

# Digger



DECEMBER 2021

## Working with your workforce

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## The HR Issue:

### Working with your workforce

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**On the cover:** Yolanda Lopez, foreground, leads the way in sticking softwood cuttings of Exclamation!™ Plane Tree in propagation beds. She's been on the Schmidt team for almost eight years. PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

**On this page:** Left: Soledad Lopez grades and trims rooted cuttings at J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO. Right: Oregon State University's Insect ID Clinic offers arthropod identification services to the public. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



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# With purpose comes passion

## Fall has arrived and is running its course.



Josh Robinson

The deciduous trees have progressed through their show of fall color and have dropped their leaves. In the plant grower's world, this turns the page to harvest season.

At the mention of the words "harvest season," a litany of tasks runs through my mind — all associated with preparation for the hard work of digging heavy plant material. Logistics, equipment, and personnel are a few of the things that stand out.

For many of us who have the pleasure of being in this industry for an extended period, we know when items are ready through simple observation. We also have equipment that lessens the strain associated with most of the difficult work.

However, when it comes to personnel, things become much more complex. Do we have the appropriate level of trained staff to accomplish the job in the short window Mother Nature provides us? I think for most of us, the answer to that would be: We could use more people.

To say there is a labor shortage for our industry is an understatement. We have been dealing with many factors that contribute to our current situation. For me, personally, the most overlooked is conveying the importance of our products to our employees.

If you were to ask a team member working through the rain, wind, and mud why they are doing this, what would they say? I would venture a guess that some say they are doing it for a paycheck. I am sure they are also there because they like working for a great organization with a good culture — where they feel appreciated.

This is good stuff, but it isn't enough.

We need a shift in how the boots on the ground view nursery work. If we want to get to a place where we can retain and attract people — world-class people — we need to instill a better sense of purpose in what we do. I believe that with purpose comes passion. And, with passion, people will enjoy doing hard jobs.

Changing the world is tough work, but that is the very thing we are doing in our industry. What other jobs let someone say they are making the world a happier, healthier, and wealthier place to live?

We need leaders in our industry to passionately convey that we are world changers, not manual laborers. The benefits of plants are abundant. They sequester carbon, providing the world its best tool to fight climate change. They help people heal faster — patients in a hospital with a view of a greenspace are proven to heal faster and with fewer complications.

Plants fight mental fatigue — studies show that people learn and retain 20% more information with views of nature. Plants bring happiness — the greener the neighborhood the happier people are, regardless of socio-economic factors. Plants reduce crime rates — a study from the city of Baltimore found that when you increase a green space by 10%, the crime rate drops by 12%. This study accounted for all areas in the city regardless of income.

Plants save water and help prevent water pollution. They save families money on heating and cooling — and we all know what flowers can do for a relationship.

The list could go on and on, but these are just a few of the benefits of plants. I have no doubt that at least one of these benefits could resonate enough to persuade someone that growing plants is purposeful work.

We should always ask if we are doing enough to educate ourselves and our people on the benefits of our products? We must find the time, or create an occasion, to convey the positive impacts our work can have on the world. I wish you all a great harvest season! ☺





# 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*.

## VARIOUS DATES

### FIRST AID AND CPR CLASSES

OAN-sponsored First Aid and Adult CPR training classes started this fall. Sign up early to guarantee your seat in the course, as registrations will only be accepted up until two days before the class is scheduled to take place. Successful completion results in certification that is good for two years. Five classes will be held from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the OAN office, 29751 S.W. Town Center Loop West, Wilsonville, Oregon. Classes on January 18 and February 15 will be conducted in English, and those on January 27, March 10, and March 17 will be in Spanish. Five classes will be held from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the CPR Lifeline facility, 9320 S.W. Barbur Blvd #175, Portland, Oregon. The February 8, March 8, and March 15 classes will be conducted in English, and classes on February 10 and February 17 will be in Spanish. Register online at [www.oan.org/cprclass](http://www.oan.org/cprclass)

## 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.

## JANUARY 5-7, 2022

### MANTS

The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center (One West Pratt St., Baltimore, Maryland). The trade show is anticipated to have nearly 1,000 exhibitors and 12,000 attendees. Early-bird registration is \$20 for attendees for all three days of the show. The discount rate expires on December 1, when the cost to attend raises to \$30. All exhibitors and attendees are required to follow state and local health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For more information, log on to [www.mants.com](http://www.mants.com).

## JANUARY 12-14, 2022

### NORTHWEST AG SHOW

The 52th edition of the Northwest Ag Show will be held at the Oregon State Fair & Exhibition Center, 2330 17th St. N.E., Salem. The annual event focuses on the emerging trends in the ag industry such as small farming, technology and education. The show coincides with the



## DECEMBER 7

### MT HOOD CHAPTER CHRISTMAS BANQUET

All chapters are invited to the Mt. Hood Chapter Christmas Party to visit Santa Claus and see him make some festive balloon art. The event starts at 6 p.m. at the Riverview Restaurant, 29311 S.E. Stark Street, Troutdale, Oregon. The cost is \$25 for adults, and kids under 12 years old eat for free. The menu includes fillet au poivre, madeira chicken, gnocchi, sautéed green beans, salad, dinner rolls, and flourless chocolate cake deserts. Please register at [www.oan.org](http://www.oan.org) under "Events" or contact Aaron at [aaron@emswcd.org](mailto:aaron@emswcd.org).

Salem Area Chamber of Commerce's SAIF Agri-Business Banquet on Friday, January 17 at the Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. S.E., Salem ([tinyurl.com/y5vba3gp](http://tinyurl.com/y5vba3gp)). Both events contribute to Ag Week celebrations for the Salem area. For more information, log on to [northwestagshow.com](http://northwestagshow.com).

## JANUARY 20-21, 2022

### IDAHO HORTICULTURE EXPO

The Idaho Nursery & Landscape Association's two-day trade show is known as the "best little show in the West." More than 1,100 attendees with pass through the Boise Center on the Grove, 850 W. Front Street, Boise, Idaho. The show will also feature educational seminars and demonstrations. For more information and to register, visit <https://inlagrow.org>

## JANUARY 25-26, 2022

### UTAH GREEN

Presented by the Utah Nursery & Landscape Association, the event will be held at the Mountain America Expo Center, 9575 State St., Sandy, Utah. The show features green industry vendors from across the nation and offers seminars on topics such as business management, landscape design, plant

material, irrigation, and many others. Full details are available on [www.utahgreen.org](http://www.utahgreen.org).

## FEBRUARY 1-4, 2022

### PROGREEN EXPO

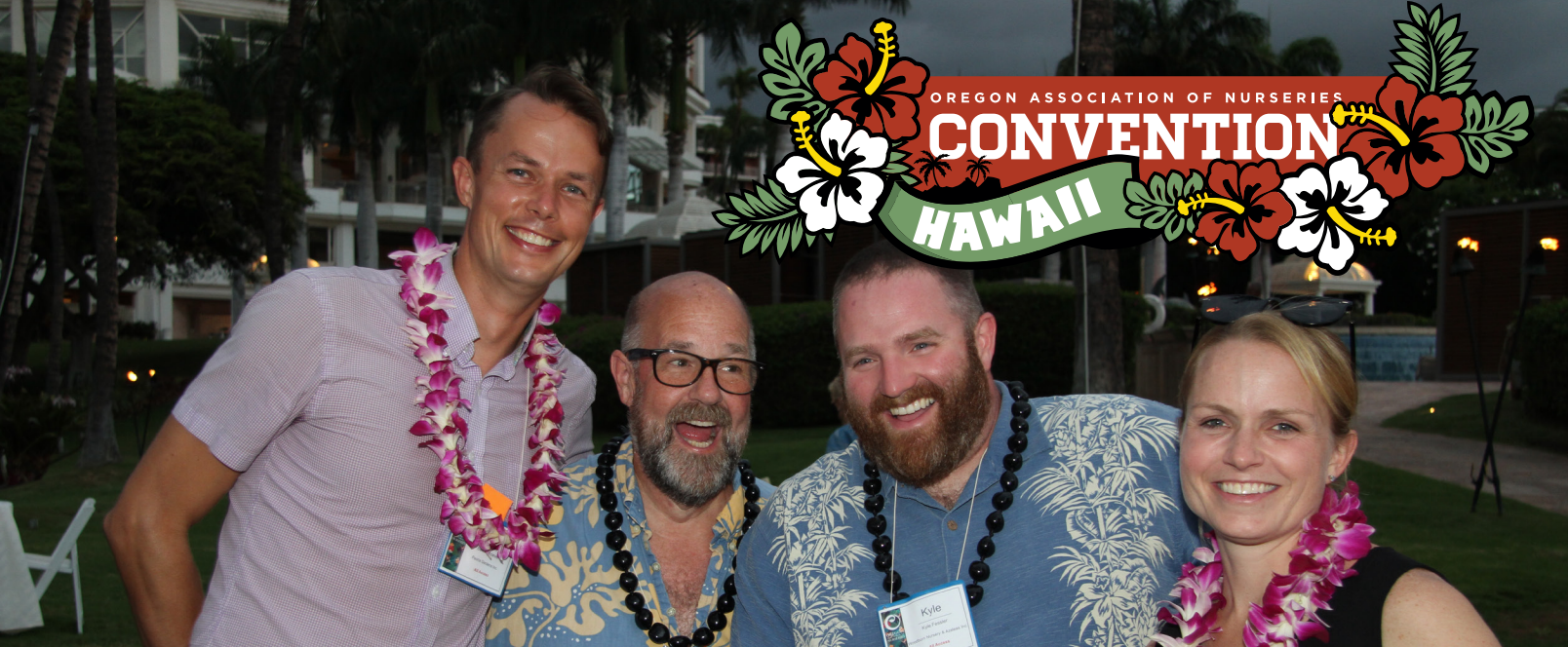
An educational green industry conference, the ProGreen EXPO features seminars and exhibits on the latest in green technology products, new business efficiency methods, and opportunities for continuing education exams and certifications. More than 4,000 professionals attend the event held at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver. Visit [www.progreenexpo.com](http://www.progreenexpo.com) for more information.

