

# Digger

SEPTEMBER 2021

## Quintessential birch

Unmistakable tree varieties for  
the landscape

PAGE 23

New, returning faces at Farwest

PAGE 9

Social distancing for plants

PAGE 33

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## 9 Farwest marks a gathering of new, returning faces

The Farwest Show returned to embrace nearly 3,500 guests at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

**FARWEST**  
PORTLAND 2021

## 23 A tree with a peel

Despite some pest issues, birch trees provide a distinctive, well-loved look to landscape designs.

## 19 Meet the leader: Tyler Meskers

Raised in rural Oregon, the Oregon Flowers Inc. vice president grew up merging his local roots with hands-on experience working on family farms in Holland.

## 21 Sitting at the virtual table

Marika Sitz, law clerk at Jordan Ramis PC, explains the ups and downs of meeting legislators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 33 Call it 'herbal distancing'

Research shows that spacing out boxwood shrubs in production prevents the spread of infectious spores.

## COLUMNS

- 7 President's Message
- 21 Legal Access
- 38 Director's Desk

## DEPARTMENTS

- 8 Calendar
- 15 Northwest News
- 29 Classifieds
- 30 Subscription Info
- 31 Ad Index
- 33 Growing Knowledge
- 37 Digger Marketplace

**On the cover:** The finer details of *Betula pendula* 'Heritage' stands out in an urban landscape.

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

**On this page:** Left: The New Varieties Showcase dazzled attendees with new introductions for the upcoming season. PHOTO BY BILL GOLOSKI. Right: *Betula alleghaniensis* 'Parkland Pillar' is grown in containers on Robinson Nursery. PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.



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**Wednesday, November 3**

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Evening: **No-host Networking Hour** (optional)

**Thursday, November 4**

Evening: **Oceanfront President's Awards Banquet**  
**No-host After-Party**

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[www.oan.org/convention](http://www.oan.org/convention)

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CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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Digger magazine is an official publication and a member service of the  
Oregon Association of Nurseries, 29751 S.W. Town Center Loop W.,  
Wilsonville, OR 97070.

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trolled. Domestic subscriptions are complimentary to qualified U.S.  
nursery industry members. Non-qualified U.S. subscriptions are \$42.  
Qualified foreign subscriptions are \$35 to Canada; \$45 to Mexico; and  
\$80 for all other countries. Single copy rate is \$6 while supplies last.  
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# Overcoming adversity

## Fall is near here in Nursery Country.

After a long, hot, dry summer, there is much hope and anticipation for cooler weather and plenty of that famous Oregon rainfall. Likewise, September brings about my favorite pastime: football.

I spent nearly two decades of my life on the gridiron, participating as a player, coach, and occasional referee. This fall is no different, as I am currently coaching my son Henry in his first season playing tackle football. Over the years, I've been fortunate to be part of championship-level teams and all-star squads, but I've also been part of teams that saw very little scoreboard success.

Football has taught me so many things about life that I wouldn't be able to fit them all on just this page. Most of all, it gave me the ability to deal with adversity, which we in the nursery industry are all too familiar with.

You don't tend to think about adversity much when you're on the powerhouse championship teams. It's the winless seasons that really make an impact on your approach to life. I had one such season that stands in the forefront of my mind more than any other.

Following a run to the state semifinals with a senior-heavy roster, our sophomore-led team finished the season with two wins, and featured a few broken bones, a flu week that left us with six healthy players, half a dozen different quarterbacks, and one extremely humbled young head coach.

That group of boys took their lumps, learned from their experiences, and really grew together as a team. They learned how to better support each other, and more quickly bounce back in the face of adversity. Those boys also earned themselves playoff appearances the following two seasons.

So, how does this relate to the nursery industry?

The 2021 Farwest Show just wrapped up. It felt like there couldn't have been more obstacles thrown in our way. There were so many unknowns going into this year. The 2020 show had been canceled. Up until a few months ago, our venue was still being used as a vaccination center. Many of our international industry partners were still unable to get into the country.

And then, just as we were finishing up our final preparations in the days before the show, the governor decided to roll back protocols and reinstate mask mandate restrictions on businesses and gatherings.

This wasn't what anyone wanted. We all knew it would be a completely different experience than we were used to, and it absolutely was. Those of us in attendance made the best of the situation. There was great networking and quality business conducted.

This was the first marketing opportunity for some new growers and exhibitors, and several took full advantage, writing their first major batch of orders. Right alongside them were the veteran growers that went through the same stages of growth years ago, giving support and encouragement to our new members.

I'm grateful for all those involved with putting on the Farwest Show, from the committee of volunteers and staff, to all the exhibitors and attendees that made the experience worthwhile. We will continue to learn from challenges we've faced, and put forth our best effort to provide our growers and customers with a great platform for continued success. ☺



Kyle Fessler





# Calendar

Get the word out about your event! Email details to [calendar@oan.org](mailto:calendar@oan.org) by the 10th day of the month to be included in the next issue of *Digger*.

## SEPTEMBER 14-15

### 2021 GRIFFIN EXPO

Marketed under the theme "The Fine Art of Horticulture," this year's virtual event will include an exhibition area with curated exhibits that showcase new products and show specials. Exhibitors will offer products and services in categories such as growers supplies, plants and seeds, construction, retail and controlled environmental agriculture (CEA). Attendees will be able to chat with exhibitors online, download sales materials, and order online right from the virtual show floor. There will also be virtual networking opportunities and presentations from industry experts, including the GGSPro tech services team. To register, log on to [www.griffins.com/griffin-expo](http://www.griffins.com/griffin-expo).

## SEPTEMBER 15-16

### GROW WEST COAST

The BC Landscape & Nursery Association's CanWest Horticulture Expo has been rebranded as the Grow West Coast. Western Canada's premier horticulture show will be presented as an outdoor market trade show experience at the Surrey Civic Plaza, 13450 University Drive, Surrey, British Columbia. Landscape professionals, municipalities, garden centers, suppliers and wholesale nursery and greenhouse growers from across the region will be exhibiting, following provincial and health guidelines. To register, go to <https://growwestcoast.com>.

## SEPTEMBER 20-22

### AMERICANHORT IMPACT WASHINGTON SUMMIT

Green industry advocates will benefit from meeting lawmakers and subject matter experts during the annual event hosted by national nonprofit AmericanHort. Former Arizona state senator Bob Worsley (R-Arizona) will deliver a keynote presentation on developing immigration reform during the current political climate. Worsley has more than three decades of experience as an entrepreneur and influential figure on issues of immigration, technology and energy. Additional presenters during the event will include representatives from JPH Law, CJ Lake LLC, K-Coe Isom, and DC Legislative and Regulatory Services. For more information and to register go to [www.americanhort.org/impact-washington-summit](http://www.americanhort.org/impact-washington-summit).

## OCTOBER 8-10

### PORTLAND FALL HOME & GARDEN SHOW

Taking place at the Portland Expo Center, 2060 North Marine Dr., Portland, Oregon, the official show of the Home Builders Association of Metro Portland will entertain and inform homeowners about the freshest garden designs and themes. There will be a plant and nursery marketplace,



## SEPTEMBER 14

### FRISBEE FAMILY FUN

The OAN Mt. Hood Chapter presents a family-friendly event to honor nursery pioneers from 6-9 p.m. at the J. Frank Schmidt, Jr. Arboretum 9500 SE 327th Ave, Boring, Oregon. Registration includes taco dinner and one beverage ticket (beer, soda, etc.). All OAN members and their families are invited to participate. The cost is \$15 per person, but kids 15 or younger are free. Sign up for one of two frisbee golf leagues: a Pro AM and a pioneer-friendly Senior Tour. Register at [www.oan.org/events](http://www.oan.org/events)

competitions, and other great show features. Visit [www.homeshowpdx.com](http://www.homeshowpdx.com) for details.

## OCTOBER 27-30

### NATIONAL FFA CONFERENCE & EXPO

The Future Farmers of America (FFA) will host their 94th annual convention Indianapolis Convention Center, Indianapolis, Indiana, in person, while also providing a virtual component for participants who cannot be there. FFA members and guests from across the country will participate in general sessions, competitive events, educational tours, leadership workshops, an expo and shopping mall, volunteer activities and more. It is one of the largest annual student conventions in the world. Log on to <http://convention.ffa.org> to learn more.

## NOVEMBER 2-4

### OAN ANNUAL CONVENTION

Registration and room reservations are open for the annual Oregon Association of Nurseries Convention, which will take place Tuesday-Thursday at the Grand Wailea, a luxury oceanfront resort on Maui, Hawaii! The agenda includes hospitality suites reception, Annual Membership Business Meeting and General Session, and President's Awards Banquet. Go to [www.oan.org/convention](http://www.oan.org/convention) to register and book your room. Sponsorships are available. Contact

Allan Niemi at [aniemi@oan.org](mailto:aniemi@oan.org) or 503-682-5089 for details.

