



OREGON

IS Nursery Country

STORIES BY CURT KIPP

THE YEAR 2020 will always be remembered as the year when everything lurched to a sudden halt for everyone. We all remember the arrival of COVID-19. First, the NBA canceled games. That was the first noticeable sign. Then so many other daily activities normally taken for granted fell like dominoes. Many states imposed orders to limit person-to-person exposure, affecting every aspect of daily life.

This happened in March 2020 — right in the middle of nursery shipping season. It was expected to be a complete disaster for nurseries.

Except that's not what happened.

After only brief pauses, nurseries got right back to business shipping product, but a funny thing happened as the season went on. They kept shipping. And shipping. And shipping.

People stuck at home wanted plants. Gardening was something they could still do, and they rediscovered their love affair with working in the soil. Nurseries were more than happy to reciprocate. They did everything they could to give the

people what they wanted.

Behind the scenes, nursery leaders worked very hard to ensure continued market and shipping access for nurseries and their delivery trucks, and the leading nursery state of Oregon was a national leader in facilitating that conversation.

When Oregon's agricultural sales figures by commodity for 2020 were released this past October, it wasn't surprising to see nurseries at the top of the list again. Nursery and greenhouse products are nearly always the state's top commodity, ahead of cattle, wheat and everything else. But the figure this time was eye-catching — nurseries and greenhouses in the state had racked up \$1.2 billion in sales. It was an all-time record.

The most recent USDA Census of Horticultural Specialties, based on data gathered in 2019, shows Oregon to be the No. 3 state in nursery stock sold, behind the much larger states of California and Florida, but it is No. 1 in several key categories. These include deciduous shade trees, deciduous flower- 



\$1.2 BILLION
in sales**

Source: *U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Horticultural Specialties, 2020
** Oregon Department of Agriculture, 2019

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#1 Oregon is the nation's top seller of **DECIDUOUS SHADE TREES** (17% of the market)

#1 Oregon is the nation's top seller of **DECIDUOUS FLOWERING TREES** (14%)

#1 Oregon is the nation's top seller of **CONIFEROUS EVERGREENS** (18.6%)

#3 Oregon is the nation's third-largest seller of **BROADLEAF EVERGREENS AND DECIDUOUS SHRUBS**

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Horticultural Specialties, 2019

ing trees and coniferous evergreens. Oregon is No. 2 in fruit and nut plants and No. 3 in broadleaf evergreens, deciduous shrubs, ornamental grasses, bareroot herbaceous perennial plants, cacti/succulents, and a category called “other woody ornamentals and vines.” Now that’s some variety.

If it’s a nursery or greenhouse product, you name it, it is likely grown in Oregon, and probably in considerable quantity.

Certain plants are favorites. Plants selling more than \$10 million worth out of Oregon include boxwoods, rhododendrons, spruces, arborvitae, junipers,

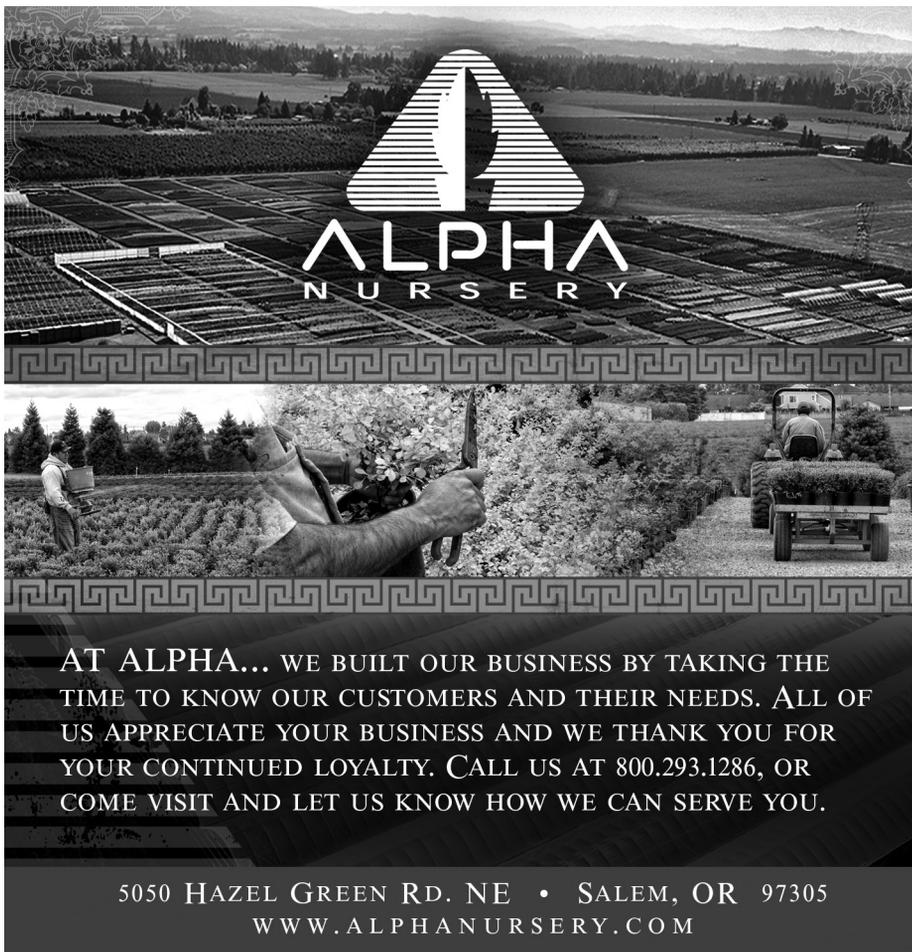
pinus, Japanese maples, red maples, maple (other) and hydrangeas.

The plants that Oregon is No. 1 in are many. Boxwoods, *Rhododendron*, *Pieris*, cotoneaster, spruce, arborvitae, cedar, fir, hydrangea, barberry, spirea, lilac, weigela, peony, lupine and columbine are some of these.

Most of the material comes from a five-county area surrounding Portland and Salem, in the Willamette Valley. Growers enjoy a long growing season, a mild climate, winter dormancy to help woody material, a dependable (but threatened)

water supply, and some of the world’s best topsoil, and this environment has not only nurtured great plants, but the outstanding growers who send them to market.

In this, the annual Oregon Nursery Country issue of *Digger*, we’ll meet some of those growers and learn about the perseverance that has helped them excel. As always, the variety of plants that Oregon offers is shown in these pages. You’ll find all the plants on NurseryGuide.com. Just do a search there by common or botanical name, and you’ll see who grows it. Enjoy your journey with us into Nursery Country. ☺



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