## FEBRUARY 14

### NOR CAL LANDSCAPE & NURSERY SHOW

The Nor Cal Landscape & Nursery Trade Show is a one-day professional collaboration between California's horticulture and landscape industries. It features more than 250 exhibits and nine educational seminars. Revenues raised by the Nor Cal Show are reinvested in the industry through education, research and philanthropy. The event takes place at the San Mateo Expo Center, 1346 Saratoga Drive, San Mateo, California. Register online at [www.norcaltradeshow.org](http://www.norcaltradeshow.org). ©





## President's Awards Banquet recognizes vital contributions

**T**HE OREGON NURSERY and greenhouse industry's best were honored at Oregon Association of Nurseries President's Awards Banquet for 2021, taking place November 3 on the chapel lawn at the Grand Wailea Resort, Maui, Hawaii. The banquet capped off the annual OAN Convention, highlighted by the passing of the gavel from **Kyle Fessler** of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.** (Woodburn, Oregon) to **Josh Robinson** of **Robinson Nursery Inc.** (Amity, Oregon).

**Tom and Debbie Fessler** of Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc. served as convention hosts, and past president **Jim Simnitt** of **Simnitt Nursery** served as the master of ceremonies for the awards dinner.

Several honors were presented as chosen by the OAN Awards Committee.

**Ben Verhoeven**, owner of **Peoria Gardens**, was named Emerging Nursery Leader of the Year. Verhoeven has served on the OAN Executive Committee for the past year as the member at large, and was recently elected board secretary. He recently served as greenhouse segment representative on the OAN Board of Directors.

"Strong voices are critical for the success of the OAN, and we are in good hands with Ben," presenter **Amanda Staehely**, owner of **Columbia Nursery LLC**, said.

The Farwest Show Committee, chaired by **Patrick Newton** of **Powell's Nursery**, was named Committee of the Year for its work in getting the show restarted after it had to be canceled the year before due to COVID-19.

"A lost year in an event can be a death knell, but not with the leadership and volunteers of the Farwest Show committee," award presenter **Jim Simnitt** said. "Patrick Newton and the committed members not only reinvigorated the show in 2021 but were critical in our success to bring the Farwest Show back."

**Mark Bigej**, chief operating officer and ownership group member at **Al's Garden & Home**, was given the OAN Outstanding Service Award. He was recognized for his service as OAN past president and as current chairman of the OAN Government Relations Committee.

"Mark Bigej has been part of the association so far back he

babysat my boys at Convention many moons ago," award presenter **Tom Fessler** said. "He runs a top tier growing and retail operation, and when the association needed his strong hand and voice, he made a difference. Mark led the effort to change the structure of our board of directors, he served as president during tumultuous times of the association where finances were downright scary. He now leads our government relations committee at a crucial time at the legislature that will shape our industry for decades. There is no better person to do it."

Four members were given Honorary Life memberships in the OAN. They included **Tom Fessler** of **Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.**, **Doug Zielinski** of **Alpha Nursery**, **Kathy LeCompte** of **Brooks Tree Farm**, and **Terry Thornton** of **Nursery Connection LLC**.

All four are past presidents of the OAN (Fessler in 1996, Thornton in 1998, Zielinski in 1999 and LeCompte in 2001). Thornton, now retired, is one of the rare suppliers who has served as an OAN president.

**Rod Park** of **Parks Nursery** presented the honorary life membership to LeCompte. "Kathy has been involved in agriculture and forestry her whole life," he said. "A leader no matter where she is — at home, at church, in her community and within the OAN family — Kathy is a nursery industry warrior. She does nothing halfway, becoming a black belt, running for office when we needed her most, and a voice of clarity and reason within our political efforts in Salem and Washington, D.C."

**Tom Brewer** of **HC Companies** and the OAN Board presented the honor to Thornton.

"It is a particular honor to recognize an unsung hero of the OAN tribe," Brewer said. "Terry Thornton's measure and impact can be found throughout his distinguished career. Starting as a shelf stocker at **Teufel Nursery**, Terry found his passion in hard goods. He was old school in getting catalogs and products into the hands of our buyers and with most things — it was a family affair. Thornton family is always all in. He served the OAN in many capacities at the chapter and board level."



## Convention 2021



The OAN award winners were (starting second from left) Patrick Newton of the Farwest Show Committee, outgoing president Kyle Fessler, his wife Mollie Fessler, his parents Debbie and Tom Fessler, Doug Zielinski, Ben Verhoeven, Kathy LeCompte, Beth Farmer and Stephanie Weihrauch. With them are new OAN President Josh Robinson (left) and banquet emcee Jim Simnitt (right). PHOTO BY CURT KIPP

Kyle Fessler presented the honorary life membership to his father, Tom.

"Tom has a deep love of his Catholic faith, his family, and the nursery industry," Kyle said. "He is proud of his children and family. Tom's best moments are spent with his 14 grandchildren in his fishing boat. Tom is an honorable, hard working, and humble man. He loves and values his employees and is passionate about growing and influencing the nursery industry."

Jim Simnitt presented the honorary life membership to Zielinski.

"Doug is a true community member and leader lending his skills and time to numerous efforts that serve the greater Keizer area," Simnitt said. "Years ago, while serving as the OAN President, he and **Clayton Hannon** decided to take the OAN to convention right here in beautiful Hawaii. It is fitting that this award is being presented here tonight."

Five recipients received the traditional Five Star Awards, which are given by the outgoing president in recognition of outstanding service or support during the year.

Outgoing president Kyle Fessler gave them to OAN Communications and Web Design Manager **Beth Farmer**, OAN Director of Finance and Administration **Stephanie Weihrauch**, the Government Relations Committee, his parents **Tom and Debbie Fessler**, and his wife **Mollie Fessler**.

As is traditional, incoming president **Josh Robinson** presented Kyle, as outgoing president, with a gavel plaque and a special thanks for his year of service. "Kyle, thanks for all you have done for the association," Robinson said. ©



Rep. Christine Drazan



Rep. Mark Owens



Rep. Ken Helm



Rep. Jeff Reardon



Rep. Vikki Breese Iverson



Chris Huckleberry

## Friends of Nurseries awards given to key nursery supporters

The Oregon Association of Nurseries has announced the winners of its Friends of Nurseries Awards for 2021. These awards are given to elected officials and others who help the association advance the best interests of the nursery industry in some way, whether through key advocacy, coalition building or just good, old-fashioned support for a bill or issue.

Oregon House Republican Leader Christine Drazan (R-Canby) was given the Legislator of the Year award for her key support on several issues, and her strong engagement with the nursery industry and OAN.

"There were enormous stakes during the last session for the viability of the industry and Rep. Drazan simply asked, 'How can we help?'," outgoing OAN President Kyle Fessler said. "That goes a long way and her commitment to protect the industry is something we wish to highlight as a true partner."

The Friends of Nurseries winners for 2021 include State Rep. Mark Owens

(R-Crane), Rep. Ken Helms (D-Beaverton), Rep. Jeff Reardon (D-Happy Valley), Rep. Vikki Breese Iverson (R-Prineville) and Chris Huckleberry, chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Oregon 5<sup>th</sup> District).

Owens was recognized for contributions on the water supply issue, which is critical for an agricultural industry that is reliant on irrigation. "He was a critical voice of reason that touched every corner of the water debate," Fessler said.

Helm was also recognized for contributions on this issue, balancing municipal and environmental needs with agricultural needs. "Rep. Helm was a steady hand on all aspects of water policy and set the Water Resources Department on a path toward sustainability and clear policy direction," Fessler said.

Reardon served on the Natural Resource subcommittee of the Oregon Joint Ways and Means Committee, and helped saw to it that water supply needs were funded. "\$535 million and a cogent plan to

put the state in the best possible position to stretch water as a precious resource could have not been accomplished without his efforts," Fessler said.

Breese Iverson was recognized for her efforts on the House Natural Resources Committee. "She was resolute and clear minded that to compete in the national and global economy, agriculture needs help rather than punitive regulations," Fessler said. "She proved herself as someone the nursery and greenhouse industry can depend on."

Huckleberry was recognized as an important liaison between U.S. Rep. Schrader's office and the nursery industry.

"There is little doubt that staff make things happen in a congressional office," Fessler said. "Huck has been a behind the scenes friend to our industry. He's a true Oregonian, and an exemplary public servant. He deserves recognition for his decades of service and support of the agricultural community." ©



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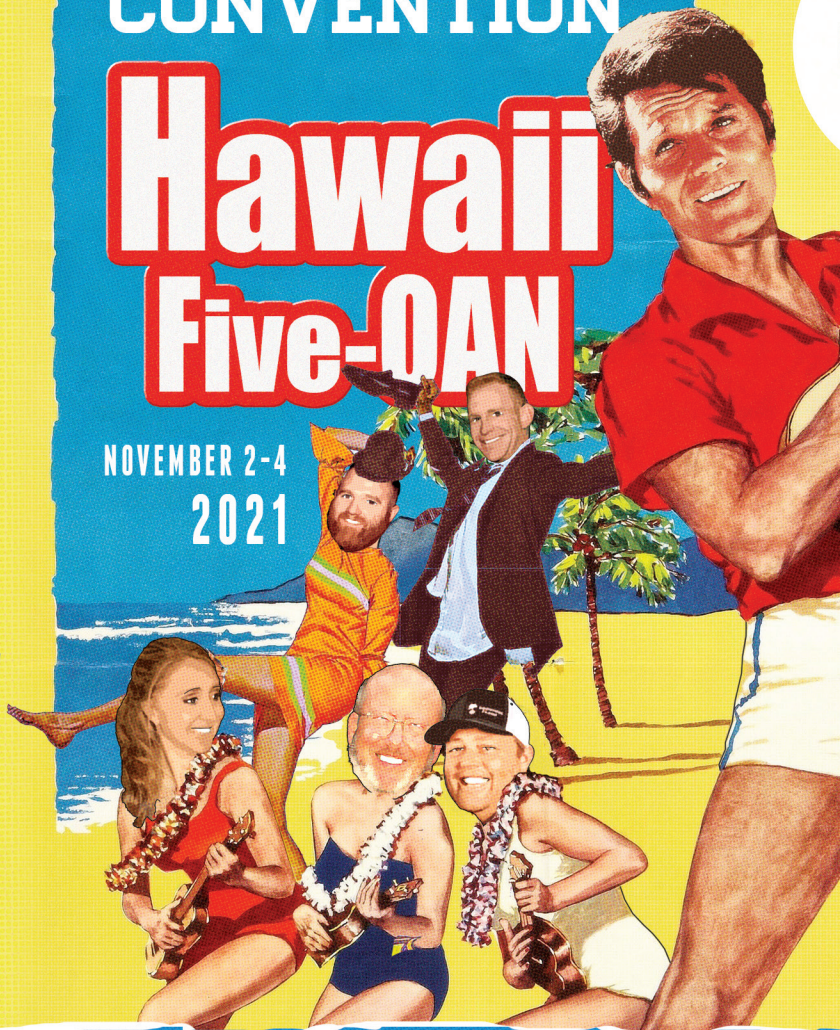
CONVENTION

