

Digger

FEBRUARY 2022

INSPIRING the art of gardening

Retail Outlook 2022

- Capitalizing on interest
- Tapping color trends
- Building customer loyalty
- Filling a need for hard goods
- The science of pollinator attraction

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February 2022 Vol. 66 No. 2

Digger



Retail Outlook 2022

The public interest in gardening continues to grow. How can the green industry capitalize?

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Mike Darcy shares his thoughts about the coming spring season for garden centers.

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Color trend watchers say green is the "in" color for decoration, design and fashion, which has implications for garden retailers.

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Printed in Oregon on domestic recycled paper when available.

On the cover: Paint with the colors of nature. ILLUSTRATION BY BILL GOLOSKI **On this page:** Left: Garland Nursery entices customers through year round programs. PHOTO COURTESY OF GARLAND NURSERY Right: Cassidy Turner poses for a photo with a garden store cat at Dennis' 7 Dees in Seaside. The store offers a mix of hard goods for creative shoppers. PHOTO BY EMILY LINDBLOM

Nursery Guide

The Oregon Association of Nurseries' Nursery Guide is the most comprehensive wholesale buyers' guide in the industry. Find thousands of plant species and cultivars, and hundreds of services and supplies for the horticulture industry.

Search online, order your hard copy from the Oregon Association of Nurseries, or pick it up at Cultivate'22, MANTS, ProGreen, CanWest or the Farwest Show.



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Josh Robinson

It's about relationships

As we turn the page to February, there are a flurry of things that come to mind.

Digging, inventory, and orders have been finalized — and now, we gear up for the craziness of shipping. We use the month of February to knock the rust off and prepare for peak shipping to come.

Coming off a busy trade show month of January, we all have additional items requested and added to orders. Calls go out to double-check ship dates, and before we know it, we are off to the races. We get the order pulled and loaded on the truck, then off to its destination. Phew! We all breathe a collective sigh of relief and on to the next one.

It's a whirlwind these days, with all the additional issues associated with logistics and freight. But not so fast.

Yes, the transaction has taken place and the order has been grown and shipped. So, what do we do from there? Are we doing things after the fact to differentiate our service from others? This is a monumental opportunity to cultivate a lasting relationship with our customers.

There are two paths to take: transactional or relational.

The transactional approach solely relies on delivering the product and getting paid for it. An offer is made, and a sale is closed.

The relational approach is based on building mutually beneficial partnerships. It offers both sides a tremendous amount of value to benefit from. This is a partnership between two companies, where both sides are invested in learning about each other's needs and providing a pathway to a solution.

Through establishing these relationships, you create trust, credibility and loyalty. Companies that embody relational transactions are where I want to spend my money. Know who the first one I thought of was? Our very own nursery association.

Do you know what the mission of the OAN is? Here it is: "The Oregon Association of Nurseries is the community dedicated to the long-term success, profitability, and excellence of Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry."

There is no doubt that that is a partnership I want to be a part of. Hence, why I am here. I can't think of a better example of a mutually beneficial partnership than what the OAN is to its members and what its members are to the association. A perfect embodiment of relational business.

What's the longest-running customer you have? Five, 10, 30, 50 years? The OAN has been doing it with us since 1933. We have all been successful because of the legacy of working together and sharing information.

Are we treating our customers like the OAN treats its customers? We may run into limited resources in being as fully effective as the OAN. I know we all do this to an extent — it's another ingredient of what sets Oregon nurseries apart. What if we could be a resource to our customers on a level closer to what the OAN offers all of us?

I love this organization and the industry it represents. I would enjoy hearing about the unique ways you connect with customers. Feel free to reach out to me any time. ☺



Calendar

Get the word out about your event! Email details to 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 continue into 2022. Sign up early to guarantee your seat, as registrations will only be accepted up until two days before each class is scheduled to take place. Successful completion results in certification that is good for two years. Four 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. The class on 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.

FEBRUARY 1-3

GLOBAL GARDEN RETAIL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE & SHOW

The inaugural show for retail horticulture industry professionals in all time zones will gather to discuss major topics, share their experiences and see examples of each other's work over three days. The event is free to attend and will feature fast-paced online sessions and a virtual trade show that will be open throughout February. Sid Raisch, president and CEO of Bower & Branch, and Australia-based horticultural consultant John Stanley serve as co-chairs of the new event. They have stated it will be the largest audience ever to be in an industry-wide conference trade show. Each of the daily conference sessions consists of three 20-minute sessions, which can be accessed on-demand, as well as several discussion rooms and Q&A sessions. Attendee registration, sponsor and exhibitor information is available at gardenretailconference.com.

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 for more information.

FEBRUARY 2-23

PLAN FOR YOUR LAND

Marion Soil and Water Conservation District is hosting a free four-part series of courses for small farms planning a conservation plan for their land. Experts will discuss



FEBRUARY 24-27

PORTLAND SPRING HOME & GARDEN SHOW

Just in time for spring gardening season, the Portland Spring Home & Garden Show will return as an in-person event at the Portland Expo Center, 2060 N. Marine Drive, Portland. It's produced by the Home Builders of Metro Portland and sponsored in part by the Oregon Association of Nurseries — which produces Plant Something Oregon. Attendees will enjoy a wide variety of local vendors, live and in-person, to find ideas and inspiration for their home, garden and outdoor living spaces. The booths will include remodelers, landscapers and landscape suppliers, gardeners, spa companies, tile and flooring installers, roofers, custom fence builders, mattress and bedding suppliers, furniture shops, home décor, local artisans, and more. Best of all, you can pick up your new Retail Nurseries & Garden Centers Road Map, courtesy of OAN and Plant Something Oregon. For more information on show offerings, log on to www.homeshowpdx.com

protecting water, improving soil health, increasing wildlife habitats and potential project funding. The first of four courses, Conservation Planning & Soils, starts on February 2. Water, Vegetation & Project Permitting will be held February 9, and Streamsides, Woodlands & Wildfire is on February 16. The final course, Working Lands, Wildlife Habitat & Action Plan, will be February 23. The courses will be conducted from 5-8 p.m. at Mt. Angel Community Festhalle. Sign up at tinyurl.com/2s4e2wp6.

POSTPONED

NOR CAL LANDSCAPE & NURSERY SHOW

Visit at www.norcaltradeshow.org for rescheduled dates

APRIL 1-2

HORTLANDIA

The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon sponsors this annual plant and art sale at The Westside Commons (formerly the Washington County Fairgrounds), NE 34th Ave and Cornell Road, in Hillsboro, Oregon. Vendors from all over the Northwest will provide the latest plant introductions and alongside old favorites.

