro-system pot-in-pot fields, or the many recycling ponds, we try to recapture and conserve every drop of water that we can.

Biological control programs have also emerged in our industry over the past few years. For some, it's hard to get out of the habit of just grabbing the spray gun whenever needed. Yes, it takes quite a bit of open-mindedness, patience, and a willingness to fail to become

successful at using biological controls in an IPM program. And, yes, sometimes it also means grabbing the spray gun when needed.

However, the new pest management tools can be more effective than they once were. These modern techniques and complementary systems only help us be better growers and achieve better results in the long run.

Sometimes these sustainable practices are something we really strive toward, and others times come about out of sheer necessity. The world we are operating in changes on a daily basis. Whether it is government regulation or a change in consumer demand, we must be ready to adapt. I think back a few years to how one unfortunate incident brought the word "neonicotinoid" into the public sphere, and changed the way most of us will operate forever.

I think we sometimes forget how great of an impact our stewardship really has on our state. We care for our land. We protect our water. We support future horticulture leaders through the Oregon Nurseries Foundation.

Oregon nurseries annually sell nearly \$1 billion worth of oxygen-creating, carbon-sequestering plants that we share with the world (not to mention the millions more in the queue for next year). I'm proud to be part of that stewardship, and I hope to continue to foster that stewardship in our industry for generations to come.



Kyle Fessler

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