## NOVEMBER 14-15

### OREGON WATER LAW CONFERENCE

The 28th annual Water Law Conference will be held in the Two World Trade Center Building, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Portland, Oregon. Meta Loftsgaarden, executive director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has been invited to present the keynote speaker. General and ethics credits may apply for those who attend. To register, log on to [www.theseminargroup.net](http://www.theseminargroup.net).

## DECEMBER 6-10

### IRRIGATION SHOW & EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The world's largest in-person trade show dedicated to irrigation will take place in San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California, following the latest protocols set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Attendees can make plans to see technical session and seminars, view new products and technologies, and find solutions to all issues in agriculture, landscape, lighting, golf, turf irrigation and specialty solutions. Visit [www.irrigation.org/2021Show](http://www.irrigation.org/2021Show) for more information ©





**Image 1:** Hundreds of people filled A Lobby for Happy Hour. **Image 2:** The bold tiling of pavers and turf grass filled one corner of the Growing Trends Showcase. **Image 3:** Customers fill Cascade Tropicals booth on the trade show floor. **Image 4:** Bess Bronstein delivers a pruning demonstration in the Solution Center on the Farwest trade show floor. PHOTOS BY BILL GOLOSKI.

## FARWEST PORTLAND 2021

# Farwest marks a gathering of new, returning faces

STORIES BY CURT KIPP

**S**OME WERE GLAD to be back. Others were glad to be there for the first time.

But whether they were rookies or veterans, many were happy to be attending or exhibiting at the first Farwest Show in two years, which took place August 18–20 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

More than 3,500 nursery industry professionals — including growers, retailers, suppliers, landscape professionals and others — took part in show offerings, which included the trade show expo, educational seminars, social events, show features and more.

“People were glad the Farwest Show occurred, for the opportunity to get together,” show director Allan Niemi said. “Our industry thrives when we can be face-to-face. We realize these are unique times, and we appreciate everyone who supported Farwest.”

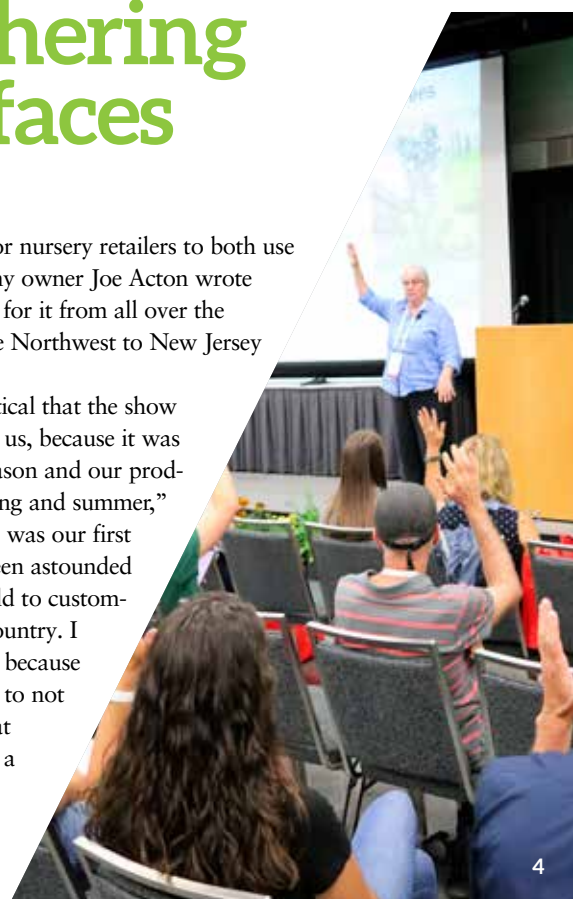
Farwest included 49 new exhibitors this year. Among them were houseplant grower **Cascade Tropicals**, plant hanger supplier **Soul of the Party**, hard goods supplier **Farmer Defense**, wholesale grower **Breeden Family Farm**, and hard goods provider **Zaydoo Creative** of Cannon Beach, Oregon, which brought its new Gard-N-Hook utility tool to the show.

The tool can be used to hang or move nursery containers easily,

making it ideal for nursery retailers to both use and sell. Company owner Joe Acton wrote numerous orders for it from all over the country, from the Northwest to New Jersey to Florida.

“I was skeptical that the show could do that for us, because it was the end of the season and our product moves in spring and summer,” he said. “But this was our first show, and I’ve been astounded at what we’ve sold to customers all over the country. I now kick myself, because I came very close to not coming here. That would have been a mistake.”

Anna Busse, a trade show representa- ➤







## Farwest marks a gathering of new, returning faces



tive with wholesale plant grower Cascade Tropicals of Snohomish, Washington, found strong interest in its assortment of lush houseplants. “Given all the context, we’ve been happy with the turnout. We weren’t sure people were going to turn out,” she said. “It definitely felt busy for all of Wednesday and Thursday.”

Having a booth full of lush, green plants was a difference-maker. “People can see plants in person,” Busse said. “[If they had] just seen them on our availability list, I don’t know if they would have been interested in them. Sometimes, plants on our website don’t represent as well as they do in person.”

Kaz Kosciolk and Ian Nabal, trade show representatives with farmwear supplier Farmers Defense of Watsonville, California, said they had strong traffic to their booth all three days. They sell hats, arm sleeves, masks and other protective gear for farmers and gardeners.

“As a first-time exhibitor, we had a

great experience,” Kosciolk said. “We were very happy with the attendees, exhibitors and buyers. It was really great for making connections with the industry, both on the business-to-business and business-to-consumer side. I definitely think we got our value’s worth at the show.”

Derry and Celia Breeden were first-time exhibitors with Breeden Family Farms, a wholesale grower based in Lebanon, Oregon. They were not just new to Farwest, but to the nursery industry.

“We had a wonderful time meeting people, getting to know people in the nursery industry and making connections,” Derry said. “We were able to get orders in, build our contact list and make some sales.”

Kevin Hsu, trade show representative with Soul of the Party, a supplier of macrame hangers based in Tustin, California, was another first-time exhibitor who had a positive experience.

“Everything went well, from the logistics, to setting up the booth,” he said. “I

can’t wait to come back next year .... We did better than what we expected. We were here at the right time, at the right place. It felt so good to see people in person and have that interaction again.”

The show was held under unpredictable circumstances, with Oregon Gov. Kate Brown implementing a statewide indoor mask mandate shortly before the gathering began. “This presented a challenge,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “The Oregon Department of Agriculture helped us get proper masks for the show, which we were able to give out to any attendees or exhibitors who didn’t already have one. Thanks to their partnership and assistance, we were able to put on a safe show.”

The next edition of the Farwest Show will take place Wednesday–Friday, August 24–26, 2022 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

“We can’t wait to be back next year,” Ian Nabal of hard goods supplier Farmers Defense said. ☺

## Retailers’ Choice Awards embrace discoveries at Farwest

The Farwest Show is an opportunity to discover things you might not have seen before, and the 2021 edition of the show was no exception.

As part of the Retailers’ Choice Awards™, a jury of volunteer garden retailers roamed the expo floor and highlighted seven different products that par-

ticularly piqued their interest

The awards as chosen by these judges were announced and shared in a presentation emceed by Christina Salwitz, The Personal Garden Coach. Both live goods and hard goods were eligible. The winners were as follows:

• **Biological Controls** — offered by

**Biobest USA** — The firm has available a large variety of biological pest management tools, including beneficial insects, mites and nematodes. The company had an eye-catching display at the show with live bees in a secure container. Info: [www.biobestgroup.com](http://www.biobestgroup.com).

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)

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## Two stand out at New Varieties Showcase

Sensational® Lavender (*Lavandula intermedia* 'Tesseract' PP31786, left) and Kimono™ Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Hokomareki' USPPAF, right) stood out among the 74 selections presented in the New Varieties Showcase at the 2021 Farwest Show.

Sensational Lavender, discovered by Lloyd Traven and Richard Grazzini and introduced by Peace Tree Farms based in Kintnersville, Pennsylvania, was selected by the show's judging panel of industry professionals as Best in Show and announced on day one of the show.

Kimono Hydrangea, hybridized in the Netherlands by Kolster BV and introduced by Curoplant Co., was chosen by voting attendees as the People's Choice winner and announced on the final day of the show.



The New Varieties Showcase was sponsored by Hip Labels. All selections had to be new to the market for 2021 or 2022, deemed significantly different and improved from prior choices on the market, and available from at least one Farwest Show exhibitor.