Handmade, one-of-a-kind garden art made from materials like metal, wood, glass, ceramic, fabric and stone will be on display throughout the event. Admission is free. There will not be any live presentations from the Grow With Us lecture series, but online offerings through the Gen(i)us Program and Garden Stories will be delivered throughout spring. For more information, log on to hardyplantsociety.org

APRIL 30 AND MAY 1, 2022

CLACKAMAS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS SPRING GARDEN FAIR

Nearly 100 vendors will be participating at the Spring Garden Fair, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Sunday at the Clackamas County Event Center in Canby. It will include free pH soil testing, new plant introductions featuring a silent auction, the Garden Fair raffle, free plant check, plant taxi's where students tow your purchases for tips, and a potting station to purchase pots and plant them up with garden soil at the fair. A full food court is available and the Portland Iris Society has been invited to hold their spring show on Sunday. Visit SpringGardenFair.org for all the details. ☺



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.

Growers seek to diversify Christmas tree species

Oregon State University researchers and independent farmers have consistently tried to improve Christmas tree seed options for the industry, according to a report from *Capital Press* (Salem, Oregon). Instead of pulling seeds from the wild, groups have established orchards dedicated to breeding the best specimens of Christmas tree genetics.

Growers traditionally focus on growing Noble and Douglas firs for the holiday season harvest. Nearly 1.7 million Noble firs were sold last year for \$65 million, and 1.4 million Douglas firs sold for \$29 million. As of late, growers are diversifying to Nordmann and Turkish firs for their foliage and grower-friendly behavior. Around 250,000 of the two species were grown by Oregon farmers last year and generated \$9 million in sales. Trojan firs an emerging Christmas tree option, but it will take a decade before they can be comprehensively evaluated.

Consumers like the newer Black Sea species because they hold on to their needles for a long time, but the trees themselves don't grow as quickly as native Oregon ones. They also bud early, and new shoots could be susceptible to frost. However, Kathy LeCompte of **Brooks Tree Farm** (Brooks, Oregon) told the newspaper she expects that Nordmann and Turkish firs will overtake Noble fir production on her operation next year. Nordmann and Turkish firs are more tolerant of heat and soil moisture, whereas Noble firs require higher elevations that don't always fit the parameters of her customers' needs. Read the full article at tinyurl.com/45ch2u6n.



Dr. Surendra Dara has been named the new director of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

OSU APPOINTS NWREC DIRECTOR

Surendra Dara has been appointed director of the **Oregon State University** (OSU) North Willamette Research and Extension Center located in Aurora, Oregon, according to a release from the university. He replaces Mike Bondi, who retired after 44 years with OSU.

"We are excited to have Surendra join the team and take on the leadership role at one of the most agriculturally diverse experiment stations in the state," said Alan Sams, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and director of the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station. "His expertise in innovative agricultural production and his passion for connecting with people from all backgrounds is critical to a region that relies on agricultural production for its economic and social vitality."

Dara previously served as a University of California Cooperative Extension advisor in San Luis Obispo. He is an expert in integrated pest management, microbial control, biostimulants and biological soil amendments. Dara has also been recognized for his development of innovative solutions in sustainable crop production and protection.

Read more at tinyurl.com/2p85c6vu.

STUDY: PROPOSED OVERTIME LAW WOULD HURT FARMS, WORKERS

A Coalition of Agricultural Organizations, including the Oregon Farm Bureau and the Oregon Association of Nurseries, has released an economic study predicting negative impacts if the Oregon Legislature approves a proposal to require overtime pay for agricultural workers when they exceed 40 hours in a week.

The study by Portland-based Highland Economics LLC says that such a change would hurt Oregon's family farms, as well as the farmworkers who depend on them, by reducing the extra hours these workers depend on for extra pay during harvest and other critical times.

"Our members recognize the essential value of farmworkers," OAN Executive Director **Jeff Stone** stated. "Oregon has some of the best benefits in the country, and employers still look for ways to provide higher compensation, cash bonuses, housing, and paid time off during the off-season. But the economic reality is that our farmers and ranchers are price takers. If this legislation is passed as contemplated in other states, farm employers will have to make adjustments that will ultimately result in lost jobs and reduced wages for workers." 

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. We are reporting on the most current information as of press time, but please check online for the most up-to-date information.



The Oregon Legislature considered passing an overtime pay requirement in 2021, only to have the bill die in committee. Legislative leaders including Senate President Peter Courtney, who plans to retire at the end of the year, said they expect such a bill to re-emerge in the 2022 session.

NURSERY PROFITS REMAIN STRONG AS INFLATION SETS IN

Northwest Farm Credit Services has released their latest Nursery Greenhouse Market Snapshot for the fourth quarter of 2021. The institution reports nursery and greenhouse sales increased last year, along with orders for 2022.

Demand remains strong for greenhouse and nursery products, as the pandemic caused many people to move out of urban areas and build homes with gardens. Wildfires also increased the demand for tree seedlings and native plants. Consumer inflation rates of 6.8% are a

cause for concern, and new home construction has passed its peak. The average buyer will have less discretionary income in the absence of wage growth.

High labor costs compounded with the increasing costs of fertilizers, soil, pots, plastic, transportation will add to businesses expenses, but overall profits for the industry remain strong through 2022. It is likely that the overtime exemption for paying agriculture workers overtime pay will come to a head in Oregon, and producers will have navigate to change to their labor model. Download a PDF of the report at tinyurl.com/4bfcd77v.

COMMISSION APPROVES CLIMATE PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Oregon Environmental Quality Commission approved a package of regulations on December 16 that are intended to combat climate change, the *Portland Tribune* newspaper reported (tinyurl.com/3syb8kph).

Gov. Kate Brown had ordered state agencies to come up with such a plan using their existing authority. This happened after legislation to do it failed. Democrats had the votes, but not the quorum, needed to pass the bill, after Republicans walked out of the session. Without legislation, the state was unable to implement a cap-and-trade system similar to Washington and California, so the agencies had to find other ways.

According to the *Tribune*, “The plan combines traditional regulation of 13 large stationary sources, such as manufacturing plants, with a system of credits that suppliers of gasoline, diesel and other fossil fuels can spend on projects to reduce greenhouse gases — particularly in low-income and minority neighborhoods and rural areas that face greater negative environmental effects.”