# Hawaii Five-OAN

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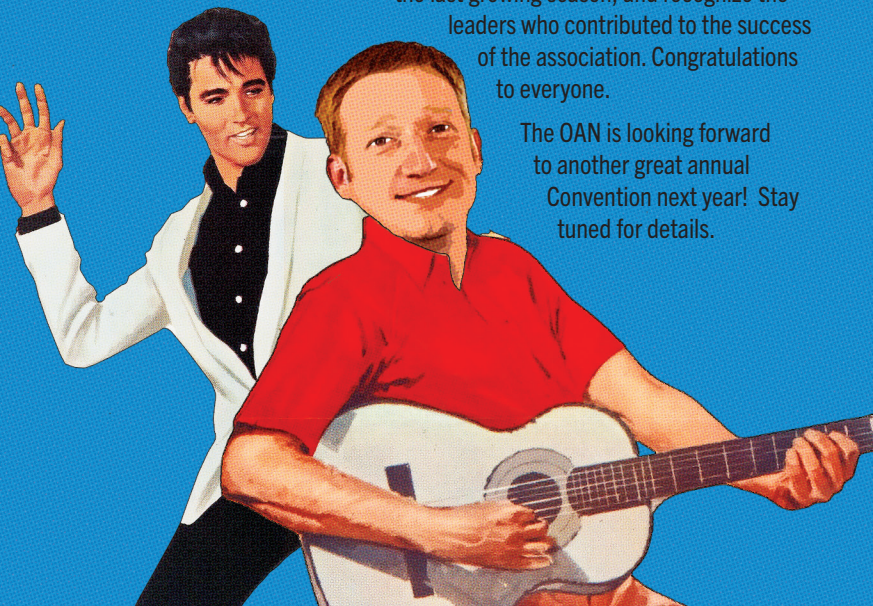
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## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The OAN would like to thank all of the sponsors for their generous support of the 2021 Convention! It was a landmark return to the Hawaiian islands. More than 80 OAN members and guests had a wonderful time at the luxury oceanfront hotel with acres of tropical gardens. Members gathered to discuss the tests and trials the industry faces over the last growing season, and recognize the leaders who contributed to the success of the association. Congratulations to everyone.

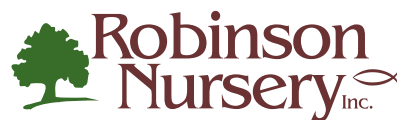
The OAN is looking forward to another great annual Convention next year! Stay tuned for details.



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# Northwest News

OAN members and chapters are encouraged to send in relevant news items, such as new hires, new products, acquisitions, honors received and past or upcoming events. Email [news@oan.org](mailto:news@oan.org).

## USDA report examines a decade of H-2A labor data

The USDA Economic Research Service released a 57-page report that shows how agricultural producers have had adjusted their use of H-2A labor program over the past decade.

When local labor is unavailable, nurseries that require pruning and repotting of plants, growers with fruits that must be harvested by hand, and other companies with labor-intensive crops tend to use the agricultural guest worker program more frequently than other types of farmers.

*Examining the Growth in Seasonal Agricultural H-2A Labor*, by research economists Marcelo Castillo, Skyler Simnitt, Gregory Astill, and Travis Minor, provides data that demonstrates the growth of labor use across all sectors. Program use varies and the report divides information by sector, geography, and business types.

The report found that nursery and greenhouse commodities, including Christmas trees, pine straw, and hemp growers used 8% of the total H-2A labor in 2019 — coming in fourth of all sectors using the program. Vegetable and melon growers were the top users with 34% of all foreign guestworkers. Fruit and tree nut growers were a close second with 32% of the labor force. Field crops, such as tobacco, seed corn, and sugarcane, used 20% of H-2A labor. Oregon and Washington have the highest H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) for 2021 in the United States at \$16.34 per hour.

Download the PDF report at [tinyurl.com/yxh66s72](https://tinyurl.com/yxh66s72)



Christmas trees are an essential part of the holiday season. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

## STUDY SUGGESTS BLEAK FUTURE FOR OREGON SNOWPACK

Oregon's greatest reservoir isn't a reservoir — it's the Cascade Range.

These high mountains, which divide the state in a north-south line, store moisture in their windward flanks, in the form of accumulated winter snows. They release it gradually throughout the spring and summer, making water available for all of Oregon's water users during the driest months of the year.

But as Oregon Public Broadcasting recently reported, scientists with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, University of California at Berkeley, project in a new study that Cascade snowpack could decline by 25% in the next 30 years, and by three quarters by century's end, if global warming continues unabated.

"This is one of the grand challenges both scientifically and societally for the Western U.S. in the coming decades," research scientist and study co-author Alan Rhoades said. "And it has large implications for water management and also just mountain ecosystems."

This and similar forecasts have long had the

attention of the Oregon Association of Nurseries and its professional and volunteer leadership, which has been proactive on the issue.

"We are well aware that water is a scarce resource of vital importance to nurseries and greenhouses," OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. "We know it has multiple users, including cities, farms and nature. This is why we've worked to foster coordination and cooperation between the various user groups, and have pushed for funding for water storage, transmission and supply management. Water is our lifeblood." Read more at [tinyurl.com/vdyp22as](https://tinyurl.com/vdyp22as)

## CHRISTMAS TREE HARVEST EXPECTED TO BE DOWN IN 2021

Christmas tree sales will be impacted by the summer heat dome, according to a report from KOIN (Channel 6, Portland, Oregon). Fraser firs suffered the most. Grand firs and noble firs sustained damage on the fresh needles on up to last year's growth. Nordmann and Turkish firs were damaged on the upper whorls and leaders. Douglas firs survived with little change. As

## 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.





a result, customers may see a little more brown on the market this year.

Tom Norby, president of the Oregon Christmas Tree Growers Association and owner of Norby's Trout Creek Tree Farm, further predicted that the holiday tree crop yields will be down 5–10% for the 2021 season.

Oregon State University researchers believe 70% of noble fir seedlings failed this year as a result of the June heat dome. Young trees had just sprouted new growth, and the needles were immediately baked.

Time will tell the full impact of the damage, as some seedlings are still trying to bounce back from the damage. Given the 8-year production cycle, Christmas tree supply shortages will likely appear in the future unless growers plant a lot more in 2022. Read the full story at [tinyurl.com/krubhbc4](https://tinyurl.com/krubhbc4)

## CALIFORNIA TO BAN GAS-POWERED LAWN EQUIPMENT

Lawn and garden equipment that runs on small off-road engines (SOREs) in California will need to be zero-emission by 2024, according to a new bill signed by that state's governor, Gavin Newsom.

The covered tools, which are used by homeowners as well as contractors, include gas-powered leaf blowers, lawn-mowers, and other equipment. The *Seattle Times* (Seattle, Washington) reported the governor signed a bill on October 9 that includes \$30 million in funding to help users with the phase out.

Landscapers and advocacy groups expressed concerns about the pace of the requirement, noting that commercial electric mowers are twice as expensive, less powerful, and don't run as long as gas-powered ones. They also say the fund-

ing amount is also not enough to ensure a smooth transition, and landscaping companies may have to pass the cost along to their customers.

"We are not trying to say we want gas-powered equipment forever. We get it, [electric is] coming," said Andrew Bray, vice president of government relations for the National Association of Landscape Professionals. "All we're asking for is a little more time."

The California Air Resources Board believes there are more than 14 million SOREs in use in residential and commercial areas. Visit [tinyurl.com/3vducma6](https://tinyurl.com/3vducma6) for more.

## TRUCK DRIVER SHORTAGE UPENDS SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES

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short by some 80,000 drivers, according to a report by *Transport Topics*.

The Biden Administration supported port authorities in Los Angeles and Long Beach in their decision to operate 24-hours-a-day/seven-days-a-week as part of an effort to expedite the unloading of supply ships waiting offshore. However, partnering businesses in the trucking industry still have a problem attracting truck drivers to move the goods inland. Freight demand for 2021 is up 30% over 2020.

Close enough to retirement age, many drivers left their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. New drivers to replace them have not emerged quickly. The work duties are also difficult, and the industry has a hard time recruiting female drivers or people with certain work/life balances that don't match the long-haul sector. Companies are reducing some schedules,

which could often ask drivers to cover 400 miles per day.

### WORKER SHORTAGES AND PANDEMIC WOES PERSIST

Growers continue to suffer from a shortage of workers and the need for skilled hands, according to a report by *The Bulletin* (Bend, Oregon). A flawed immigration system constrains the supply of workers, and the global pandemic only made the situation worse.

Ag jobs are mostly seasonal and do not provide year-round income, making them unpopular. Many companies must build a new labor force each year, according to Shay Myers of Owyhee Produce in Nyssa, Oregon.

Oregon Association of Nurseries Executive Director **Jeff Stone** told reporters

that there aren't enough local people interested in pursuing agricultural work. Growers turn to foreign guest workers to produce and harvest their crops, but younger migrants are looking for jobs in other sectors. Working with specialty crops requires skill, must be done by hand, and can't be automated.

Emergency rules for the pandemic limited the number of workers could be inside temporary housing units, so growing operations were forced to limit their workforce. "When COVID hit, it cut in half or a third how many workers you could house in a unit," Stone said. Consequently, harvests were smaller as well. Log on to [tinyurl.com/h56vpp7x](https://tinyurl.com/h56vpp7x) to read more.