"There's no substitute for seeing the industry's best new plant introductions in person, where they shine the brightest, and we did have some great ones in the show this year," said Allan Niemi, director of events for the Oregon Association of Nurseries, which produces the show. "Voter interest in the new selections was strong, as it always is. People were excited to see what's new on the market and can give them better performance or new design options."

Sensational Lavender is available from Farwest Show exhibi- ➤



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tors Walla Walla Nursery Co. It is described as “the next generation of Lavender Phenomenal.” The plant boasts “incredibly large and thick flowers and sturdy stems,” along with “broad silver foliage that is “thick and tough” and a “thick floral aroma.” Other attributes include a dense habit, heat tolerance, humidity tolerance and cold tolerance.

Kimono Hydrangea offers a unique combination of heavy reblooming, compact size, dark foliage and flower coloration. It has dazzling blooms of white and pink florets with red margins sitting atop dark green foliage, all wrapped into a compact 2–3-foot package, suitable for the modern outdoor space. It prefers part sun and is suitable for USDA Hardiness Zones 5–8. It is available from Farwest Show exhibitors Van Belle Nursery, Walla Walla Nursery Co., and GardenScape Nursery Inc.

In addition to the Best in Show winner chosen by judges, and the People’s Choice winner chosen by voters, there were runners up in the judge-chosen and voter-chosen categories. These were given Awards of Merit.

The Awards of Merit as chosen by the judges were as follows:

### Heart to Heart® ‘Burning Heart’ Sun

*Caladium* (*Caladium × hortulanum*

‘Burning Heart’ PP27071), introduced by Proven Winners North America LLC. It is a bronze, fancy leaf variety with pink to orange spots, representing “a completely new color for caladiums,” according to the company. It is intermediate-to-tall in height, and works well in combinations, patio planters and landscapes, either in full sun or shade. The color is best expressed in the sun. The plant is available in quart, 6½-inch and 8½-inch containers from Farwest exhibitors Proven Winners.



### NewGen Independence® Boxwood (*Buxus*

‘SB108’ PP28888), discovered by a boxwood enthusiast in the Williamsburg, Virginia area and introduced by NewGen Boxwood®, Saunders Genetics LLC. Independence was chosen for the NewGen brand based on very high tolerance to boxwood blight and strong performance in boxwood leafminer trials. It has a habit similar to *Buxus microphylla* ‘Green Beauty’, but with more elongated leaves. It has a rounded habit, deep green color and medium-sized plant, and can be used in formal plantings where a medium sized round plant is desired. The branching structure is very strong, so it withstands snow loads. It is also deer resistant. The plant is available from Farwest exhibitors Bountiful Farms, Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc. and Sidhu & Sons Nursery.



### SunFern™ Olympia Russian Wormwood (*Artemisia gmelinii*



‘Balfernlym’ PPAF), hybridized by Christa Klevit in the Netherlands and introduced by Darwin Perennials. This novelty evergreen shrub with fern-like textures can be used as an accent plant in containers or as a groundcover in the landscape. It is low maintenance, tolerates drought, and does well in full sun. The plant is available as 50, 72, 102, 128, URC and URC AutoStix from Farwest exhibitors Ball Seed.

The voter-chosen Awards of Merit were as follows:

### ColorBlaze® El Brighto Coleus (*Plectranthus scutellaroides* ‘El Brighto’), introduced by Proven Winners North America LLC.

This fiery, frilled coleus has purple and red centers with yellow margins and works well in containers. It works as a houseplant as well. It prefers sun or shade and will perform outdoors in Zones 10–11, growing to 24–40 inches tall by 18–36 inches wide. It is available from Proven Winners.



### Cascade Sunburst Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum* ‘Vacbri2’), discovered by Briggs Nursery in Elma, Washington, and introduced by Briggs.

This huckleberry offers distinctive, variegated foliage. The finely serrated leaves are vivid coral when they emerge, gradually turning green with creamy variegations. Its racemes of pale pink, urn-shaped flowers bloom in spring, followed by glossy purple-black, edible berries in the summer, providing multiple seasons of interest. The plant does well in shade or sun and tolerates most soil types but prefers acidic soil. It attracts hummingbirds and butterflies and is deer resistant. It grows to four feet wide and tall and is suited for Zones 7–9. It’s available from Briggs Nursery.



### Serendipity Ornamental Onion (*Allium*

‘Serendipity’ PP32023 CPBRAFF), discovered by Eric Sal at Walters Gardens Inc. in Zeeland, Michigan and introduced by Walla Walla Nursery Co. and Proven Winners. This new selection is a sport of the popular A. ‘Millenium’, and has similar qualities, but with attractive blue foliage. It has globe-like, rosy-purple flowers that appear profusely in mid to late summer. It likes sun exposure best and grows well in Zones 4–8, reaching a size of 15–20 inches tall by 10–15 inches wide. It’s available from Walla Walla Nursery Co. ☺



All of the New Varieties Showcase selections for 2021, as well as prior years, are viewable at [Farwestshow.com/new-varieties-showcase](https://Farwestshow.com/new-varieties-showcase).






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• **Biodynamic® plants** — available from **Suncrest Nurseries** — Suncrest Nurseries, located near Watsonville, California, offers their new Biodynamic and Organic Eco-Conscious Beauty line, featuring edible medicinal, habitat and native plants. Suncrest is the first certified Biodynamic commercial wholesale nursery in the United States. Biodynamics is a holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming, gardening, food, and nutrition, according to the Biodynamic Association. Info: [www.suncrestnurseries.com](http://www.suncrestnurseries.com).

• **C Bite Clips** — created by **Thriving Design** — These patented clips are made for trellising and are designed for use in various garden applications, such as trellising, plant supports, tomato cages and more. They can connect to each other in as many as three different directions, and operate like Tinker Toys for the garden. In addition to stakes, one can attach ropes or fabric to them. They are made in the USA of UV-resistant, non-virgin plastic for many seasons of use. Info: [www.thrivingdesign.com](http://www.thrivingdesign.com).

• **Gard-N-Hook** — created by **Zaydoo Creative** — Zaydoo Creative is an Oregon-based company that creates and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 32)

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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](mailto:news@oan.org).



## California declares exterior quarantine for spotted lanternfly

The state of California has adopted a rule to prevent the introduction of the spotted lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula*). Oregon is not a quarantined state for SLF, but the pest has been found in several East Coast states. The full details are online at [tinyurl.com/5beuze9p](https://tinyurl.com/5beuze9p).

All trees, shrubs, nursery stock, annuals, perennials, houseplants and edibles exposed to outdoor environments are covered. The California Department of Food and Agriculture created a checklist for inspection, which can be downloaded from [tinyurl.com/hb5hhkj5](https://tinyurl.com/hb5hhkj5). As an identification aid, it includes pictures of the SLF in various life stages. More information is available from Oregon State University Extension Services, including a pest alert that explains how the pest can have impact the nursery, small fruit, grape and timber industries. Download the alert at [tinyurl.com/2ckdwx45](https://tinyurl.com/2ckdwx45)



Oregon Christmas trees are selling for more money, although fewer are making their way into homes. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAL LANDGREN

## OREGON STATE EXTENSION SERVICE HAS A NEW DIRECTOR

Oregon State University (OSU) has appointed Dr. Ivory W. Lyles as the new vice provost for extension and engagement, and new director of the **OSU Extension Service**, the school announced.



“Dr. Lyles has a long history of outstanding leadership in extension and engagement positions in universities in multiple states, and he is a national leader in this domain as well, through organizations like the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities,” said Edward Feser, OSU’s provost and executive vice president. “Most recently, in Nevada, he renewed strong stakeholder partnerships and implemented innovative programs in workforce development and other areas. I’m delighted he is joining OSU’s leadership team.”

Dr. Lyles will succeed Anita Azarenko, who is retiring after having served in the role temporarily for the past two years. He has been serving as the director of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and associate dean for engagement in the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources. In those

roles, he collaborated extensively with community partners to address the needs and challenges of citizens throughout Nevada.

Prior to that, Dr. Lyles worked in ag and extension roles with Alcorn State University, the University of Arkansas – Little Rock, the University of Tennessee, Tennessee State University, The Ohio State University and Mississippi State University. He received his doctorate in agricultural education, community, and rural development in 1990 from The Ohio State University, his master’s in Extension education and education leadership in 1984 from Mississippi State University, and his bachelor’s in agricultural economics in 1980 from Alcorn.

Dr. Lyles will begin work on September 30. Read more at [tinyurl.com/77hz3bbh](https://tinyurl.com/77hz3bbh).