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) submitted an extensive, 10-page document responding to the proposal.

In Memoriam



DAVID G. ADAMS

The Oregon Association of Nurseries is saddened to report the passing of Dave Adams, a retired former extension agent for Oregon State University who was an honorary lifetime member of OAN and a member of the Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame.

He passed away January 4, 2022, at an area hospital, from complications sustained after a bad fall and a hip replacement surgery. He was 88.

Mr. Adams was born in 1933 in Buffalo, New York to Albert and Edith Adams. His early years were difficult, as he attended 13 different high schools, but he graduated on time. In the post-Depression years, his father was a traveling construction worker, going wherever the work required. After graduation, Dave enlisted in the U.S. Army and served as a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant.

After completing his Army service, he met his future wife, Mary Lou, and they were married on December 24, 1956. He then enrolled at Michigan State University, earning a double master's degree in agriculture and horticulture. The couple



moved to South Dakota, and Dave taught at South Dakota State University for seven years. He then accepted an employment offer at Oregon State University. The couple moved to Corvallis, Oregon where Dave earned his doctorate in agriculture and worked for the OSU Extension Service.

As an OSU Extension agent, Adams collaborated with coworkers to start the Ornamentals Northwest Seminars. These were incorporated into the Farwest Show seminars, which he managed for several years while serving on the Farwest Show Committee. In 1998, he was inducted into the Oregon Nurseries' Hall of Fame. Later in his career, he worked and volunteered with numerous organizations. He took more than 70 trips to 16 different countries, where he worked with nursery people in various countries and passed on his knowledge of agriculture.

Dave enjoyed spending time with his family, working on his farm, camping and fly fishing. He was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and had a deep passion for genealogy. He was able to trace his family lineage back to the mid-18th century. At the time of his death, Dave and Mary Lou had just celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary.

Dave is survived by his wife, Mary Lou, four children, 10 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held January 15 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1285 Elm St., Canby, Oregon.



Pyrus calleryana is an invasive species in Pennsylvania.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

“Setting limits on greenhouse gas emissions without consideration of non-regulatory incentives for green industries, such as nurseries, to provide sequestration and regulated community innovation will set a dynamic of uncharted energy provision, cost inflation that directly harms traded sector industries, and uses the state as a ‘hammer’ to force change,” the document stated. “The agricultural, business, transportation and energy sectors believe that climate change is real. However, the OAN fears that implemen-

tation of this rule will create harm when investment and innovation should be the primary tool to transition to a clean mix of fuel and energy types.” Read the full report at tinyurl.com/ay4mybky.

PENNSYLVANIA BEGINS PHASING OUT BRADFORD PEAR

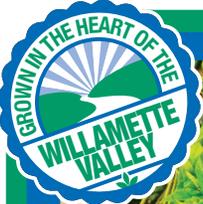
Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), also known as Bradford pear, has been banned from sale or cultivation in Pennsylvania

effective February 9, according to a release from the state’s Department of Agriculture. The tree has been added to the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed list as a Class B weed.

As part of the first phase of the ban, nurseries and landscaping businesses will receive a notice from the department to decrease their inventory of Callery pear trees next month. By February 2023, any business still selling them will be issued a warning. A “stop sale” and “destruction order” will be issued if they are still selling or distributing Callery pears by February 2024.

Breeders who own the rights to varieties can apply for an exemption if they can prove their trees are sterile. Read more at tinyurl.com/spztje.

Officials in Ohio banned the sale of the tree by 2023. South Carolina has followed suit with a deadline of October 1, 2024. >>




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DRAINAGE CHANNEL MAINTENANCE ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Maintenance of agricultural drainage channels is critical for much of Oregon agriculture. The Agricultural Drainage Channel Maintenance (ADCM) program regulates maintenance of agricultural drainage channels to protect aquatic resources. Landowners and water districts that want to maintain their channels can request a notice from the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). For eligible channels, a notice is a user-friendly, fast, and free alternative to the permits from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL). Once a notice is valid, it is good for five years.

Eligible channels include ditches and streams that have been historically maintained and provided drainage in the past five years; dry at the time of work; and

not designated essential salmonid habitat.

Landowners and water districts must have a valid notice or DSL permit prior to maintaining most channels. Contact agchannelmaintenance@oda.oregon.gov for more information.

OREGON SNOWPACK REACHES 126% OF NORMAL

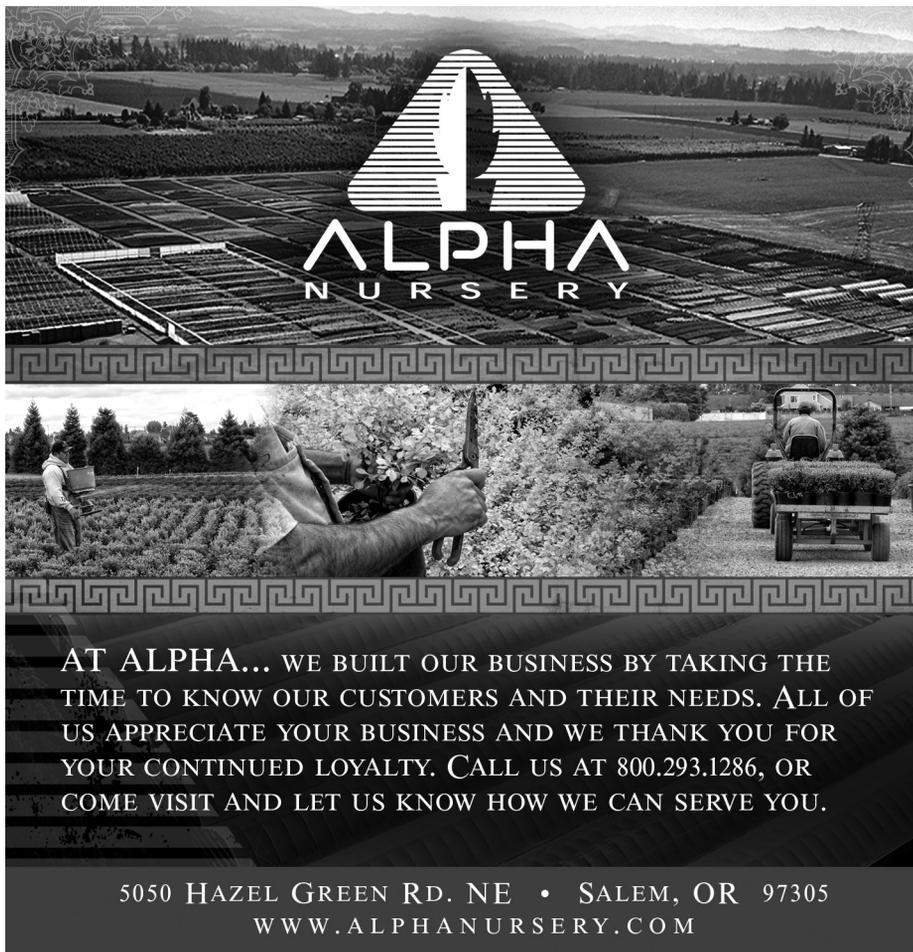
Snow continues to appear on Oregon's forecasts as statewide snowpack levels reached 126% of normal in January, according to a report from the *Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon). Wintry weather will help alleviate some of the state's historic drought conditions for areas west of the Cascades, but that's not the case for central and eastern Oregon. More precipitation is needed through February to offset two years of low water tables.