### CORBAN UNIVERSITY CREATES AG SCIENCE MAJOR

Dr. Susie Nelson has been appointed



#### In Memoriam RAYMOND KLUPENGER

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is saddened to report the passing of Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame member Raymond Klupenger, retired owner of **Klupenger's Nursery and Greenhouses**, and a past president of the OAN (1972). He died Friday, October 22,



2021 at the age of 81.

His father, Joseph, was also a past OAN president (1958) and was in the initial class of Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame members in 1991, making Ray a rare second-generation president and hall of famer both when he was inducted in 2017.

A funeral Mass of Christian Burial, followed by a reception, took place October 28. Read the full obituary at [tinyurl.com/yu32pb6z](https://tinyurl.com/yu32pb6z).



#### In Memoriam LOWELL LEROY HALL

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is saddened to report the death of OAN Honorary Life member and past president Lowell Hall, owner of **Hall Nursery**. He died June 13, 2021 at the age of 88.

Lowell was born in New Rockford, North Dakota on June 13, 1932. In 1941, his parents Harold and Nellie moved to Oregon and settled in Milwaukie. He went to Milwaukie High School, where he met his future wife Donna Lea Strahm.



An FFA member with an interest in horticulture, he started a nursery business called Halls Half Acre in 1951. The Halls moved their family and business to a 30-acre operation in Hubbard when he decided to expand the business. He renamed the company Hall Nursery and specialized in azaleas.

Lowell served as president of the OAN in 1973. He was awarded an Honorary Life Membership to the association in 1989 for his distinguished service to the horticulture industry. He also received the Pacific Coast Nurseryman Outstanding Service Award in 2002.

He was laid to rest June 18 at Belle Passi Cemetery, Woodburn, Oregon. Memorial donations may be made to the Canby Senior Center or Providence Oregon City Hospital.



director of agricultural science for Corban University, according to a report from *Capital Press* (Salem, Oregon). She was a researcher and lecturer at **Oregon State University** (OSU) for the College of Agriculture Science. The private Christian institution will launch an agriculture science program in the fall of 2022, and Dr. Nelson will build the curriculum structure with an eye towards the Willamette Valley's eight unique growing regions. She will also be responsible for recruiting students into the program, using Oregon's diverse product mix as a draw to the area.

"Getting a more comprehensive group of new generation students that understand ag and can educate others is vital," Nelson says.

Dr. Nelson has a doctorate in agricultural education from OSU, with experience teaching high school- to college-level

courses. She is also a farmer, producing crops and cattle on a 40-acre family farm. Learn more at [tinyurl.com/kxzfptve](http://tinyurl.com/kxzfptve)

## GROUPS ASK EPA TO DELAY BAN ON CHLORPYRIFOS

Farm groups and pesticide makers are asking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reconsider a forthcoming federal ban on chlorpyrifos, a chemical growers say is their best weapon to protect certain crops, including Christmas trees.

The Oregon and Washington Farm Bureaus are among 82 organizations that signed comments to the EPA arguing to delay the ban until the agency responds to their concerns, the *Capital Press* newspaper (Salem, Oregon) reported.

Other groups signing the letter to the EPA include the California Farm

Bureau, Idaho-Oregon Fruit and Vegetable Association, Washington Friends of Farms and Forests, and the Washington Potato and Onion Association. The EPA will review and consider all objections and will respond to the objections, an agency spokesman told the newspaper.

The ban, announced in August, takes effect Feb. 28 and applies to all uses for growing food crops. In so doing, it jumps ahead of an Oregon Department of Agriculture plan, announced last December, to phase out the chemical for most uses by 2023. Read more at [tinyurl.com/au3yb2tn](http://tinyurl.com/au3yb2tn)

## USDA OFFERS \$1.15 BILLION FOR RURAL BROADBAND ACCESS

USDA Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced that \$1.15 billion in loans and grants will be available to



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Principal Consultant

## Northwest News

provide high-speed internet access to rural areas, according to a release from the agency ([tinyurl.com/28a4j99v](http://tinyurl.com/28a4j99v)). The funding is made available through the USDA's ReConnect Program and integrates with the Biden Administration's efforts to focus on economic growth in the middle class.

To qualify for funding, applicants must commit to providing download and upload speeds of 100 megabits per second to all locations in its suggested service area. Projects that currently serve areas with 25 megabits per second download and three megabits per second upload speeds or less will be given priority. The community's economic needs, affordability of service offered, labor standards, and tribal connections will also be considered.

For more information and announcements, visit [www.usda.gov/reconnect](http://www.usda.gov/reconnect).



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## EPA MONITORS HERBICIDES FOR COMPOST CONTAMINATION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released interim registration review decisions for **two pyridine herbicides** often used in agricultural and landscaping settings, according to a release from the agency.

Aminopyralid and picloram are used to control many broadleaf and woody weed species in pasture and rangeland. They are preferred for their ability to target certain weeds without harming native plants on conservation land. However, concerns about the herbicides remain because the active ingredients can contaminate compost or persist through the spread of manure from animals that have eaten treated materials. The chemicals can, in turn, damage residential gardens and other sites.

The interim decisions require mitigation measures to prevent the herbicides from entering compost. Most require monitoring livestock activity and monitoring grazing periods, notifying property owners of compost prohibition, and distributing educational materials. Additional information on the pyridine and pyrimidine herbicides and interim decisions are available on EPA's website at [tinyurl.com/25ejp4zk](http://tinyurl.com/25ejp4zk). ©





Mike Darcy

Head “plant nerd,” longtime speaker, host of gardening shows on radio and TV, and author of the *In the Garden* email newsletter. You can reach Mike, or subscribe to his newsletter, at [itgmikedarcy@comcast.net](mailto:itgmikedarcy@comcast.net).

# An endless source of joy

**M**AURICE HORN and Mike Smith founded **Joy Creek Nursery** in 1992 with a simple motto: “We are creating the nursery we always wanted.” Sadly, after almost 30 years, it was announced in October that, Joy Creek Nursery would close on November 7, 2021.

Much has changed since 1992 when they opened a specialty nursery in a rural community 18 miles outside of Portland. Scappoose was the designated location because Mike Smith had a 40-acre farm there and part of that farm could be used for a nursery.

The town also had a population of only about 4,000. Mike and Maurice knew that to create a successful nursery, it would require a unique appeal to attract gardeners from throughout the area. The name Joy Creek came from the name of the creek that runs through the property.

Of the 40-acre farm, the nursery occupied seven acres, including a display garden, stock fields, a retail center and growing space. Initially, Joy Creek Nursery began as a mail order nursery and then grew to include both retail and online sales, as well as a garden design and installation department.

They felt from the beginning that a display garden would be essential to show customers how their plants would grow in this climate. Maurice said that while mail order was initially the primary focus, potential customers started stopping by to see the gardens and to buy plants. Thus, the retail sales area was born, and like any newborn, it grew over the years.

The business responsibilities were divided between Maurice and Mike. Landscape and maintenance divisions were added, with separate crews for each, and these became Mike’s responsibility. Maurice oversaw retail sales, plant propagation and production, and prepared the contents of the annual catalog.

## Mail order to destination nursery

In those early days, a printed catalog was the primary way that nurseries were able to sell their plants through mail order. A printed catalog was often the only source for customers to learn what plants were available. This was especially true for a nursery like Joy Creek that was introducing new plants each year.

The 70-plus page catalog descriptions were so complete and well written that they not only enticed gardeners to purchase these new plants, but even read like an encyclopedia of plants. In fact, the arrival of the Joy Creek catalog soon became a much-anticipated spring tradition. Today, with the internet and extensive websites for nurseries, catalogs are on the wane.

Joy Creek Nursery soon became a destination specialty nursery for many gardeners from Portland and the surrounding areas. Maurice was forever on the lookout for new plants to add to the inventory. His insatiable quest for introducing gardeners to new plants resulted in tremendous growth of the catalog and customer base. Maurice not only introduced new plants, but he also re-introduced many older plants that were often difficult to find.

The four-acre display garden became

an essential element to showcase the new plants. Customers could actually see plants growing in a natural setting — they no longer had to rely on a description from a catalog or plant label.

In some ways, the display garden became a laboratory of plants and how they performed. There were failures and successes, and gardeners could observe both. Sometimes leaves would scorch from the sun on plants that were marketed as being able to take full sun. Other times, shade plants would be reaching out for more sun. It was all there on display for the public to see.

As the nursery grew and the plant selection became broader, Maurice began to group plants into collections of the same genus and soon had collections of hydrangeas, penstemons, clematis, hardy fuchsias, and ornamental grasses.

In view of the closing of the nursery, Maurice is concerned that they have not found buyers for the collections, and he is afraid some of the varieties may be lost. The collections were frequently featured in his many presentations. Maurice was often a presenter at the Northwest Flower & Garden Show in Seattle, as well as the Yard, Garden & Patio Show in Portland. He was a sought-after speaker for many garden organizations and was a presenter at the inaugural Plant Nerd Night in 2001. He continued to be a frequent repeat presenter at that event.

Operating a nursery or garden center, or a combination of the two, is hard work. Ask any nursery person and they will attest to this. There are so many ➤



Top: Joy Creek Nursery served customers from Scappoose, Oregon. Bottom: Hydrangeas in early November in the display garden at Joy Creek Nursery. PHOTOS BY RICH BAER



## What I'm Hearing

**Left:** A bed of *Rudbeckia* in early November in the display garden at Joy Creek Nursery.

**Right:** *Penstemon* 'Wine Kissed' in early November in the display garden at Joy Creek Nursery. PHOTOS BY RICH BAER.



different factors that are beyond their control. Maurice told me that they have had to deal with their well running dry twice, ice storms, snow, freezing winds and temperatures, the feeding of elk and deer, the intense heat of this past summer, lack of rain, and the economics of the time. If all of that was not sufficient to dampen one's dreams, then there was COVID-19.

### A time of transition

After working 12 months a year, seven days a week and all of the elements they had to deal with, Mike and Maurice, both 72 years old, felt it was time to make some lifestyle changes. This was sad news for the gardening community but certainly understandable.

The loss of Joy Creek Nursery creates a large void for gardeners, but there are still some excellent mainstream garden centers,

as well as other outstanding specialty nurseries. These include Gossler Farms Nursery in Springfield, Sebright Gardens in Salem, Dancing Oaks Nursery in Monmouth, Xera Plants in Portland, Cistus Nursery on Sauvie Island and Far Reaches Farm in Port Townsend, Washington.