## OREGON CHRISTMAS TREE PRICES GO UP WHILE VOLUME GOES DOWN

Oregon has grown fewer Christmas trees over the last five years, but their price and overall value has gone up, according to a new report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Between 2015 and 2020, nearly 1.28



## 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](https://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.





million fewer trees were cut and sold, but there was a \$22.4 million increase in overall sales. The price of an average tree climbed almost 57%, from \$17.90 in 2015 to \$31.06 in 2020. Gross sales were up by 26% in 2020, reaching \$106.9 million.

The amount of land dedicated to Christmas tree production dropped by nearly 10,000 acres in five years, and 6.15 million trees were planted in 2020. Growers will drop that figure to 5.83 million trees in 2021. Growers also reported a 12% mortality rate for 2020 seedlings, but failed seedlings were replaced by 77% of the producers.

Oregon continues to be the nation's top state for Christmas tree sales. The report breaks down the data in detail for common varieties and information from the Oregon counties and is available at [tinyurl.com/nkktr8ru](https://tinyurl.com/nkktr8ru)

## RESEARCHERS STUDY USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN AG

Thirteen researchers from the **Oregon State University** (OSU) College of Engineering are part of a \$20 million federal effort, known as the AgAID Institute, to develop artificial intelligence to tackle mounting agricultural challenges such as diminishing water and labor supplies, weather variations and climate change.

"It is essential to improve the robustness, efficiency and adaptability of food production," said Alan Fern, professor of computer science and the principal investigator representing OSU. "The institute aims to achieve this by identifying the best ways to integrate humans and AI/robotics technology."

Washington State University is the leading the AgAID Institute, whose other partners along with OSU are the University of

Virginia, Kansas State University, Carnegie Mellon University, Heritage University, Wenatchee Valley College and the University of California, Merced.

Log on to [tinyurl.com/rbk4unza](https://tinyurl.com/rbk4unza) to read the full story.

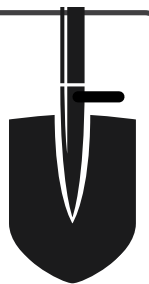
## ROGG RETIRES FROM OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Helmuth Rogg, who served as director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Conservation Program, retired in late August.



Rogg played a key role in ensuring that Oregon's plants are protected against pests and diseases, and that Oregon nurseries maintain their market access to other states. "Helmuth has been an important

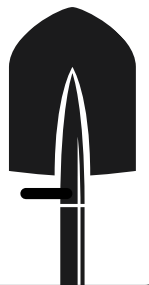
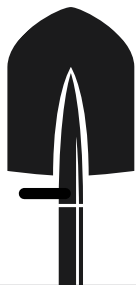
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partner and advocate for Oregon nurseries,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “We greatly appreciate his contributions as well as his longtime support of our industry. We have worked together to solve challenges, and he will be missed.”

## VACCINATING GUEST WORKERS IN OREGON REMAINS DIFFICULT

It has been a challenge to vaccinate Oregon’s migrant agricultural workers for COVID-19, according to an article published in online health care journal *The Lund Report*. As of late July, only 45% of Hispanic and Latino adults in Oregon had been vaccinated.

The report cited several reasons. Mass vaccination sites were difficult to reach when many laborers had long days on the job, limited time off, and no means

of personal transportation. Instead, mobile clinics by Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center were set up to reach as many of them as possible. The federally subsidized clinics, set up in Washington and Yamhill counties, administered nearly 49,000 single-dose vaccines and 24,000 double-dose vaccines.

Groups such as Causa and PCUN (Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste) are making every effort to hand out flyers and answer questions about the vaccine at farms, nurseries, schools, and stores. They are using traditional radio ads and social media posts to hit every media outlet, as well. Many folks are just misinformed by their family or friends, or fear that the side effects would knock them out of work for additional time.

Not mentioned in the article, the OAN worked with counties to encourage growers

to set up their own vaccination clinics and many did, either by themselves or in cooperation with another grower. The article can be found at [tinyurl.com/e8scxdde](https://tinyurl.com/e8scxdde).

## AMERICAN FARM BUREAU OFFERS MENTAL HEALTH HELP

The mental health of farmers is coming into focus, particularly due to a succession of emergencies that have left operators even less respite than usual, including COVID-19, droughts, worker shortages, wildfires, extreme heat, economic uncertainty, last winter’s ice storm and more.

A 2020 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that farmers are more likely to commit suicide than any other occupation. These professionals are often born into generational traditions >>



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of work that extend beyond common day-jobs, and the pressure to keep the family farm running can be very intense.

The American Farm Bureau has developed the Farm State of Mind website ([www.fb.org/land/fsom](http://www.fb.org/land/fsom)) to provide the agriculture sector with resources for assistance. People can quickly find a crisis hotline or counseling services within their state.

The *Capital Press* newspaper (Salem, Oregon) highlighted the issue in an article that featured Jon Iverson, chair of the American Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Rancher Committee. Iverson is part of the ownership family at Iverson Family Farms and OAN members Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm in Woodburn, Oregon.

"There's resources out there for help or to give farmers the tools that if they see a neighbor or family member that's not acting right," he said. "How to approach the

subject, how to bring it up, and then how to help them ask for help or help find help."

The full *Capital Press* story is available at [tinyurl.com/4b72d7v8](http://tinyurl.com/4b72d7v8)

## BAYER TO END GLYPHOSATE USE IN ROUNDUP PRODUCTS

Bayer will stop using glyphosate in residential lawn and garden formulations of Roundup™ in the U.S. starting in 2023, according to a release from the company. New active ingredients will be reviewed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state counterparts for future products.

The decision is part of a move to close further litigation alleging that Roundup exposure causes non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The vast majority of lawsuits related to the weed control tool are being filed by residential lawn and garden users.

By eliminating the chemical, they hope to eliminate the liability of future lawsuits from this market segment.

Additionally, Bayer has petitioned a review of a court ruling (*Hardeman v. Monsanto*). If successfully overturned, the company would have federal preemption to stop further lawsuits. If the court refuses to hear the case, the company will set aside \$4.5 billion to pay for any remaining settlements and litigations through its own claims program.

There will be no change in the availability of the company's glyphosate formulations in the U.S. professional and agricultural markets. Visit [tinyurl.com/dwjmnw3](http://tinyurl.com/dwjmnw3) to learn more. ©

# BUILDERS OF HEAVY DUTY GREENHOUSES AND STRUCTURES

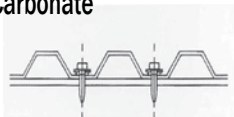
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# MEET THE LEADER

The voices of Oregon's nursery industry

## TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

I am a first generation American. My parents, Martin and Helene, immigrated from the bulb fields of Northern Holland to the Pacific Northwest in 1979 in pursuit of the American Dream. They started the family cut flower farm, Oregon Flowers Inc., in 1985, forcing bulbs into cut flowers. Growing up, I spent my childhood within the flowers, often being found climbing and building forts on peat moss bags and “helping” around the greenhouse. My family routinely travelled to Holland, visiting in-laws and friends while staying connected to the European bulb and flower industry. I now live on the farm with my wife, Megan, and three kids, Kase (5), Beckham (3) and Vivian (9 months).

My education started at North Marion School and I later attended La Salle College Prep in Milwaukie. I enjoyed participating in high school athletics — specifically soccer — and was a member of 4H raising pigs in Canby. During my high school summer breaks, I would spend my time in Holland. I worked for my uncle's tulip bulb farm, supporting their tulip bulb harvest. Just before college, I spent 4 months working for Valdivia Lilies, a lily bulb grower in the southern part of Chile. This deepened my interest in the flower industry and introduced me to some prominent members of the flower industry. During my time in Valdivia, I made contacts with many Dutch bulb farmers and breeders who often visited during the Chilean bulb harvest in June. Soon after, I attended Oregon State University and earned a bachelor degree in agriculture business and management with a minor in horticulture. After college graduation, I spent a year working in Holland. I interned with a lily breeder, Gebr. Vletter den Haan, in Rijnsburg. When I returned to Oregon, I formally stepped into the family business. I currently spend my days running the family business and enjoying time with my family on the flower farm.

## WHAT'S YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE?

My guiding principles are to stay positive, do the right thing, and keep the big picture in mind.



**Tyler Meskers**  
Vice President  
*Oregon Flowers, Inc.*

**OAN member since 2009**

### OAN roles/positions:

- Board of Directors Greenhouse Grower Representative

## WHAT'S A GOAL YOU HAVE YET TO ACHIEVE?

My goal for Oregon Flowers Inc. is to continue its growth with efficient labor-saving equipment and facilities, while keeping the current labor force.