"While the snowpack looks good now, we still do have a long way to go to reach normal peak levels," Oregon State Climatologist Larry O'Neill said. "In a lot of snow measuring stations, we're only 30 to 35 percent of the way there and are still wary of a prolonged dry or warm stretch that has occurred in recent years."

Visit tinyurl.com/2p8fwdhc to read the full story.

Announcements EL-LISSY RESIGNS FROM USDA PPQ PROGRAM

Osama El-Lissy has resigned from his position as Deputy Administrator of the USDA Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, according to a release from the agency. He served in the critical position that deals with pest and disease



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The OAN awarded an Honorary Life membership to 1998 Past President Terry Thornton (center) during a gathering at the OAN office.

PHOTO BY BILL GOLOSKI

regulations on a federal level.

“Osama was open, honest and solution-oriented,” OAN Executive Director **Jeff Stone** said. “He was a critical part of our association’s success in mediating national regulations and managing the pests we encounter. For his ongoing efforts, he was presented with an OAN Friends of Nurseries award in 2020.”

His resignation letter reviewed the great accomplishments the PPQ has made since 2016, including a specific list of plant pests and diseases the agency’s efforts have eradicated. Under his tenure, the agency protected Florida’s multi-billion-dollar nursery industry and many of its valuable fruit and vegetable crops from the giant African snail. During a plant health emergency response in 2020, they eliminated *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 pathogen (also known as brown rot or bacterial wilt on germanium, potato



and tomato plants) from 650 facilities in 44 States with the help of state partners. In 2016, PPQ eliminated European grapevine moth from the United States, protecting California’s annual \$4 billion grape crop and its \$57 billion economic impact statewide. Read the letter at tinyurl.com/78yrd93s.

THORNTON PRESENTED WITH HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

A special reception to present **Terry Thornton** with his OAN Honorary Life membership was held December 16, at the OAN offices in Wilsonville. Thornton is one of four newly minted Honorary Life ➤



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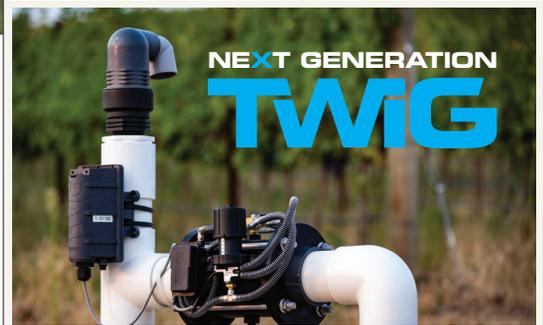


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Northwest News

members this year, but was unable to attend the OAN Convention on the island of Maui, Hawaii, where they were recognized.

Thornton served as OAN President in 1998, becoming one of the rare associate members elected to the role. He has served the association in many capacities at the chapter and board level. Thornton was also awarded the Distinguished Member of the Horticultural Trades in 1991.

Starting as a shelf stocker at Teufel Nursery, Thornton 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. He reminisced about the relationships he made with members during his tenure with the association and his long career delivering materials to many destinations when accepting the award.

The other new Honorary Life members recognized this year were Doug Zielinski (Alpha Nursery), Kathy LeCompte (Brooks Tree Farm) and Tom Fessler (Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc.), all past presidents like Thornton.

BAILEY HIRES TRADE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Jasmina Dolce has been hired for a newly created trade communications specialist for **Bailey**, according to a release from the company. She will write and share stories about the company, Endless Summer® Hydrangeas, First Editions® Shrubs & Trees, and Easy Elegance® Roses with consumer brand licensees, growers, garden centers and other trade audiences.

With more than 15 years of industry experience with the media side of horticulture, Dolce previously served in editorial roles for *Greenhouse Product News* and *Lawn & Garden Retailer*. She has delivered relevant and engaging content in partnership with internal and external marketing teams to develop promotional campaigns. She has a bachelor's degree in communications with a focus on public relations and advertising from DePaul University. ©



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Emerging with confidence

AS WE ENTER year three with COVID-19 and its variants raging around us, it appears that most garden centers have made the necessary adaptations to stay open.

Initially there was much confusion, and rightly so because we have never been in a situation like this. Many garden centers were temporarily closed to make the necessary adjustments that would allow them to legally open for business. Customers also had to change the way in which they shopped due to social distancing, masks, and in many cases, reduced business hours.

Some garden events and meetings are becoming physical events once more. While the majority are still on Zoom, it is refreshing to see live meetings and events occurring. The Portland Rose Society has returned to having in-person meetings at Oaks Park, and the Northwest Flower and Garden Festival in Seattle is scheduled for February, along with the Portland Home & Garden Show at the end of the month. All of these events are indoors and there are certain protocols to be followed, but they are resuming.

Sadly, Plant Nerd Night has been canceled for the second straight year. Since it is held indoors and involves people being in such close proximity to one another, social distancing seemed to be impossible to achieve. Hopefully, the 20th anniversary

of Plant Nerd Night can happen next year. Two large outdoor events are still scheduled: Hortlandia, the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon's plant and garden art sale, is scheduled for April 1 and 2 at the Hillsboro Westside Commons, formerly known as Washington County Fairgrounds. After that, the Clackamas County Master Gardeners' Spring Garden Fair in Canby will be held April 30 and May 1.

Buying habits have changed, too

Whether we like it or not, it seems that we have all made the necessary changes. For the most part, garden centers are open for regular hours and customers — with social distancing requirements — can browse as they normally would. What has changed, and sometimes in a phenomenal way, are the categories of plants that have risen in popularity. As we enter 2022, these are some of the expectations that are predicted.