Maurice once said, "Plants are my life." Now he has time to breathe new life into the plants in his own garden. Best wishes to

Maurice and Mike on this new adventure in their lives and in all their future endeavors. They and Joy Creek will be missed, but hopefully they will still be active in our local horticulture community.

Nurseries may go away, but the people behind them are never forgotten. Maurice and Mike will not be allowed to disappear from the memories and thoughts of local gardeners. ☺



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**Top:** Eason Horticultural Resources' all-female office staff assembled at the Kentucky office for three days of training. PHOTO COURTESY OF EASON HORTICULTURAL RESOURCES

**Bottom:** Everde Growers was awarded a County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) award by the Florida Farm Bureau Federation for their environmental stewardship efforts. PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERDE GROWERS



✓ The HR Issue: □

# Competing for key personnel

Nurseries dangle remote work, added benefits and work-life flexibility to attract top talent

BY TRACY ILENE MILLER

**T**HE NURSERY INDUSTRY has struggled with labor shortages for years. It started with field, farm, and greenhouse workers, and more recently has grown to include the key roles of propagators, growers, sales representatives, and managers.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, horticulture and agriculture job openings have been harder to fill. Interest in technology and high-profile cannabis growing, urbanization, shifts in labor out of agriculture into higher-paying jobs.

All of these factors and more have impacted availability. Of course, there is no overlooking the pandemic, and how it has provided an additional layer of difficulty.

Even so, through these challenges, companies are making shifts in how they recruit and attract talent for key roles — managers, growers, sales and office staff — that are necessary to a company's success. In part two, we will look at retention practices — ways that companies hold onto talent once they've signed on.

## Develop a multi-location strategy

In all the ways that COVID-19 has upended the work world for better or worse since early 2020, the shift to distributed office work is distinct. Every business is different, but on a mass scale, the trend is clear. By April 2020, 62% of employed Americans worked at home, according to research firm McKinsey & Company.

Through video conferencing and other technologies, teamwork has been empowered to thrive across multiple locations, including home offices. By all examinations, that shift to remote work is settling in permanently in large industries across the economy.

"Before March 2020, no one would think we could work in this sector and work from home," said Terri Cook, senior vice president of human resources, **Everde Growers**, a Texas-based nursery company with additional farms in Oregon, California and Florida. "Most of the nursery positions are back, but we have learned in the last two years how to operate not in an office. For everyone, for office >>



## Competing for key personnel

Steve Maddox, Melanie Byrne, David Toohey, Don Gamsjager and Walter Bissex pose in front of one of the daylily beds at Pioneer Gardens near Deerfield, Massachusetts. PHOTO COURTESY OF EASON HORTICULTURAL RESOURCES



staff, where we can do it, we have gone almost completely work-at-home.”

Although sales may seem the logical area to work remotely, not all sales managers are in agreement. Some say it’s imperative their sales team work together, in an office culture. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Nevertheless, for sales and other key positions, organizations of all stripes are reimagining mentorship, productivity, and other processes to identify which positions still require in-person, hybrid, or fully remote personnel. For positions or activities that can operate semi-remotely or fully remote, organizations are finding ways to bring those people to the office on a schedule, but otherwise allowing them to work from home, thus expanding the geographical range of potential candidates.

“Because of COVID, we have loosened our requirement of being in the office, and it has opened the talent pool,” said Mike Pezzillo, CEO and vice president at **Eason Horticultural Resources** (Covington, Kentucky), a consultant and sales agent to retail garden center growers, wholesale greenhouse growers, nurserymen, and landscapers. “We have developed the mindset that we can work from anywhere. A lot of our new hires are remote.”

### Reach beyond horticulture

Labor shortages and COVID-19 have had the effect of pushing the industry to increasingly reach outside nursery and horticulture career streams. Engaging people, by offering learning opportunities and experiential work experiences, is the direction companies are moving in to fulfill open slots.

“We like to hire people with industry experience, but we have had success with people who don’t (have it),” Pezzillo said.

“It’s not a deal breaker anymore.”

Organizations are opening up their hiring practices to attract individuals who might not be the “perfect fit,” instead opting to establish training programs, many times with individuals who have transferable skills.

### Evaluate benefits packages

In a tight labor market, a generous employee benefits package is one way talent measures interest in a position.

“We have to be as competitive as we can in a fairly competitive environment” said Jonathan Pedersen, CEO and president of **Monrovia Nursery Co.**, a California-based grower with additional locations in Oregon, Georgia and Connecticut. Competitive with benefits such as 401(k), health insurance (supported at 70% by Monrovia), life insurance, paid time off, and extended sick pay due to COVID.

Reviewing benefits packages at least annually, and using market data to evaluate those packages, can help companies stay competitive. “We look at that every year,” said Pamela Evans, human resources manager at the **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.** nursery, a tree grower with 3,000 acres of growing space at three Oregon locations. “We are trying to embellish benefits, to see what that means, not only for recruitment, but to make them look good for employees who have been here for a long time.”

### Offer flexibility

According to Everde’s Cook, employees are interested in compensation that goes beyond a simple paycheck. “Make sure your benefits are in line, and the job has flexibility,” she said. “It’s the whole work-life balance situation.”

Multiple national surveys of representa-

tive samples of workers echo each other:

Workers are willing to take fewer benefits for greater flexible work arrangements, and want it spelled out in the offer letter.

“Anymore, it isn’t always about money,” Pedersen said. “We see people come in with college degrees making sure the job hours are conducive to weekends off; that they are not working weekends year-round.”

Horticulture has a season when the expectation, and the necessity, is “all hands on deck.” However, especially for younger people on a career path, employees want to be compensated well, have good benefits and work in a place that acknowledges the importance of work-life balance.

### Make job descriptions stand out

“We are always addressing that in HR, looking at how a job description is written, where it is posted, who the audience is,” Pedersen said. “That is critical today, especially if you are posting on a recruitment website and you are trying to attract people for the first time in horticulture.”

Job descriptions are the first-level introduction to a company. They need to include the essentials of benefits, responsibilities and duties. But what else? A compelling job description in today’s market has points of distinctions that help your company stand out. For instance, does the job description answer these questions:

- What’s attractive about the company culture?
- What are the opportunities for remote working?
- Where is there flexibility in the job?
- What is the potential for upward movement, or even lateral movement?
- Where are there opportunities for growth, collaboration or leadership?



• Outside of the skills required of them, what skills will the candidate gain in this position?

- Where is technology employed?

That last question might seem unusual, but the use of and access to technology in the workplace is highly valued by the next generation of workers.

When J. Frank Schmidt was recruiting for an inventory position, it was a selling point that they used a particular program that candidates had some experience with in college. "That excited them," Evans said.

Technology is a big part of staying current, for meeting an organization's business goals. It is also a key attractant to millennials and members of Generation Z (aka Zoomers), who view technology not only as a perk but necessary to maximizing their personal ambitions, according to a Gallup poll.

### Diversify recruiting strategies

Even the best and experienced HR professionals are having difficulty recruiting talent, forcing them to get creative and broaden their recruitment process to attract and find new hires.

Eason has been doing more posting in trade magazines and on social media. "We've gotten good results, as opposed to using job-listing services like Indeed and Monster, where we haven't had much success," Pezzillo said.

LinkedIn is one of the most prominent social media platforms for job searching. Increasingly, students and recent graduates are being coached to develop their profiles. The trend puts 51% of college graduates on the platform, according to LinkedIn. Add to that Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and even Snapchat, and social media is the necessary recruitment tool of the 2020s. Studies showing approximately 70–80% of millennials use social media to find jobs. Implementing a social media strategy might help you attract talent.

For the talent you've already attracted, your existing employee base, see how they can help. Everde has been using more headhunters to fill horticultural positions, as well as turning to its employees. "When jobs are posted nationally, we post internally, and try to hire from within," she said. As well, >>

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## Competing for key personnel

existing employees can be great contributors to finding new employees, especially when they feel valued.

Strategies for using employees may include an employee referral bonus, such as a gift card or extra time off, and creating employee outreach committees for brainstorming recruitment activities.

As COVID wanes, another strategy is to begin to re-partner with schools, but not only those with a horticulture program. Attending college fairs, reaching out to career counselors in parallel fields and targeting key academic departments, business schools, and management training programs for presentations can broaden your networks of outreach.

### Tapping the Great Resignation

The nursery industry certainly has had its challenges with labor shortages, and the

pandemic has been a further disruption. The interference may also be an opportunity. The Great Resignation, as it is being called, is the record-breaking instance of 4.3 million Americans — 2.9% of the entire workforce — quitting their jobs in August, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

On a national level, pundits and economists keep their daily analyses fresh and rolling trying to pinpoint the reasons these workers are no-shows. The causes range from worker revolt to massive early retirements, lack of child care and health safety concerns. Added to that is the savings low- to middle-income Americans managed from receiving pandemic stimulus money: Cash balances are up 70% for low-income households and 50% for middle-income households, according to a JP Morgan Chase Institute report.

Predictions are that once those cash

stores are depleted, Americans will be pushed back to work. This may take up to 12 months for that to happen, the exact timeframe at least 55% of people surveyed said they will be looking for new employment, according to Bankrate's annual job-seeker survey.

Another 12 months may offer the nursery industry an opportunity to refine and expand recruitment strategies of key personnel keeping in mind what job seekers continually repeat, in survey after survey, as the primary motivators for picking their next job: "remote work, career advancement and flexibility," as well as a commitment to health and work-life balance. ☺

*Tracy Ilene Miller is a freelance writer and editor who covers several topics, including gardening. She can be reached at [tmillerwriter@gmail.com](mailto:tmillerwriter@gmail.com).*

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"Grimming" is the tedious but important combined task of grading and trimming rooted cuttings freshly dug from the propagation beds. From left, Soledad Lopez leads the way in employee longevity with 22 years, followed by Veronica Lopez with nearly 15 years and Elidia Melesio with 3.5 years at J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

✓ The HR Issue: ■ ■

# Now hiring — hopefully

The lingering pandemic finds nurseries getting creative to fill vacancies

BY JON BELL

**J**ONATHAN PEDERSEN, chief executive officer (CEO) and president at **Monrovia Nursery Co.** (Azusa, California), has watched as the labor market in the nursery industry has changed over the years. But this summer, with the global pandemic still overshadowing everyday life, vaccine mandates throwing in wrenches here and there, and extended unemployment benefits keeping many workers at home rather than at work, some truly startling signs of change showed up.