## HARDEST BUSINESS DECISION

The hardest business decision I have made was to stop buying bulb material from a family member in Holland. For years, our family purchased flower bulbs from my aunts and uncles in Holland. My family has a close relationship and regularly work together. We came to a point where buying from family simply did not work. This choice was very difficult, as it was the best choice for our business, but challenging from an emotional standpoint for our family.

## WHO IS YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT MENTOR?

My most significant mentors are two my past employers and my parents. The opportunity Alex Aalwyn of Valdivia Lilies and Rian Vletter of Gebr. Vletter den Haan provided me during my internships were paramount to my knowledge and growth within the floral industry. Also, my parents are important business mentors. Coming to this country with four suitcases and creating a successful company is something I really admire. They truly are an example of the American Dream and in my opinion, the hardest working people I know.

## BEST BUSINESS ADVICE:

One thing COVID-19 has taught me is that you never know what tomorrow will bring. My best business advice is to look at every challenge as an opportunity.

## WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE NURSERY INDUSTRY?

What I love most about the nursery industry are the people. Throughout the years, our family and business have created lifelong friends through working together. I feel that the nursery industry is very supportive of each other. It feels good to be a part of a community that shares a similar attitude.

## WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE?

COVID-19 has been a rollercoaster. In April 2, 2020, our company lost 90% of our customers for 2–3 weeks. There was one day we were receiving calls every 10 minutes from our customers, canceling orders







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## Tyler Meskers

and closing their businesses. We had greenhouses full of flowers and were still waiting on Valentine's Day payments. On top of that, we had to throw mountains of flowers away daily, as our customers were not ordering anything. The hardest task was to rally our family, crew and business providing confidence that we will get through this. The market recovered in May, and has been strong since. I am proud that we are now generating record sales, with plans of expansion. It has been a humbling experience to say the least.

### WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

I am fortunate to work with a product that makes people happy. Flowers bring joy and make people smile.

### WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I am proud of the journey I have taken to get to this point. Running the family business and raising my family on the farm is something I feel very proud of. I am excited about what opportunities are yet to come.

### WHAT IS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE OAN?

I currently serve on the OAN Board of Directors as a greenhouse grower representative. Although being on a board is new to me, I will strive to do my best to provide for the families, farms, and nurseries involved. I look forward to doing my part in improving our industry.

### WIN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES FACING THE NURSERY INDUSTRY TODAY?

I think the most critical challenge facing our nursery industry today is the increased regulations put on our families and businesses. My family came to the United States in pursuit of freedom, specifically the freedom to dream and the ability to think freely. I understand regulation is necessary, but should not be in place to limit opportunity for growth or dreams. I truly hope our politicians can stay focused on our nursery needs and provide support to better our industry and help our families and businesses thrive. ☺

# Sitting at the virtual table

**D**URING SPRING 2021, I spent my final semester of law school as legal extern with Jordan Ramis PC. This gave me a chance to spend focused time working on the OAN Government Relations (GR) Team for the 2021 session of the Oregon Legislature.

For 13 weeks starting on January 11, I shadowed OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone and the other members of the OAN lobbying team as they bounced from one virtual meeting to the next. During my few months of legislative session exposure, I gained a deep appreciation for the value of relationships and the importance of being at the discussion table for significant issues.

As a legislative session rookie, I expected a steep learning curve. However, I soon found out that legislators, lobbyists, associations, and interested citizens were also jumbled together on a collective learning curve as they all tried to navigate the virtual legislative session.

A virtual session meant that almost everything of import took place in email exchanges or text exchanges, or on virtual meeting platforms. The opportunity to swing into someone's office or catch them in the hallway was all but eliminated. Everyone was bound by a common currency: the calendar invite.

While the inability to meet in person radically shifted what I understand to be the tradi-

tional dynamic in the Capitol, I noted that the digital platform increased accessibility in many instances. With everything online, folks across the state — even those in the more distant corners — had a level playing field to communicate with those in Salem (though bad wi-fi connections still proved formidable at times).

OAN members, in particular, rose to the occasion by providing compelling personal testimony before many legislative committees.

In the virtual world, OAN set a high bar when it held a virtual nursery tour for U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon) to give him a direct view of select member operations. A virtual farm tour may have seemed silly and unconventional in the past, but circumstances as they were, OAN orchestrated an effective and interesting way to showcase various nursery operations under the constraints of a virtual world.

Though this method was necessary in the pandemic world, it struck me as a good approach that might have staying power in the future, at least when it comes to communicating with individuals in more far-flung places.

## OAN's water policy discussions

I spent a large portion of time in my externship thinking about water issues and sitting in on water policy discussions. Coming into the externship, I had some background in water law through my prior work as a law clerk at Jordan Ramis, and I was eager to observe the water policy con-



Marika Sitz

**Marika Sitz served as a law clerk with Jordan Ramis from 2020-2021 and will be joining the firm as an associate on the environmental & natural resources team in September 2021. Marika can be reached at 503-598-5542 or [marika.sitz@jordanramis.com](mailto:marika.sitz@jordanramis.com)**

versation at the legislative level.

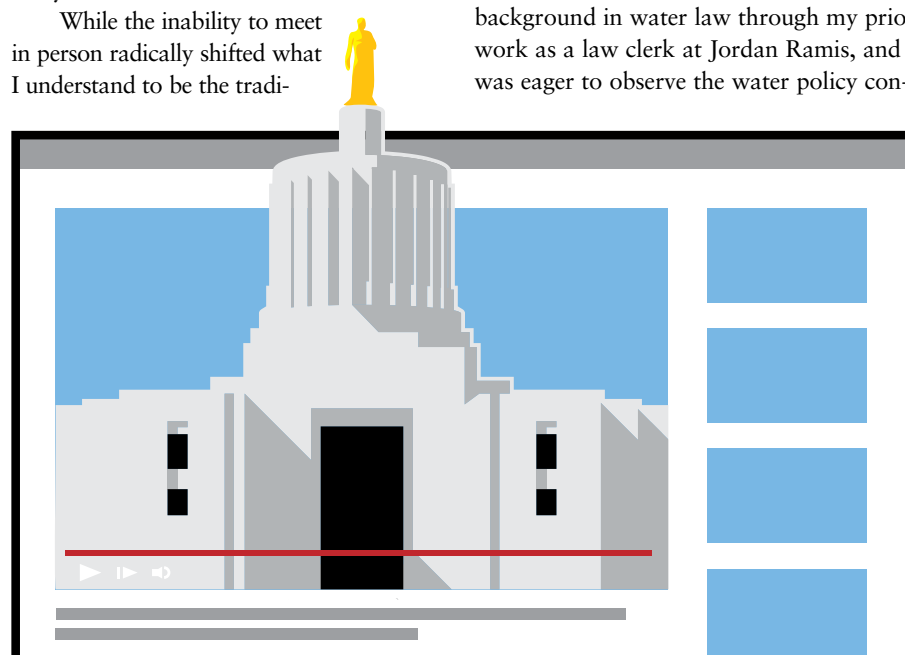
My conclusion after 13 weeks in the trenches with OAN on water policy matters is that it's often one hard-fought step forward, and 10 frustrating steps backward.

As a starting point, OAN enters water conversations with a clear understanding of water's importance to the nursery industry. Every day, emails flew between the OAN GR team and legislators, OAN members, and other lobbyists. These emails had ideas, questions, and reactions, and they sometimes became actions and plans of action for existing bills or new bills.

At the beginning of session, the conversation included some bills that appeared to be particularly beneficial for OAN members. While these bills were mixed in with various other water bills, I was excited at the possibility of this legislation making its way through session.

In my experience, agricultural operations are a great testing ground for innovation. Every day, growers are faced with the realities of water management and water shortage. They often respond by thinking outside the box, adopting new technology, or both. The bills that stood out to me were bills that recognized this reality.

In my mind, OAN had a good case for bills that would support the nursery industry. However, as session progressed, I increasingly began to feel that OAN was wedged in a defensive position, making it hard to push forward with good policy bills. The water bills that floated to the surface and stayed in play as session progressed >>





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took on forms that weren't always beneficial to nursery interests.

Municipalities, recreationalists, industries, farms, ranches, fish, wildlife, power systems, and nurseries all rely on water. When any conversation about water happens, folks representing all those interests, and various iterations of those interests, are at the table. I came to realize that as all the emails were bouncing around on OAN's end, other organizations and interested parties were engaging in the exact same exercise. This dynamic leads to a constant give-and-take process as legislative negotiations unfold over the course of the session.

After 13 weeks, I looked at the bills still in play and felt like not much large-scale progress had been made. However, in my opinion, the months of hard work that goes into the legislative session isn't necessarily embodied by shining examples of agriculture-friendly bills. By my estimation, the real testament of the work is in the subtle language changes, workshopped through countless email exchanges, that added a few more benefits or stopped a bit more overreach than would have otherwise become law.