House plants will continue to be a high-demand commodity. Many garden center personnel have told me that when they thought the demand had peaked, they were wrong because it continued upward. Even high prices for specialty specimens were not a deterrent. With more people working from home and continuing to do so, the house plant surge should continue.

There also has been an increase in the



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 itmikedarcy@comcast.net.

demand for roses. Perhaps gardeners are remembering gardens from their past, and in most cases, there were always roses present.

Another factor in the demand for roses is that many of the newer introductions have been developed for disease resistance. Roses lost some of their luster with their tendency to develop diseases, and now that issue has been diminished.

To encourage early sales and to provide an extra customer service bonus, some garden centers are displaying on their websites the roses they will be offering and allowing customers to order ahead. This provides the garden center with some early season income, while allowing the customer to be assured of getting the rose that they want.

Eating up the edibles

Vegetable seeds continue to be in high demand. When COVID-19 and the lockdown first appeared, the increased sales of vegetable seeds took us all by surprise. This continued, even more so, the following year and there is no sign that it is diminishing. Gardeners, and even non-gardeners, are concerned about the food supply because there is no sign that is getting better. For many, this was their first time with a vegetable garden, and even with some failures, the process was usually positive.

Not only were vegetable seeds a popular item, but vegetable starts were equally high in demand. Not everyone has the patience to start seeds, especially those that need to be started indoors, such as tomatoes. It >>>



The floribunda rose 'Lavaglut' is considered to be a disease resistant rose.

PHOTO BY RICH BAER

What I'm Hearing

Roses are surging in popularity, with people perhaps remembering rose gardens their parents had. This floribunda selection, *Rosa* 'Lavaglut', was introduced in 1978.

PHOTO BY RICH BAER.



was often difficult to keep tomato starts in stock because of the high demand. Heirloom tomato plants were sought after, and it was almost as though the word "heirloom" would take people back in time to less stressful periods.

New varieties were also popular, especially those developed by Oregon State University (OSU) because they were perceived, and often rightly so, to be developed for our climate and would thus thrive here. Signage is very helpful in letting customers know which plants were created by OSU, because it adds extra confidence to their selection for being successful in their gardening experience.

Color, wildlife and stress relief

Plants with color provided a bright spot in these challenging times. Garden centers soon learned that instead of just

having display pots of color to show off the plants, many customers wanted to buy the display "as is." It was easier to buy the complete pot with plants rather than to make it up themselves. With apartment and condominium dwellers, space is often limited and having an instant display of color is just what is needed.

Plants to attract wildlife were also sought after. The wildlife is usually what I call the "3-Bs": birds (especially hummingbirds), bees, and butterflies. Purchases of these plants often need the assistance of a salesperson to be sure the customer is getting the right mix of plants for their particular area. However, these plants are easy to sell

and will usually provide the customers with their desired results fairly quickly.

For example, salvia is often in bud or bloom at the time of purchase, and the flowers will readily attract hummingbirds and bees, indicating to the customers that they have made the right selection.

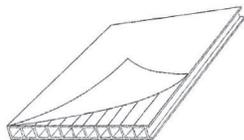
Garden centers can start this year on a very optimistic note. It has been noted that plants provide individuals with a purpose and can often be a stress reliever. Many individuals have found that tending to a garden of any type, big or small, definitely provides physical and mental relief. Thus, individuals are excited to get back to gardening, and/or bringing plants inside to adorn their home.

This means that garden centers have carte blanche to go ahead and create attractive, inventive displays that will invite, stimulate, excite and lure customers to come in to visit. ☺

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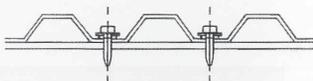
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Right: Garden Fever, a retailer based in Portland, Oregon, offers a bright lime green *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Wilma Goldcrest' for the holiday season. PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN FEVER

Left: Containers of *Astilbe* 'Boogie Woogie', *Hosta* 'Guacamole', and Japanese painted fern, *Vinca* 'Illumination' are created at Smith Gardens. PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH GARDENS



A green renewal

Trend watchers say green is the hot color, which has implications for garden retailers

BY KYM POKORNY

WHETHER MUTED OR BRIGHT, foliage or flower, color drives the nursery industry, and many trend settlers say green is the Color of the Year for 2022.

The first announcement came at last summer's Cultivate'21 trade show from Garden Media Group, a marketing firm that specializes in the green industry. After a year of research, the Pennsylvania company led the way with a proclamation that green — healthy green clover — is the hottest, trendiest color for the green industry.

The large paint companies, traditional predictors of Color of the Year, followed by selecting green in late summer and fall.

The best known expert on color, Pantone, went its own way and declared periwinkle blue the color of the year, but the

vast majority of authorities chose green in a variety of shades. Behr chose Breezeway, a sea glass green; Sherwin-Williams selected gray-green Evergreen Fog; Better Homes & Gardens picked Laurel Leaf, a dusty eucalyptus green; and Benjamin Moore decided on soft, silvery October Mist.

The trend is clear. No matter what shade of green, it's hot this year.

"After our research, we really narrowed in on green," said Katie Dubow, creative director of Garden Media. "We could see the one thread running through is nature. It signifies renewal and rebirth. That's where we are right now. It's also that so much of the past 18 months people have been immersing themselves in nature. They're spending more time outside tapping into the health ben- ➤➤"





Tom Fischer (center), editor with Timber Press introduced new gardening and plant books at Garden Fever events

PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN FEVER



Houseplant display at Garden Fever entices customers with lush greenery

PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN FEVER

efits that come with nature. That's why we picked it."

Denise Mullins, director of product innovation at **Smith Gardens** in Aurora, Oregon, has noticed how foliage-focused folks are right now.

"That's why green is the trend," she said. "Tropical foliage is on a crazy upward swing, especially in houseplants. Supply is low, though. I have fellow plant nerd friends who propagate at home and

Vinca 'Illumination', Heuchera 'Fire Alarm', Carex 'Prairie Fire', and Spirea 'Magic Carpet' complete this container.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH GARDENS



sell online. It's a green trend. People want to be surrounded by plants."

Paying attention to color

Paying attention to color trends can make a difference to the bottom line, according to Dubow. From ordering to merchandising to customer communication, retailers can use this information to offer customers what they see in magazines, online and on TV and, in turn, are inspired to buy.