While on a mountain biking trip in Utah, Pedersen passed a McDonald's that was hiring at above minimum wage and offering health benefits and a 401(k). And in Oregon, a McDonald's in McMinnville got some press when, desperate for workers, it advertised jobs starting at \$15 an hour for 14- and 15-year-olds.

"When you see the local McDonald's in McMinnville hiring teenagers for wages like that, you think, 'Huh, something's changed,'" said Petersen, whose company includes growing operations in California, Oregon, Connecticut and Georgia. "It's a real challenge

out there. The demand for labor all over the place is way up."

Not that the nursery industry is necessarily competing with fast-food companies for workers. But it is finding itself in an incredibly tight labor market, and that's tough for an industry that has almost always battled workforce constraints. The situation has been compounded even more through an increase in demand for plants as people have turned to landscaping and gardening while they've been staying closer to home during the pandemic.

As a result, nurseries are having to make workforce adjustments to keep up with the new demand. They're moving crews around, paying more and even automating, all in an effort to keep plants going into and coming out of the ground.

"Like most any business I know of, we have struggled with having enough help to get our work done," said Shane Brockshus, chief operating officer (COO) for **Bailey Nurseries**, the St. Paul, Minnesota-based grower with additional growing operations in Oregon, Washington, Georgia and Illinois. "Navigating the





## Now hiring – hopefully

extremes of our weather in the last year — fires last September, ice in February, drought and extreme heat this summer — has not helped the situation. I will say in challenging times you really see the strength of your core staff shine. That core group of ours, and their dedication, has been so impressive to me.”

### Pandemic problems

The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on almost all employment in the U.S., with record job losses at the national level. Here in Oregon, nonfarm employment dropped by 285,200 jobs or 14.5% in March and April of 2020 as the pandemic hit, according to the Oregon Employment Department. In just those two months, one out of every seven jobs in Oregon was either temporarily or permanently lost.

In 2019, the nursery industry in Oregon employed nearly 9,200 workers and had an annual payroll of almost \$348 million. When the pandemic hit, nurseries didn’t necessarily see mass layoffs and furloughs the way some industries, like hospitality and restaurants, did. But there was a period of uncertainty when it wasn’t clear whether nurseries, garden centers and other related businesses would be allowed to operate during the early months of COVID — the prime springtime months for the industry. The U.S.-Mexico border also closed, making it harder for laborers with H-2A visas to get into the country when their help was needed most.

But after the initial dust settled, many states, including Oregon, declared that garden centers and nurseries were essential businesses and allowed them to operate. That was great news for nurseries, but as demand from homebound landscapers and gardeners grew, so too did the labor market tighten.

“With the pandemic, we also had quite a few seasonal workers who decided to go back to Mexico and who haven’t come back,” Pedersen said.

### Hiring struggle

Pam Evans, human resources manager for wholesale grower **J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.** (Boring, Oregon), said the company

**Top:** Experienced crew members on the J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. container loading dock load Rivers Purple Beech. They include (from left and facing the camera), Jose Morales (six years), Carlos Sanchez (7 years) and Uber Aguilar (6 years); Luis Gonzalez is pushing the hand truck.

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

**Bottom:** J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. relies on skilled staff for field production.

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.



had about 400 employees in mid-September. It was set to ramp up to about 500 a few weeks after that, but Evans said the company wasn’t expecting that to be an easy lift.

“We are struggling to hire,” she said. “Once we got over the hump of COVID, we hoped it would get better, but it really hasn’t improved.”

Evans said staff is short at all their farms, including additional locations in Canby and in Milton-Freewater. The company hasn’t lost a significant number of employees during the pandemic — steady demand from customers allowed the company to keep people on the payroll without disruption — but there have been some

retirements and some employees who have moved away. Finding their replacements is proving difficult.

“It’s so different from back when I started,” Evans said. “We constantly had a stream of people coming into HR back then. Now, it’s been months since we’ve hired anyone.”

Like J. Frank Schmidt, **Alpha Nursery** near Salem hasn’t lost a ton of folks during the pandemic. But what it has seen, according to assistant manager Josh Zielinski, is a bit more inconsistency in terms of attendance. That’s likely due to the fact that workers, like everyone else, have been trying to juggle daycare, schooling and other







J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. crew members work in the field. PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.

family responsibilities in an environment of ongoing uncertainty.

“Attendance is the bigger issue for us,” Zielinski said. “It’s nothing blatant or malicious. Kids were out of school. People need to leave to take care of things. We understand that and we have done our best to accommodate it, but it’s challenging.”

Beyond the pandemic’s impacts on the nursery labor market, other factors have been at play as well. Pedersen said competition for workers has risen in Oregon in recent years as sectors like cannabis and wine have boomed. The aging workforce phenomenon continues to cause challenges,

as do immigration issues and even the current supply chain delays that have impacted the entire world.

For example, Pedersen says a shortage of plastic pots is hampering all U.S. growers at present. Pots that were supposed to arrive at Monrovia in late August had yet to show by the end of September because the ship first got stuck in the Panama Canal and then had to make an extended stop in Mexico. While Monrovia was waiting for its pots, it moved crews elsewhere to tend to other work. When the pots do arrive, the workers will have to be moved back to unload and catch up.

“The supply channel issues are rampant, and they do affect labor,” Pedersen says.

### The solution spectrum

Nurseries are taking a multi-pronged approach to help address their workforce concerns. That starts with offering solid wage and benefits packages. Some nurseries have turned to hiring or referral bonuses. At J. Frank Schmidt, Evans says the nursery has been moving schedules around to try and even out the workload; it’s also shifted employees to different work locations with the same intent in mind.

Nurseries have also turned to local colleges and universities to try and develop new workers through internship programs and other opportunities. Those efforts have been successful to some degree, but many schools have cut back their horticulture >>

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## Now hiring – hopefully

J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co staff harvest trees in the spring. PHOTO COURTESY OF J. FRANK SCHMIDT & SON CO.



programs in recent years, which reduces the talent pool even more.

Automation continues to play a larger role in nurseries as well. That's likely to continue, especially if the labor crunch lingers.

"Automation is no longer just about payback via efficiencies, but facing the reality that we may not have people there to do the work otherwise," Brockshus said.

Longer term, the labor issue is going to need some bigger-picture fixes to smooth things out. For starters, guest worker programs need to be improved in order to make them more effective. Increased housing options for workers in rural areas could also help, as could shifting to a model that finds nurseries hiring fewer seasonal workers and more full-time ones.

"We need to be an attractive place to work," Pedersen said, "and I would way prefer to pay a living wage and pay them to work year-round so that they can have a steady career here at Monrovia."

Brockshus also said that creating a workplace culture that is attractive to employees can go a long way in encouraging people to come and work for a nursery — and to stick around.

"I think that culture is very important, especially in a competitive environment," he said. "Being a family business, like so many in our industry, does bring some important values that matter. I think our culture is why we have so many 20-, 30-, even 40-year employees that have gone through cycles of good and hard years with the business." ☺

*Jon Bell is an Oregon freelance journalist who writes about everything from Mt. Hood and craft beer to real estate and the great outdoors. His website is [www.jbellink.com](http://www.jbellink.com).*





# The changing employment law rulebook

Oregon employers face new regulations, and it's not just about COVID-19

BY PETER S. HICKS

**A**LTHOUGH IT MAY NOT seem like it, not everything over the past year was related to COVID-19. In 2021, the Oregon legislature and state agencies were also busy focusing on employee rights and workplace protections, enacting significant legislation and regulations directly impacting employers.

As we move into 2022, employers need to also be aware of the new requirements and regulations, and take the steps necessary to avoid potential liability.

## Significant legislation

**Presumption of retaliation** — Senate Bill 483 creates a presumption that any action taken against an employee or prospective employee within 60 days of the employee reporting or opposing an OSHA-Oregon violation is retaliatory or discriminatory. Although the presumption is rebuttable, the employer must

now prove that there was legitimate non-discriminatory or non-retaliatory reason for the employment action. Employers must therefore be careful to document employment actions and interactions with employees to successfully rebut the presumption and establish the underlying basis for employment decisions.

**Accommodation of child care needs** — Under ORS 653.450, employees, at either the time of hire or at any time during employment, may identify any limitations or changes in their availability for work schedules and request not to be scheduled for shifts during certain times or at certain locations. Senate Bill 716 amends ORS 653.450 to specifically include child care needs as a limitation of change that may require consideration by the employer. Although ORS 653.450(2) provides that there is no obligation to grant the request, employers need to give requests careful consideration and avoid any conduct that could be



construed as retaliatory.

**Family leave eligibility during a public health emergency** — House Bill 2474 expands eligibility for the Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) leave during a public health emergency to employees working 30 days or more. This significantly shortens the eligibility requirements under normal circumstances which provide that OFLA leave is generally available only when an employee has worked for the employer for at least 180 days.

**Driver's license requirements** — Senate Bill 569 makes it an unlawful employment practice to require a valid driver's license as a condition of employment. Employers may require a driver's license if driving is an essential function of the job. However, as of January 1, 2022, employers must accept forms of identification other than a driver's license to verify

identity or for hiring purposes.


**CROWN Act** — House Bill 2935 clarifies that racial discrimination includes discrimination based on physical characteristics associated with race such as hairstyles, hair texture, hair type, and natural hair. Employers must also take care to be sure that a dress code or policy does not have a disproportionate impact on members of a protected class.

### OSHA-Oregon heat rules

On July 8, 2021, OSHA-Oregon passed temporary rules addressing exposure to high ambient temperatures (OAR 437-002-0155 and OAR 437-004-1130). The current rules are in effect for 180 days from enactment, and OSHA-Oregon is currently working on permanent rules likely to be in place before the temporary rules expire.