Of course, there are also bills that simply need to be stopped entirely, which the OAN's GR team often manages to accomplish despite steep political odds.

### Setting the stage for the future

My final observation from the session: I attended many meetings about water. OAN's philosophy is to be at the table for water policy discussions, even the more frustrating or complex ones. This consistency likely contributes to OAN's solid working relationships with many other parties involved in the water conversation.

Water issues will only become more critical in the future. This session was a sobering reminder to me that any water conversation will likely involve multiple perspectives and a push-pull dynamic as those different perspectives clash. But if my many, many hours in water-related meetings are any indication, the OAN will continue to be an active participant in these conversations.

As Jeff is known to say, "If you're not at the table, you might be on the menu." ©

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# A tree with a peel

Despite some pest issues, birch trees provide a distinctive, well-loved look

BY KYM POKORNY

**S**ALES OF POPULAR BIRCH TREES in Oregon plummeted in the early 2000s when the bronze birch borer made its way across the country and began attacking susceptible plants up and down the Willamette Valley. The voracious insect had been plaguing states in the Midwest and East for years, leaving a trail of horticultural devastation in its path.

Hardest hit were the most-popular white-barked species — paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), European white birch (*B. pendula*), and gray birch (*B. populifolia*).

It seemed that *B. utilis* var. *jacquemontii* would come to the rescue with resistance. A beautifully formed pyramidal tree with dark green foliage and startlingly white bark, Jacquemonti — or Himalayan — birch didn't quite live up to the hype.

Although it remains a mainstay of the nursery industry, sales are dropping, according to Nancy Buley, director of communications for **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.** (JFS), a large shade tree grower in Boring, Oregon. The nursery grows 15

different birch varieties.

"Jacquemonti birch have been a really good seller," Buley said. "But we're not growing as many. The local market is shrinking, primarily because of bronze birch borer. We've cut down our Jacquemonti in our arboretum because they were declining so much. It's been coming on since 2003. No varieties are immune to birch bark borers, but there is some high resistance."

Shawn Nerison, production manager at **Surface Nursery** in Gresham, Oregon, also sees a drop in sales of Jacquemonti, especially in the east, where most of their inventory goes. He blames bronze birch borer, and they are growing less and less of the tree.

Surprisingly, the birch market remains robust in Oregon where birch are the fifth-best selling wholesale shade tree with sales of \$5.8 million in 2019 — more than any other state, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Horticultural Specialties. Nationwide, \$26.4 million worth of birch were sold.





## A tree with a peel

**Previous page:** *Betula alleghaniensis* 'Parkland Pillar' are container-grown at J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. **This page and opposite:** *Betula nigra* 'Heritage' dresses up a corporate landscape with its unique bark.

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

### A top seller

What seems to be selling best for everyone is *B. nigra* 'Heritage', a selection of the U.S. native river birch that's a powerhouse in the nursery industry and a top seller for many growers, including JFS, where it tops the sales among 17 different birch selections they offer.

**Heritage Seedlings**, a propagation nursery in Salem, Oregon, first started growing 'Heritage' for its name and found so much value and interest in the tree that they've kept it in production ever since.

"People would buy 'Heritage' birch and half of them would think it was ours," Krautmann said. "We sold the heck out of them and still do. It succeeded from the get-go. It's bronze birch borer resistant for the most part, it's a great landscape plant and it's easy to root. It's the one that's taken care of us the most."



Krautmann also said he has a soft spot for the late Earl Cully. A keen plantsman, Cully selected 'Heritage', which Krautmann calls "a tree for the ages." Others agree: It is not only a Great Plant Pick in the Northwest but also a

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Gold Medal Plant back east, both prestigious programs that feature plants appropriate for their areas of the country.

**Robinson Nursery** in McMinnville, Oregon, grows 15,000-plus 'Heritage' in

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five-stem clumps in #3 containers that sell three times more than any other birch they grow, according to Adam McClanahan, the nursery's national field brand development representative. Not as white as the insect-prone but well-loved white-bark birch trees like European birch (*B. pendula*), 'Heritage' rivels it with exquisite white, cream and pale salmon bark that peels back to reveal lighter inner bark. It's a fast grower with a large, pyramidal, upright habit and looks best when grown in groups.

### Running in packs

Many nurseries grow birch as a multi-stem tree, or as matching singles for the buyer to arrange.

"I don't think of birch as a shade trees," Nerison said. "The look good in clumps or multi-stem. It shows off their peeling bark more. They are kind of a native-looking tree."

Customers must agree. At Robinson Nursery, three- to five-stem trees sell three times as much as single-stem trees. The multi-stem trees really show off birch's attributes. Their exfoliating bark is by far their biggest draw, McClanahan said.

But there are other characteristics in favor of birch. Their leaves are small and easy to clean up in fall. They've got graceful forms, are easy to start from cuttings and quick growers. Because of their many attributes, birch remains a popular tree, and new trees keep the market going.

Cultivars of the fast-selling river birch (*B. nigra*) have been specifically selected for

their highly ornamental, salmon-to-cream colored bark on young trees and more modest size as compared to seedlings that can grow to 60-plus feet tall, Krautmann said. River birch cultivars in the nursery trade are among the most ornamentally appealing of trees year-round.

"River birch also offers notable habitat and environmental mitigation values," Krautmann said. "Most recently, I see it used here in the Pacific Northwest as part of bioswales, accompanied by sedges, rushes, alder, *Symphoricarpos* and mahonia since it tolerates seasonally wet soils for long periods. Remarkably, it's also very drought tolerant. I see this more often in non-irrigated plantings in the Midwest than here in the Northwest or the South."

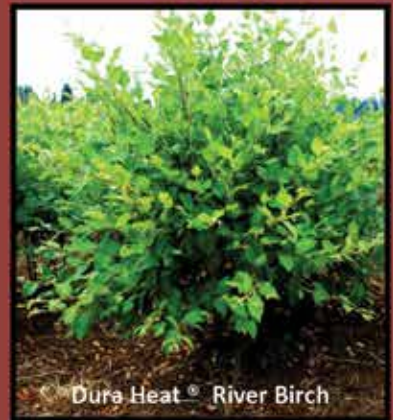
### Standing up to the heat

In the South, river birch 'Dura Heat' (*B. nigra* 'Dura Heat') is a hit. Its claim to fame is its ability to withstand the heat and humidity. 'Dura Heat' does well in colder areas, too, but doesn't like places with wild temperature fluctuations.

A smaller birch, 'Dura Heat' grows to 30-40 feet so is more useable tree for tiny houses or any smaller space. According to Krautmann, it has glossier foliage and a tighter habit than the species, something that makes him rank 'Dura Heat' over 'Heritage' in those respects. Neither is preferable as street trees; they get too tall for power lines. Both are hardy to Zone 3 and heat tolerant to Zone 9. With growers, it is profitable, quick-turn nursery ➤



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## A tree with a peel



trees, reaching market size a year sooner than many tree varieties.

North American native river birch and its cultivars have proven the most resistant to the birch borer. Another river birch selection growing quickly in popularity because of its creamy, almost-white, papery bark is *B. nigra* 'City Slicker', according to Buley.

"We really like 'City Slicker'," she said. "It was selected in Oklahoma by Carl Whitcomb. He selected it for its white bark, which starts at a very young age. It has better heat- and drought-resistance than is typical of river birch and the scientific conclusion is that it's the most resistant to bronze birch borer."

Other attributes of 'City Slicker' are its deep, glossy green foliage that turns bright gold in fall and its attractive oval to rounded form. It grows in a pyramidal fashion to about 35 feet tall with a spread of 25 feet. It's best used as a specimen tree and fulfills the need for a smaller tree for shrinking home landscapes.

'Dakota Pinnacle', the most columnar of cultivars at 10 feet wide and 30 feet tall, more than fulfills that requirement. McClanahan thinks it's a fantastic tree and is trying to talk Robinson into growing it.

"We're seeing demand go up for columnar trees and trees that are smaller in stature, especially columnar,"

McClanahan said. "People still want the feel of a tree but don't have the room."

Of all birch selections, McClanahan said *B. alleghaniensis* 'Parkland Pillar' ranks as his top choice, though his affections are fickle — they are open to change.

Krautmann points to 'Northern Tribute' as a more-recently introduced river birch from North Dakota with what he



**Top:** *Betula nigra* 'Dura Heat' works well in smaller landscape designs.

**Bottom:** *Betula nigra* 'City Slicker' is good option for hot and dry environments.

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

thinks is a lot of potential, especially for people with higher pH soils and droughty situations. 'Northern Tribute' boasts of ivory bark that exfoliates to copper-bronze and an upright rounded habit that's eye-pleasingly different than the rounded form of the species. The tree rises to 35 feet at maturity and spreads 30 feet. It's hardy to Zone 3.