Color trends take a while to trickle down from the fashion runways where they all start. Colors of the year — neutrals in 2021 — persist until customers start seeing green show up all over their Pinterest or Instagram feeds or on their favorite HGTV show. Retailers need to be ahead of the trends in order to be prepared when customers, whether subliminally or consciously, demand green.

"There is value to color of the year," said Heidi Mortensen,

rose program manager for Star Roses and Plants and Bloomables brand manager. "How quickly our industry responds to it is a different story. If someone is out shopping and sees peach rugs and pillows, they may naturally be more drawn to peach-colored flowers because they just bought peach for their décor. I personally think any color plays a huge role for us. We want to help retailers turn more inventory so we do a lot of match potting now to make plants stand out like red roses in red pots."

How green plays out in the garden center is endless. Lori Vollmer, co-owner of **Garden Fever** retail nursery in Northeast Portland with her husband, Richard, is adamant about the value of trend watching.

"Do I pay attention to color?" she said. "Absolutely. I start with Color of the Year and from there, look at clothing and then home décor, which has a direct link to nurseries."

Vollmer, like many Baby Boomers, flips through magazines like *Elle Décor* to follow trends, but Millennials are more likely to be clicked into the internet. Home shows and catalogs also help give Vollmer a strong grasp on color trends. You've got to keep your eyes open to everything, she said, so you can use your knowledge of trendy colors to merchandise inventory that people will be drawn to.

"Customers will tell you what they like," Vollmer said. "They either buy it



A Smith Gardens container uses *Heuchera* 'Melting Fire', *Vinca* 'Illumination', *Heuchera* 'Plum Pudding', and *Imperata* 'Red Baron'

PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH GARDENS

or they don't. Listen to that and don't let your personal favorites rule the roost, because you're here to meet the desires of customers."

Spotting and utilizing trends

Between labor challenges and supply chain problems, some retailers say they don't have time to be trend spotters. Dubow believes many want to know more. In her many presentations about trends, most in the audience are retailers. "You're coming to a trend talk, so you're interested," Dubow said. "You can become a trend spotter and a leader. Learn about trends, tell people about them and you become a trend spotter. Your customers trust you more. They look to you for leadership and it builds your brand overall."

How you go about becoming a trend spotter can be on a high level, such as how you merchandize, or a low level, such as writing a blog or a social media post, Dubow noted. Tell customers and potential customers that green is in the spotlight this year and give them ideas about how to use green.

For growers, color trends can be tough. Some turn inventory in a few months and can follow the trends, but they put their efforts where the money is.

"Plant breeders are dollar-wise," said Suzy Hancock, general manager of **Portland Nursery** in Northeast and Southeast Portland. "It takes a lot of money to bring a plant to market. Marketing departments pay a lot of atten-

tion to color."

Mortensen of Star Roses and Plants, where plants can take up to 10–20 years to come to market, has a long-term vision of color trends. While she watches color trends, the nursery is more in tune with what colors are missing in their rose lines and what customers are demanding. Following last year's neutral trend, the big

color in roses right now is white, which follows the minimalistic, farmhouse design so prevalent in media outlets. But she predicts orange will be the next hot color, at least for Star Roses, which is working on an orange-colored rose for the Knock Out line.

"We have 240 roses, so we can use what we have to follow trends," Mortensen said. "We will deal with green by having our marketing department talk about the variety and usefulness of green foliage. There's a wide array of greens with different design solutions."

Trends don't come and go in a year and they overlap, so vigilance in following color trends

is necessary to keep customers engaged, according to Mullins.

"If you don't pay

attention to color, it could backfire," Mullins said. "You have to pay attention to what the customer wants. You don't want to stock shelves with colors that don't sell well. Watching your color directly affects sales. And it changes from year to year."

At Pepper Harrow Farm in Madison County, Iowa, color is everything. Owners Jenn and Adam O'Neal, authors of the new book "Small Farms, Big Dreams," pay close attention to trends. But because of their colorful business model, they don't limit themselves.

"We 100% pay attention to color," Jenn O'Neal said. "We design our growing year by color and seasonality. We are very color-trend-oriented at the farm. We call what we do 'design-driven' flower farming. We specifically plant what we do based on color."

What to do with the information

Like Mortensen, the O'Neals still see white as a trend. But they think green makes perfect sense and they've seen an uptick in sales of greenery. Brides are reaching out >>



This container combo hits a variety of green shades with *Vinca* 'Illumination', *Hosta* 'Patriot', Makinoi's holly fern, Japanese painted fern, and *Ajuga* 'Mahogany'

PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH GARDENS



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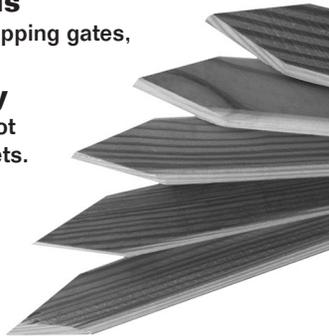
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for foliage-only arrangements, Jenn O’Neal said. And people went crazy for a recent greenery chandelier they made.

At Portland Nursery, planted containers and end-cap displays show combinations that customers can easily copy. The pot is as big a part of the presentation as the plants. They have to play together, Hancock said. For houseplants, neutral containers stand back so foliage is shown at its best.

“If you put combinations out there, it’s like bam! You’re helping customers and helping yourself,” Hancock said.

Sometimes colors don’t pan out, Vollmer said. She’s made mistakes in color quality and texture because it’s difficult to get a true representation of what the product looks and feels like in reality. It’s also important to assess which shades do best in a certain area. The color palate in Palm Springs is quite different than the Pacific Northwest.

“You have to weed through and see what is appropriate for our neck of the woods,” Vollmer said. “The Pacific Northwest is very on trend, but it’s not the same as other places. I look for what customers are buying, what growers suggest and my own instinct; 75% of my choices are instinct. They have to tell a story. I want people to look at what we’ve done and say, ‘Those combine beautifully.’”

Not everyone is on board with Color of the Year.

“One of the things we’ve been criticized for is ‘what do they expect us to do with this,’” Dubow from Garden Media said. “We don’t expect everyone to paint their houses green. We want retailers to know what people will be seeing. In general, consumers start seeing these colors in things like pillows and clothes and comforters. We should be stocking our shelves with some green. We don’t think garden centers should change all their selection, but you could have displays to show off combinations.” ☺

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



More than just plants

Hard goods will help build sales, if retailers pay attention to customer needs

BY EMILY LINDBLOM

THERE IS NO GARDEN CENTER without plants, but the stock carried shouldn't necessarily end with green goods.