Under the rules, employers are now required to take certain action when the worksite ambient heat index temperature equals or exceeds 80 F, including establishing shade areas, providing ample opportunities to drink water, and ensuring an adequate water supply (32 ounces per hour) for each employee. When the heat index exceeds 90 F, employees must take a minimum 10-minute preventative cool down rest period in the shade at least every two hours. Breaks may be provided with required meal or rest periods, but must be compensated.


Employers are also required to observe and communicate with employees working alone, create a mandatory buddy system, or implement other means of observation or communication. One or more employees must also be designated and equipped at each worksite to call for

  
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emergency medical services (EMS) and allow other employees to call for EMS.

Finally, employees reasonably expected to be exposed to high heat conditions must be trained on heat-related illness and prevention. New employees must be trained and acclimatized before beginning work. An effective emergency medical plan must also be established for when the ambient heat index exceeds 90 F, including how to respond to heat-related illness, how to implement first aid measures, and how emergency medical services will be provided.

#### OSHA-Oregon wildfire smoke rules

OSHA-Oregon has also established rules regarding wildfire smoke and air quality issues. These rules apply when the worksite Air Quality Index (AQI) is at or above 101, but do not apply to workplaces and operations in enclosed structures

where air is filtered by a mechanical ventilation system or enclosed vehicles where air is filtered by a cabin air filter.

When the AQI is at or above 101, employers are required to notify employees and make N95 or KN95 masks available for use upon request. When the AQI is at 201 or above, all employees are required to wear N95 or KN95 masks. Employees may also be moved to enclosed buildings or vehicles where the air can be adequately filtered, relocated to another outdoor location, or moved to another work schedule. When the AQI is 501 or over, all employees are required to wear N95 masks.

Employees that may be exposed to an AQI of 101 or higher must be trained regarding the potential health effects of wildfire smoke and how to identify the symptoms of exposure. Training must also include

how to get the current and forecasted AQI level and emergency response procedures.

Employers should review their current handbooks, policies, and procedures to ensure compliance with the newly enacted legislation. Given that we are also moving into the cooler fall and winter season, employers should use this time to put adequate procedures and training in place for 2022 to satisfy the OSHA-Oregon smoke and heat requirements.

Jordan Ramis continuously monitors legislation impacting businesses and is prepared to provide assistance, interpretation, and guidance that may be helpful for implementation of the rules. ©

*Peter Hicks is an employment and commercial litigation attorney at Jordan Ramis PC. He can be reached at 541-797-2079 or peter.hicks@jordanramis.com.*



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## EMPLOYMENT

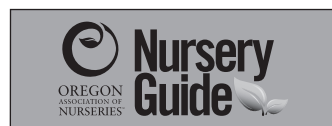
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## EMPLOYMENT

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## EMPLOYMENT

### ASSISTANT NURSERY MANAGER

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- Must have a strong knowledge of the container growing process from start to finish; including but not limited to propagation, fertility, soils, pest management, timing of pruning, spacing, shifting, etc.
- Passionate about Horticulture
- Understand production scheduling
- Experienced in leading, motivating, managing, and delegating team.
- Work well under pressure, managing multiple priorities.
- Have a sense of urgency while maintaining high quality standards.
- Computer Skills; Grow Point (or similar system) Excel are a plus.
- Positive Attitude, enthusiastic.
- BS in Horticulture or Agriculture and/or 10 years Nursery experience.

We are hoping to find a candidate whose ultimate goal would be that of assuming the General Manager position for our Nursery. Please submit cover letter and resume to [bob@lovejoynursery.com](mailto:bob@lovejoynursery.com).

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## EMPLOYMENT

### ASSISTANT FARM MANAGER

Moana Nursery in Canby Oregon is looking for a full-time Assistant Nursery Manager, who will work directly with the General Manager. They will work in all areas of the 193 acre wholesale nursery, which has both container yard and field production. We have a parent company in Reno Nevada with three retail stores and a commercial/residential landscape division.

**Duties:** • Production planning, inventory • Herbicide applications in container yard and fields • Customer orders • Fleet maintenance decisions • Budgeting of annual expenses • Shipping • Supply purchasing.

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# Digger

## EMPLOYMENT

### HERBACEOUS GROWER

DCA Outdoor, Inc. is a national, vertically integrated green industry organization with a goal to streamline the production and distribution of landscape products. With locations throughout the Midwest and Oregon, we are expanding our team with a newly created position that will work at our Cornelius and Banks, Oregon locations.

We are looking for an experienced plant grower who has advanced herbaceous plant knowledge, excels with systems and processes, and can get things done. If you are someone who flourishes in a fast-paced environment, pays attention to the details, and has strong follow up skills, this could be the job for you! **KEY Responsibilities:**

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2. Inventory Control: Ensure the herbaceous growing area maintains an accurate inventory through cycle counts and inventory audits, as necessary. Train area crew leaders to use growing space appropriately based on the production plan and plant cultural needs.
3. Plant Health: Work closely with the IPM manager and production manager to ensure the best pest and disease control plan is in place.
4. Production Plan: Work closely with herbaceous planning coordinator and production manager to implement production plan according to sales plan and production schedules.
5. Training: Develop, schedule and conduct training for operational processes as deemed necessary.

**Minimum Qualifications:**

- One year of Green Industry Operation related experience.
- One year of management experience
- Advance knowledge of herbaceous plant production methods and techniques

**Application requirements:**  
To submit your application for this position, please go to [www.dcaoutdoor.com/careers](http://www.dcaoutdoor.com/careers). Completion of Culture Index survey. Without survey completion, your application will not be considered. Please copy and paste the following into your browser in order to complete the survey: <https://www.cindexinc.com/c/A550CC>.

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## EMPLOYMENT

### NURSERY MANAGER - GREENER PASTURE FARMS

We are located in Forest Grove, Oregon where we buy, grow and sell woody ornamentals plants. We are looking for a Nursery manager. Responsibilities include; pest management, weed management, crew management, inventory, and plant health. The job requires someone who is bilingual, has plant ID knowledge, hard worker. Starting salary is based on candidates experience. 4660 SW Plumlee Rd Forest Grove, OR 97116 5038669369 [duncan@gpfarms.net](mailto:duncan@gpfarms.net)

### HERBACEOUS PLANNER

DCA Outdoor, Inc. is a national, vertically integrated green industry organization with a goal to streamline the production and distribution of landscape products. Working remotely from anywhere in the U.S. and reporting to the Director of Planning, we are looking for an experienced nursery/horticulture planner who is an independent future-thinker that can get things done. If you are someone who likes to take charge, pays attention to the details, and can work well under pressure this could be the job for you! **KEY Responsibilities:** 1. Planning — Master plan development, supply demand balancing, inventory management and control. 2. Scheduling — Monitor workflow to provide for the most efficient operations to ensure the highest possible quality and yield of the crop. 3. Purchasing — serve as DCA brand ambassador with all vendors, oversee and ensure processes are followed to maintain the accuracy of the production inventory. 4. Analysis and Reporting — Provide market analysis, generate timely royalty reports for all Licensors, report trends, and make appropriate adjustments in the production plan

**Minimum Qualifications:** • Experience in managing manufacturing processes, productivity, and efficiency measurements • At least two years horticultural experience or a degree in horticulture or related field in lieu of experience • Experience using MRP / ERP systems • 3 years of experience in Scheduling and/or Inventory Control • Travel up to 25% of the time

To submit your application for this position, please go to [www.dcaoutdoor.com/careers](http://www.dcaoutdoor.com/careers). Completion of Culture Index survey. Without survey completion, your application will not be considered. Please copy and paste the following into your browser in order to complete the survey: <https://go.apply.ci/s/A550CC0000>

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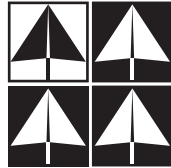
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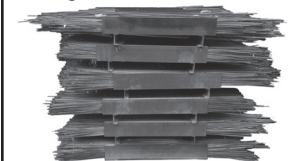
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# GROWING KNOWLEDGE

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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## Know thy enemy

Expert insect pest identification resources are available in Oregon

BY CHRIS HEDSTROM

**T**HE FOUNDATIONS OF a good integrated pest management (IPM) plan are scouting, monitoring and identification — knowing where and when you have pests, and knowing exactly who those pests are.

Scouting and monitoring techniques are straightforward. One can use tools like sticky cards, traps, bait plants, or simply observing plants regularly to find all kinds of critters that might be chewing holes in leaves and sucking the sap out of the stems.

Identifying and knowing exactly what insects have been caught ... well, that can be a lot more difficult. Nonetheless, accurate identification of the pest is critical to knowing the types of IPM strategies to choose.

Not all insects are created equally when it comes to what they like to eat, how much damage they can cause, or even which diseases they can spread across a nursery. Knowing the types of insects and even the exact species can provide insight into behavior, host range, and other characteristics that can be used to create a comprehensive IPM plan.

There are tens of thousands of insect species in Oregon, but only a small percentage are considered pests. But let's be honest: a lot of them look alike, and while there are some common offenders, growers are going to come across others that are totally unfamiliar. They might not have the expertise or the time to guess what these mystery insects might be.

When running into unknown insects, it's best to utilize the resources available in Oregon for accurate insect identification to help make the right pest management decision. The resources listed below are available for insect pest identification services to all nursery professionals in Oregon.



**Figure 3:** The Oregon State Arthropod Collection estimates they have 9,000 drawers of this type containing some 3,000,000 specimens. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

### Oregon State University's Insect ID Clinic:

<https://bpp.oregonstate.edu/plant-clinic/insect-id-clinic>

The Insect ID Clinic is housed within the Plant Clinic in the Botany and Plant Pathology Department at Oregon State University (OSU). The clinic provides insect, arachnid, and other invertebrate identification for any members of the public or industry. The Insect ID Clinic is led by expert entomologist Bill Gerth, who has been with the clinic for nine years (Figure 1). He also works with OSU's Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Services to identify aquatic invertebrates.

Requests are handled year-round for nursery workers, farmers, homeowners, and the generally curious. Most inquiries come from Oregon, but they also get requests from Washington and





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California (plus the occasional specimen from Ohio — home of a different “OSU”).

Requests for identification can be submitted in two ways: photos can be uploaded to the clinic through their website, or physical specimens can also be dropped off by appointment at Cordley Hall on the OSU campus in Corvallis.