### Researching durable options

Healthy trees have less to worry about when it comes to bronze birch borers, but stressed trees are fair game. The insect will attack any birch if the tree is already affected by drought or high temperatures. Climate change will only make it worse.

"I'm a firm believer that climate change will negatively impact plants," said Todd West, assistant dean, College of Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources at North Dakota State University (NDSU). "The issue we're seeing in the landscape industry is how do we select plants that can survive changes each year. Weather patterns will be erratic. This will be our biggest issue as breeders: How do





*Betula nigra* 'Northern Tribute' spreads out and is not the traditional birch shape.

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.



we breed for climate change. That's a big question. That's why we're looking at trees that can handle great shifts in weather."

With its cold winters, hot, dry summers and high pH soil, NDSU has the perfect environmental attributes for breeding birch. If a tree lives North Dakota, it lives anywhere, West said. When he came on board in 2011, his predecessor had long been working on birch. Dale Herman, former breeder and professor emeritus in horticultural sciences at NDSU, started collecting germplasm and planting trees in 1974.

"He took a small program and turned it into something special," West said. "I get to play with everything he received from China, Russia, Europe, Canada and Australia. We have an extremely diverse collection."

On 80 acres about 45 minutes from Fargo, Herman created an arboretum now named after him. The farm was purchased in 1973 to expand the horticulture program and get away from Fargo's Red River Valley clay soil.

"The nice thing about North Dakota is our growing environment is very conducive to producing plants for urban areas," West said. "The pH of the soil averages 8.2 so everything has to be pH tolerant or it's gone. We are among the top 10 driest states in the country. So, if you look at urban environment, it's typically very dry and high pH. We select trees for drought tolerance and pH. It's a given. If it

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## A tree with a peel



*Betula nigra* 'Northern Tribute' is a relatively new drought-tolerant option.

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can't handle high pH and drought, it won't survive here."

Of course, hardiness is always a consideration. The six trees that have

been released from NDSU are hardy to at least Fargo's Zone 4a, some to Zone 3.

West kids that he's the only person in the country who wishes for -40 F weather, his

evaluation temperature — which separates what will or won't survive.

Birch trees take from 20–40 years to make it to market, West pointed out. "It's a long-term investment," he said. "We evaluate a tree for 20 years before we release it. The grower may take another 10 years. Add breeding into that and you've got another amount of time."

For West, it's worth it. Bronze birch borers may have given the genus a hit, but it hasn't shut it down. Breeders continue on the path of new resistant varieties to feed the public's love of this iconic tree. ☺

*Kym Pokorny is a garden writer with more than 20 years' experience writing for The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon) and other publications. She is currently a communications specialist with Oregon State University Extension Service.*

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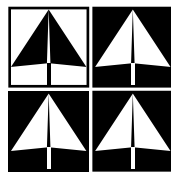
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## Farwest marks a gathering of new, returning faces



### (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

manufactures tools for the garden, vineyard and horticulture industries. Owner Joe Acton created Gard-N-Hook, a multipurpose tool specifically designed to lift and retrieve flower baskets and bird feeders, drag heavy or cumbersome nursery pots for easy placement, and wrangle thorny bushes and tree branches for pruning without touching them. Info: [www.gard-n-hook.com](http://www.gard-n-hook.com).

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• **Protective Sleeves** — available from **Farmers Defense** — The company makes moisture-wicking, lightweight protective sleeves with a polyester blend fabric, to protect farmers and gardeners from the elements. It's available in all sorts of colorful, artistic designs, or can be custom-made with company logo for the buyer. "We make stuff that keeps the farmers comfortable and protected," company representative Kaz Kosciolk said. Information: [www.farmersdefense.com](http://www.farmersdefense.com). ©

## Little Prince repeats as Best in Show booth winner



Farwest Show exhibitors are known for their creativity, and for the 2021 edition of the show, that didn't change. The show's judging panel of green industry professionals walked the floor to find the best of the best, recognizing several winners with the Ted Van Veen Best in Show booth awards.

"Our Farwest exhibitors always take pride in showing off the best that the nursery industry has to offer, even with the circumstances of the past year," Show Director Allan Niemi said. "Their creative booths only served to highlight what they do best, which would be their plants and products."

Winning the overall Best in Show booth award was Little Prince of Oregon Nursery, based in Aurora, Oregon. The wholesale grower of annuals and perennials is a frequent contender for the top prize, also winning it in 2019 and 2016, and bringing something new to the game each time. This year they didn't disappoint, with a tiki-

inspired tropical booth design.

In addition to Best in Show, Little Prince also collected an award for Best 10x10 Booth, Grower Division. The Best in Show booth award comes with a free 10x10 booth space for the 2022 Farwest Show, scheduled for next August 24–26 in Portland.

Other Best of Division award winners included the following:

- Grower
  - Best 10x20 or Larger Row Booth — **Cascade Tropicals** (Snohomish, Washington)
  - Best Island Booth — **Bountiful Farms** (Woodburn, Oregon)
- Service/Supply
  - Best 10x10 Booth — **SeaCoast Compost**

(Charleston, Oregon)

- Best 10x20 or Larger Row Booth — **Phillips Soil Products** (Canby, Oregon)
- Best Island Booth — **Bellpark Horticulture** (Surrey, British Columbia)

The show also recognized exhibitors who put extra creativity into their booths with three Far From Ordinary booth awards. Winning that award this year were **Brooks Tree Farm** (Salem, Oregon), **Farmers Defense** (Watsonville, California) and **Means Nursery** (Scappoose, Oregon). ©

**Tropicals** (Snohomish, Washington)

- Best Island Booth — **Bountiful Farms** (Woodburn, Oregon)
- Service/Supply
  - Best 10x10 Booth — **SeaCoast Compost**





# GROWING KNOWLEDGE

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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**Figure 1:** Layout of the spacing and irrigation experiment at North Willamette Research Extension Center (plants spaced 6 inches apart in the foreground and 0 inches apart in the center of the photograph). PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

## Call it 'herbal distancing'

**Research shows that spacing out boxwood shrubs in production prevents the spread of infectious spores**

BY MANA OHKURA, LLOYD NACKLEY, CAROLYN SCAGEL AND JERRY E. WEILAND

**I**T'S BEEN A YEAR and a half since the COVID-19 pandemic started. We have been hearing how social distancing prevents the spread of the virus and we see signs everywhere indicating we should stay at least 6 feet apart.

It turns out, social distancing may work to keep boxwood blight from spreading in your nursery too.

Wait a minute — boxwood plants can't move, and they don't reach out for hugs!

Well, they are often grown tightly packed together with branches overlapping each other, so let's say they're as close as holding hands.

In this study, we share results from a recent experiment where we grew boxwood plants either packed tightly together or spaced further apart under different irrigation frequencies to see how that impacted the spread of boxwood blight from infected plants to healthy plants.

### **Boxwood blight**

Boxwood blight has caused large losses to the nursery industry in Oregon since it was detected in the state in 2011. The disease is caused by a fungus, *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*. The pathogen causes leaf spots, stem lesions, and





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**Figure 2:** Configuration of plants within each plot. **Left:** A 6-inch spacing plot. **Right:** A 0-inch spacing plot. Each plot contains 49 plants boxwood plants arranged in a 7 × 7 grid with the center plant inoculated with spores of the boxwood blight pathogen.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



significant defoliation (To learn more about boxwood blight symptoms, read “Scouting for boxwood blight” by Jerry Weiland at [www.diggermagazine.com/scouting-for-boxwood-blight](http://www.diggermagazine.com/scouting-for-boxwood-blight)).

It’s a stealthy disease that can be difficult to notice until an outbreak occurs. Symptoms start on lower parts of the canopy that are easily missed unless you are bending over to look for them. In addition, during dry or cold weather, symptoms can be mild with spots on just a few leaves that can be easily overlooked as mild defoliation that mimics general plant

stress. Symptoms can also be masked by soil or substrate that has splashed onto the leaves.

Difficulty in disease detection may result in infected plants unknowingly being shipped between nurseries and to customers throughout the country.

Boxwood blight occurs when the spores of the pathogen land and infect any above-ground portion of the plant. The pathogen also produces survival structures, known as microsclerotia. Microsclerotia overwinter in the soil or on plant debris and produce infectious spores when condi-

tions are favorable (warm and wet).

A recent study showed that spores of the pathogen, which are produced in sticky masses, are not windborne, but splash dispersed. A sporulating leaf does not release spores when air blows over it. Instead, spores are only dislodged when water droplets displace them.