By offering hard goods, retailers can increase the total value of the sale, build profit, and give customers what they want without making them go somewhere else.

But it pays to watch the ongoing trends in hard goods, including accessories, decorative planters and other non-plant products. Such offerings can sometimes even keep the customers coming back during the off season, thereby building year-round traffic and sales.

The concept of added value is gaining in prominence. This means that instead of selling one product alone, a store can put it together with other items as a package for display and purchase. A lone plant can be sold along with an accessory like a planter or something else to dress it up.

"Added value is seen more and more here in the states over the last couple years and I think it's going to keep going in that direction," said Johannes Smit, director of U.S. operations at

international company Bunnik Creations. "A lot of people, especially during the pandemic, want to do more with home décor and cozy up their homes so that's going to continue."

The Bunnik team works closely with plant growers around the world with popular products for consumers.

Smit said the hard goods he works with range from plastic pots and ceramics to terracotta, wicker and bamboo.

"For a lot of the growers, the big items are the ceramics," Smit said. "There are a lot of designs and features that can be put on a ceramic."

He said ceramics become part of decorating a home with indoor foliage.

"That's been a huge trend, it's up and coming in the U.S. and also in Europe," Smit said, adding many hard goods trends begin in Europe before making their way to the U.S.

Some recent ceramic trends the company advertises on its website include aboriginal art, with warm colors and nature themes; cheerful pastels and geometric shapes; and kanso, >>

More than just plants

Previous page: Wind spinners are both decorative and functional, as the vibrations they create discourage moles. **This page, top:** Dennis' 7 Dees sells a wide range of hard goods to meet customers' needs and personal aesthetics. **PHOTOS BY EMILY LINDBLOM** **Bottom:** Shovels (left), puzzles (center), gloves (rights) and pruners (next page) are available at Portland Nursery. **PHOTOS BY JIMMY MACK AT PORTLAND NURSERY**



the Japanese term for simplicity and elimination of clutter.

Smit said other popular items are baskets made from all kinds of material, including seagrass, bamboo and split willow.

“You’ve got to stay ahead of the trends,” he said. “We look at home décor, and all types of things that go into homes with new up-and-coming designs and materials for both indoors and outdoors. We work with customers to build their programs out from concept all the way to the final product.”

In the COVID-19 era of supply chain issues seen across almost every industry, Smit said it’s important to stay ahead of the game. He works with customers to make sure they know their options for expediting products.

“Ordering earlier gives them more time to make sure things go smoothly,” he said.

Form and function

Cassidy Turner, manager and receiver at **Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping and Garden Center** in Seaside, Oregon, said when she first started gardening, she would buy whatever looked best, but she soon found that functionality is really important.

“I went through 15 pairs of gloves before I found a really good pair,” Turner said. She suggests garden stores sell at least two types of gloves; one that won’t let moisture in, like rubber gloves for digging into the earth, and one for potting plants.

Turner’s focus on form and function extends to garden accessories as well. She sells colorful metal wind spinners, which may look purely aesthetic but actually serve to discourage moles from setting up residence in a garden.

“As the top spins, the vibrations are captured in the soil and moles don’t love

it,” Turner said. “It’s ornamental and also serves a purpose.”

Dennis’ 7 Dees sells fencing and netting to protect plants from hungry animals. It also sells sculptures, birdbaths, flags, decorative poles, benches, woven swings, arbors and trellises.

“A trellis is nice for leaning against a house so it doesn’t have to be attached to the house, but it mimics that look,” Turner said.

Other popular items are, of course, a wide range of pots. Turner said almost any plant can go in a pot.

“It’s important to know how fast that plant will grow when it’s put in a pot,” Turner said. “We help customers match the pottery with the growth of the plant.”

She added that she also sells smaller pots specifically for creating bonsais.

“Ginseng and ficus can be sold as



house plants, and bonsai pottery can add a cool element to outdoor gardening too,” Turner said, adding juniper is effective for bonsai as well.

Good drainage is imperative too, so stores can sell pots that already have drainage holes, or closed pots along with a catch or rocks to add to the bottom to create drainage.

Turner helps customers choose the right type of pot for their plants. Since terracotta leaches moisture, it shouldn't be used for plants that need a lot of water, but it can be used well in the form of ollas that are buried in the ground and spread water out to nearby plants.

Beyond the Garden

Jimmy Mack, the hard goods buyer for both locations of **Portland Nursery**, said he helps customers choose hard goods based on the types of plants they want and the style of décor they're going for.

Mack said it comes down to their aesthetic.

“You have to spend time with customers, and the thing that sets all us smaller independent nurseries apart is that we're going to spend extra time with a customer to figure out what can make their garden successful,” he said. “We want them to come back if something doesn't work, and teach them what went wrong.”

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More than just plants

Top: Dennis' 7 Dees offers a variety of ways to display air plants.

Bottom: Dennis' 7 Dees in Seaside sells hard good products ranging from pottery and tools to holiday decorations and sculptures. PHOTOS BY EMILY LINDBLOM



styles, is very popular at Portland Nursery.

“There are a lot of new lines of pottery, and I’m buying what I can get my hands on, including nice local pottery that’s coming out now,” Mack said.

Portland Nursery has expanded beyond the garden to offer a variety of gift items.

When shoppers come into the store, they can buy books, puzzles, board games and mugs along with their plants.

“When I took over buying, I started pushing the boundaries of what we carry,” Mack said. “During the pandemic, people are at home, so it gives me a lot of free rein, and I started bringing in coffee and tea mugs, and local coffee and tea.”

During the winter, Mack said he sells irrigation equipment so customers can set up their water systems ahead of time to specifically meet the needs of their gardens.

“People’s water bills can be pretty

massive, so if there is a way to save water, that’s a really under-talked-about part of gardening,” Mack said.

He also recommends that garden stores sell high-quality pruners that may have high up-front costs but will last for years and can be repaired over time.

Other hard goods items he recommends include Hori Hori knives, hand saws, shovels and hats.

“A good hand saw is invaluable,” Mack said. “With the supply chain issues, it’s hard to find a good shovel to sell, but for a creative buyer, it’s out there. Those are your very basic items but you want to

get good quality ones.” ©

Emily Lindblom is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master’s degree in multimedia journalism. Visit her website at emilylindblom.com or reach her at emily@emilylindblom.com.