In the event that the ID needs to be done to a species level or is not a commonly found pest, a physical specimen could be necessary to make the identification. Turnaround times are usually within a few days, but can take up to two weeks for diagnostic identifications, especially during the busy summer season. Generally, there is no fee for most requests, but if many specimens are submitted, or services are needed as part of a project, a fee may be charged. For some of the pests identified, they may also be able to offer management advice.

When submitting a sample, be sure to



**Figure 1:** Entomologist Bill Gerth examines an insect specimen for OSU's Insect ID Clinic, where members of the public can submit photos or specimens for identification. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY INSECT CLINIC

follow the packaging tips on their website to make sure the specimens are shipped safely and in the best possible condition for identification. In addition to invertebrates, the OSU Plant Clinic is also available to diagnose plant diseases.

**Oregon State Arthropod Collection:**  
<https://osac.oregonstate.edu/>

The Oregon State Arthropod Collection is the largest collection of insects in the Pacific Northwest, with over three million specimens collected over the last 150 years

from all over the world (Figures 2 and 3). The museum, overseen by Dr. David Maddison (director) and Dr. Chris Marshall (curator), supports entomological research by providing an extensive reference collection to aid with species identification through comparison and maintains a historical record of where and when specimens have been collected. This specimen collection is utilized frequently by the entomologists at OSU's Insect ID Clinic and ODA's IPPM programs (described below), in addition to researchers worldwide working on insect taxonomy and pest management research.

The Arthropod Collection is normally housed in Cordley Hall on the OSU Campus but is currently at a temporary location at OSU's Coast Range Building during the multi-year Cordley Hall Remodel project. The museum returns to Cordley Hall next year and expects to reopen to the public in early 2023. ➤➤



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## Know thy enemy

**Figure 2:** Millions of preserved insect specimens collected over the last 150 years are carefully labeled, sorted and stored in specialized insect drawers in the Oregon State Arthropod Collection. The specimens support both regional and global entomological research. PHOTO BY CHRIS HEDSTROM

### Oregon Department of Agriculture's IPPM Lab

[www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/IPPM/InsectsSpiders/Pages/IdentifyInsect.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/IPPM/InsectsSpiders/Pages/IdentifyInsect.aspx)

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Insect Pest Prevention and Management (IPPM) program works to protect Oregon's agriculture, horticulture, environment, and quality of life from damaging insect pests and enhance or maintain the value of our agricultural and horticultural products.

The program is internationally recognized for expertise in the identification of wood boring insects and has acted as a western Regional Identification Center for woodborers since 2008 to provide identification services to agencies across the nation. In 2020, IPPM transitioned to a National Identification Center for Invertebrates, providing identification services for most types of invertebrates targeted by invasive species surveys.

IPPM works closely with ODA's Nursery and Christmas Tree program to track critical and invasive pests that affect shipments of agricultural products domestically and internationally. Therefore, the most efficient method for nurseries to get identifications is to work with your nursery inspector (for nurseries that ship or receive material in or out of Oregon).

The IPPM lab provides identification for anyone in the state. Inquiries can be submitted through ODA's Identify-an-Insect portal on their website (see link above). Turnaround times vary but users can expect at least a follow-up in about 24 hours. Physical specimens can be mailed or dropped off by appointment. There is currently no fee for submissions.

### Other resources:

Pacific Northwest handbooks:  
[PNWHandbooks.org](http://PNWHandbooks.org)

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) Handbooks are an incredible source of information about insect, weed, and disease management throughout the region. These guides are reviewed with input from



researchers and OSU Extension personnel and published annually. Although they are not designed specifically for pest identification, they can help you to narrow down potential pest species and offer management strategies for key pests in many agricultural industries, including nursery.

**OSU Extension offices and publications:**  
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/find-us>;  
<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/>

Local OSU Extension agents are always available to help with insect ID questions (as well as any other plant health inquiries). OSU Extension is, in part, a huge network of plant health experts, many of which are trained entomologists or have years of experience fielding inquiries about plant pests and diseases. OSU Extension has also updated some recent ID guides, including the *Pocket Guide to Common Natural Enemies of Nursery Crops and Garden Pests in the Pacific Northwest* (Publication EC 1613, <https://beav.es/Uoq>).

*Pacific Northwest Insects*, Merrill Petersen, published by Seattle Audubon

This book, published in 2018, is a wonderfully comprehensive guide to regional insects, with images of some common and

not-so-common invertebrates seen in our region. While not specifically designed to be a pest management tool, it's an accessible resource and reference tool to aid in identification, with tons of photos and information about insect families, characteristics and habitat.

### Planning to submitting a photo for ID?

Follow these tips to help get the best image and make it easy on the identifiers:

**Focus:** Sharp photos are needed showing the details needed for an accurate ID.

If you are having trouble focusing, try to get more light in the image or use the flash.

**Get close:** Try to get as close as you can while still being in focus. Images where the insect is tiny in the frame might not have enough detail for a good ID.

**Slow it down:** For live insects, chilling the bug in a fridge or freezer for a little while will slow it down, allowing you to get a better photo. Leaving it in a freezer will kill it slowly, leaving it in good condition (put a paper towel in the container with the insect to keep things dry). Avoid crushing the insect to kill them, as it can damage them and make identification difficult.

**Multiple photos:** The top and bottom of the insect may be helpful. Submit photos from a few angles if possible.

Both the Insect ID Clinic and ODA have detailed instructions on their websites about how to prepare and send physical specimens. Be sure to read them carefully to learn about the best ways to preserve specimens for shipping. ©

*Chris Hedstrom is the IPM outreach and communications coordinator for the Oregon IPM Center at Oregon State University. He can be contacted at [chris.hedstrom@oregonstate.edu](mailto:chris.hedstrom@oregonstate.edu).*





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# La familia de viveros e invernaderos

**The word “familia” has a long history of referring to close relations or connections.**

In Spanish, “la familia” variously refers in English to one’s family, circle of friends and coworkers, teammates, or other close communities or organizations. So, as many of you will know, the Spanish headline above refers to “the family of nurseries and greenhouses.”

Much has been made over the course of the year about the deeply rooted connection that agriculture has with our largely Hispanic workforce. To a person in the industry, the bond of growing the highest quality plants in the world is matched by shared experience and family. Despite the best efforts of politicians, agriculture is one body — one family.

## Christmas time in the Stone house

The Christmas holiday is a precious one in my home. My wife’s phenomenal cooking blends traditional holiday food such as turkey, mashed potatoes and a ridiculous amount of gravy with tailored dishes such as lasagna, tamales, and mac and cheese. And homemade rolls! These golden-brown delights are tossed like footballs to one end of the table to the other.

The strong scent of a cut Christmas tree, my adult girls decorating like an artist on a blank canvas, barely passable wrapped gifts (guess what I do), and the strangest of traditions: gravy shots (choose a shot glass and down goes the turkey gravy — scalding your esophagus is optional).

The wonderful thing about the holidays is that tradition is what you make it.

## Eshraghi tour with holiday wreaths

Getting out and touring our member organizations is something that puts some spring in my step. Over the last two months, Eshraghi Nursery has been the focus of several legislative tours with local state legislators, the state treasurer, and the labor commissioner.

Hearing directly from owner Linda Eshraghi, manager Chris Lee and longtime workers paints an all-too-familiar picture of

demanding work, quality craftsmanship and a family atmosphere. Part of the tour of the nursery operation, this time of year, is the process of creating Christmas and holiday wreaths. The aroma alone is compelling — and the quality material that goes to our retail garden centers cannot be matched.

Linda describes it best. After learning from other nursery operations, she started her own business. The Farmington Gardens website tells the story. Her first funds came from wholesaling Christmas wreaths, which soon led to a humble local plant booth. “It just looked like a tiny roadside stand. It was beyond simple,” she recalls.

Not long after, in 1989, Eshraghi Nursery was formed, and several years after, in 1994, Farmington Gardens was established as a permanent retail outlet for the plants and trees she was growing.

Today, the looks of awe by elected officials as they peek into the process and production of a holiday staple was hard to miss. Who gets the credit for success of the growing and retail stories? Linda is quick to give it to her employees. And the stories — mostly translated from Spanish — attest how a family operation is inclusive and rewards hard work.

## Convention as a family event

As December takes hold, the warmth (literally) of our recent OAN Convention still is felt. Not only was this the first trip to Maui for my wife and me, but the trip was defined by the nursery families coming together. Kids and pools go together like egg-nog and fireplaces.

Yes, we celebrated our volunteer leaders and handed out awards to deserving members, including lifetime memberships to Terry Thornton, Kathy LeCompte, Doug Zielinski, and Tom Fessler. Mark Bigej was honored with the Outstanding Service Award, Ben Verhoeven as the Emerging Leader, and the Farwest Show as the Committee of the Year.

Convention is for the members, and they should be celebrated. The membership got a deep dive into the Maui culture with the staff of the Grand Wailea, and we were warmly greeted by Maui’s mayor, Mike Victorino.



Jeff Stone  
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

But what made 2021 so special — pure and simple — was the next generation of family members running on the beach, exploring the pool and showing us old people how to do the rope swing. We had Fesslers, Staehelys, Robinsons, Nelsons (both Hans Nelson and Bountiful Farms varieties) and others blending together as the sun-soaked parents and grandparents looked on.

My failure at the rope swing went viral and was an unmitigated disaster. Jennifer and I sat by the pool’s “lazy river” and waved to the throngs of kids floating by. Laughter and smiles were not in short supply.

Whether on fertile Willamette Valley soil or the tropical sands of Hawaii, the nursery family was together. Stories of when Tom Fessler took the reigns over 25 years ago — handing his newborn son Noah to the Bigej family — was matched by the Staehely children snagging their uncle Jim Simmitt and myself to go down the slides.

We will be back in four years, but this is the plug to plan for Convention in 2022. We will be in the Northwest next time, but the fun and family atmosphere travels wherever you go.

## Counting blessings

There is no doubt that the last two years has been a rollercoaster ride with uncertainty of markets due to COVID and supply chain disruptions. You have been resilient to make it through wildfires, ice storms and a heat dome. For every challenge is a blessing. You have each other and that makes any year worth celebrating.

On behalf of the OAN and your hard-working staff and board of directors, I wish you a blessed holiday season and may we look forward to 2022. ©





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