On the one hand, this is good news, because it suggests that the pathogen is unlikely to be transported through the air to distant plants or nurseries. On the other hand, if rain occurs during warmer weather or if the plants are irrigated frequently, those conditions could accelerate the spread of the disease. It could also mean that if plants are grown tightly packed together, neighboring plants could easily be infected when water droplets containing spores splash from one plant to its neighbors. »



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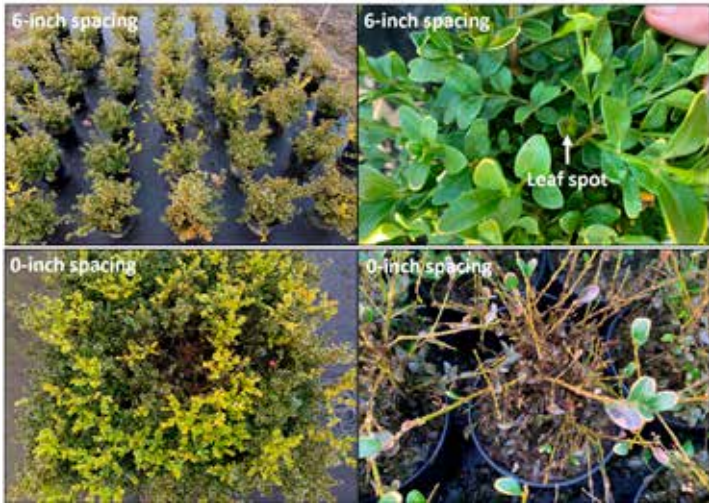

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## Call it 'herbal distancing'

**Figure 3:** Comparison of 6-inch spacing and 0-inch spacing plots in November 2020. **Top left:** A 6-inch spacing plot with infrequent, barely noticeable symptoms of boxwood blight. **Top right:** A close-up of the inoculated center plant in a 6-inch spacing plot with only one leaf spot. **Bottom left:** A 0-inch spacing plot with significant defoliation of the inoculated center plant and adjacent plants caused by boxwood blight. **Bottom right:** A close-up of the inoculated center plant in a 0-inch spacing plot with significant defoliation and dark leaf spots on the center plant and its adjacent plants. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



### The spacing and irrigation experiment

We used the susceptible boxwood cultivar 'Green Velvet', grown in 1-gallon pots that were spaced either 6 or 0 inches apart (Figure 2) and overhead irrigated once, twice, or three times a day while keeping the total volume of water applied the same for each of the three irrigation treatments.

Healthy plants for each treatment were arranged in a seven by seven grid with an inoculated plant placed in the center of the grid (49 plants per grid; Figure 2). Center plants were inoculated in mid-July and boxwood blight symptoms developed on these plants one week later. We assessed the development and spread of boxwood blight from inoculated plants to healthy plants over 8 months.

At the 6-inch spacing, initial symptoms on inoculated plants were mild regardless of irrigation frequency ( $\leq 5\%$  of canopy with very few leaf spots or stem

lesions) and the disease spread to adjacent healthy plants over the 8 months, with generally greater disease severity and faster spread observed at higher irrigation frequencies. Thus, increasing plant spacing and reducing irrigation frequency could potentially mitigate further spread of boxwood blight if the disease is present in a nursery.

### Summary

Our experiment shows that growing boxwood plants under tight spacing accelerates disease spread when coupled with frequent overhead irrigation. On the flip side, it demonstrates how the spread of boxwood blight may be reduced if the plants are spaced further apart.

To maximize space use, most nurseries would prefer to grow plants tightly packed together. However, once boxwood blight is present in the nursery, keeping the plants 6

inches apart could limit disease spread.

If overhead irrigation is being used, reducing the frequency of irrigation also reduces the spread of boxwood blight. Although the boxwood blight spores are splash dispersed unlike the COVID-19 virus that is airborne, we found that social distancing works for boxwood blight, too. ☺

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### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Jesse Mitchell, Dalyn McCauley, and Bryan Beck for their assistance with this study.

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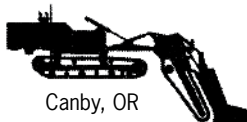
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# A more perfect union

**On September 17, 1787 — 234 years ago this month — the Constitution of the United States was signed.**

This year, as every year, scores of our youth will sit in classrooms learning about democracy's sustaining win, as well as its noble cause — the creation of “a more perfect union.” But what does that mean?

The Articles of Confederation provided the first version of our federal government. Our leaders, including Benjamin Franklin, saw that a transformation was needed — a new, stronger Constitution. He was in such poor health at the time that he couldn't deliver his own speech, so he had James Wilson read it for him. In it, Franklin shared doubts about portions of the document, but still emphatically urged all present to sign it.

Our purpose in becoming a nation was in rejecting a single authority, the king. But more than that, we wanted to move beyond any single agenda. We wanted to provide a common defense, promote the general welfare, and embark on a path to secure these liberties through time.

The essence of “a more perfect union” is pursuing justice, embracing tranquility, and serving as a shining light on the hill for the world to follow.

America has been through so much over the last several years. People are more akin to talk at one another and not engage with one another and work out our differences. You hear the adage that elections have consequences — well, that is true. America is beautiful because it is the people who govern through the leaders they choose.

## Youth and the future of voting

Recently the news organization, Politico, printed an opinion piece by Joshua A. Douglas, a law professor at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of the book, *Vote for US: How to Take Back Our Elections and Change the Future of Voting*.

Dr. Douglas asked a class of fourth graders about their views on how to design an election process. He was surprised at what bubbled to the top (as was I).

Instead of silence and thousand-yard stares, these students were engaged and

excited to share their thoughts. Douglas pointed out that as much as adults like to debate what students learn in school — and to shield them from controversial social critiques in the classroom — the group turned out to have strong, innate ideas about structural unfairness.

Sure, they were also interested in when recess began, but once he encouraged them to offer their own ideas about electoral fairness, the conversation took off.

They started from scratch to create their election system. The class was split between on voting age — they settled on 18, but some made a strong case for 16.

The conversation moved to why certain rules might be better or worse. To his astonishment, the kids understood the basic unfairness of a system in which one side is allowed to craft rules that will help the party in power. They said that it made no sense to let one side essentially shut the other side out of having an equal chance of winning.

They didn't know it, but they had offered the best critique of gerrymandering, which over the years has helped incumbent candidates, political parties or white majorities stay in power: It's simply not fair. Someone shouldn't win just because they run in a district that is stacked in their favor.

Without his prompting, students brought up difficult issues involving citizenship and immigration. One student shared that his parents are not U.S. citizens, but said they still were legal members of the community. On the one hand, he said, it made him want them to become U.S. citizens so they could vote. On the other hand, he found it unfair that they were not allowed to influence who is elected.

This insight is interesting since the most recent census data confirmed a long-suspected truth of change in our country. The single largest segment of our population is under 18 and for the first time, the minority population is now the majority.

We are more blended as a country than ever before, so creating free and fair elections should not be a foreign policy objective that we ask of other nations, but not ourselves. To be a more perfect union, we must be a guiding light for others, too.

However, elections are only one half of



Jeff Stone  
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

the coin — understanding how our government works is more important now than ever.

## Markham Elementary Parent Day

Back in 2012, I was asked to present at parent day for my daughter, Carolyn Rose, then in the fifth grade. Nobody knows what an executive director for the nursery and greenhouse industry does, including my own father, so I focused on basic civics.

I started with who was president. Several of the kids raised their hands and shouted “Obama.” What was his first name? “President.” Well, OK.

What about our senators, our congressman, our mayor? Crickets, except for my daughter raising her hand. I dismissed that and directed my attention (okay, glare) to the ever-shrinking teacher in the back of the class. Anyone within a foot of me could almost make out the guttural growl. Moving on. Yes, let's move on.

How a bill becomes a law: Ms. Baker's fifth grade class voted for 15 more minutes of recess as our makeshift U.S. House. I asked if Mr. Morley's class, acting as the U.S. Senate, would vote the same. I was assured that they would.

So, they get more recess? Not so fast. Principal Garnett would most certainly veto the idea. Outrage ensued. I said they could override it but if the School Board, as the Supreme Court, said it was against the rules — then it wouldn't happen.

The birth of knowledge of the three branches of government arrived.

I love our great country and despite all the differences we see in the news, our future of a more perfect union lives on through this next generation. Just like it should be. ☺

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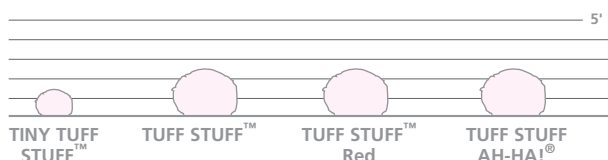


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