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Garland Nursery keeps customers engaged with a constant stream of photos and content posted to its Facebook page. PHOTOS COURTESY OF GARLAND NURSERY

Loyal legions

Building repeat business and loyal customers isn't easy – but it works wonders

BY JON BELL

BRENDA POWELL'S GREAT-GRANDPARENTS started **Garland Nursery** in Corvallis, Oregon, 84 years ago. The retail nursery, which sits on six peaceful acres in the country, has passed down through four generations and is now owned by Powell and her siblings, Lee Powell and Erica Powell Kaminskas.

Over the decades, the nursery has built a solid reputation as a knowledgeable, friendly place where people can outfit their yards and also escape to a bucolic setting for an afternoon. That combination, along with the family's longstanding presence in the community, has also brought a long list of loyal customers back again and again.

"We have a lot of people who have shopped with us for 50 years," Brenda Powell said. "There are a lot of people who knew our parents, who were super involved in the community and the industry,

and we still get people who come in who had gone to high school with them. That's going away somewhat, but it still happens."

Not every nursery has the luxury of an 84-year history and notable family members to help inspire loyal customers who shop with them for decades. But there's no denying that regular, repeat customers can be a big piece of a retail nursery's good fortune — or lack thereof. And while there are ways to try and cultivate those repeat customers — think rewards programs, regular and engaging communications or even just top-notch customer service — there's no straightforward recipe for success.

"To me, a customer is someone who customarily visits. Loyalty is a completely different magical unicorn," said John Karsseboom, owner of **The Garden Corner** retail nursery in Tualatin. "Customer retention or customer loyalty — that is an ongoing challenge." ➤

Loyal legions

Coupons and flyers from Al's Garden & Home (top) and Garland Nursery (left and right).



Bottom images: Garden Corner of Tualatin documents their activities on social media.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GARLAND NURSERY

Get with the program

In the past decade or more, large and small companies alike have launched rewards programs or exclusive clubs as a way to try and groom repeat customers. Companies like Starbucks, McDonald's, Target, REI and countless others all have rewards programs of some sort that allow customers to acquire points they can use for future purchases or get discounts on a future buy based on how much they spend.

Retail nurseries have gotten in on the rewards game, too.

For example, **Al's Garden & Home** offers Al's Color Dollars that are worth \$1 for every \$10 spent. Al's then schedules various redemption periods throughout the year when customers can spend their Color Dollars. Al's also has a free rewards program that gives customers rebates based on how much they spend, as well as invitations to special events.

Garland Nursery's Garden Club works similarly: Customers sign up for free and get a \$5 reward rebate for every \$200 they spend. There are also member-only sales and appreciation events. Powell said the nursery has more than 20,000 reward members, 13,000 of whom have spent money at

Garland in the past two years.

Once a year, members also get a magazine with a coupon for \$20 off a \$100 purchase. And because members sign up online and the program is run through the nursery's point-of-sale system, Garland is able to track purchases and offer more customized service.

"We are able to look up purchases for 18 months, so we can see what they bought and make a recommendation if they want another one or something different," Powell said. "It also makes it so they don't need a receipt if they need to return something, which is convenient."

Sid Raisch, a nursery consultant and president at Horticultural Advantage, said rewards programs can be fruitful, but they do come with an expense.

"If it's being effective, that's fine, but if it's not, then you're just giving away money," he said. He noted that some companies might be better off building and strengthening their brand before they try their hand at a rewards program

Additionally, while rewards programs might try to build customer loyalty, Raisch said there's a difference between loyalty and simple repeat business.

"I am a frequent user of Starbucks, but I am not a loyal customer," he said. "I'm a customer of convenience because I travel a lot and Starbucks is convenient and they are in good locations. It matters to get the points, but it's not loyalty. I would be loyal to my independent coffee shop when I'm at home."

Katie Dubow, president of Garden Media Group, said another version of loyalty programs includes subscription services like Amazon Prime, where customers actually pay to get access to something that other customers don't. She said some horticultural consul-





Garland Nursery uses Facebook to reach out to customers for suggestions.
PHOTO COURTESY OF GARLAND NURSERY

tants are offering subscription services that give access to webinars, classes and other educational content.

“Those are more industry focused, but I don’t see why a retailer couldn’t do that,” she said. “It’s just getting an idea of what a customer would be willing to pay a premium for just to have access to something exclusive.”

Keeping in touch

Keeping in regular contact with customers can also help keep your name in their minds so they’ll come back to you

when new nursery needs arise.

The Garden Corner has two weekly email newsletters — one focused on its products and one that offers ideas to try. Garland has a weekly email that shares news, events and also popular updates on the nursery’s cat, Mrs. Fanta Claus.

Along the same lines, social media has become an important tool for building repeat business or just keeping customers engaged with brands.

“There is huge opportunity with social media,” Dubow said.

Not only is social media a way to

connect with younger customers, but it’s a relatively easy way to engage with just about anyone. Dubow said it’s important to interact with customers who may have mentioned your business on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

“At the very least, you need to be thanking them,” she said. “Those are customers out there who are essentially being ambassadors for you — and you’re not even having to pay them or ask them to do it.”

Go old school

One of the best ways to build repeat business and loyal customers is about as far away from rocket science as you can get: offer people good customer service and an enjoyable experience.

Powell said Garland has always prided itself on its selection, quality and good customer service. Many employees >>

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Loyal legions

Garland Nursery cat, Fanta, makes shoppers comfortable. PHOTO COURTESY OF GARLAND NURSERY

there are good at remembering customers' names, which offers a personal touch. She also said they try to keep refreshing their displays so that things don't get stale for customers, and she and her siblings try to get out and be active in the community — being part of the chamber or making donations, for example — so there's recognition like their parents had.

"I think just being the experts out there in the community has helped us a lot," Powell said.

For Karsseboom, building repeat business starts behind the scenes by eliminating as many tasks for his employees as possible — things like watering plants and turning on the lights. Automating those functions frees employees up so they can focus on more important things.

"It's eliminating anything that would

take them away from interacting with customers," he said. "The extra time gained is something they can be doing for the customer instead,

maybe offering them a coffee or just chatting with them. To me, loyalty is about getting to know a customer by name, knowing their personality, their likes and dislikes."

Karsseboom said he also works every day to make the Garden Corner a business that would be missed if it were gone.

"If we were to think of a business that one day suddenly vanished and we would entirely miss them, what business would that be? That's where my mental state is,"

he said. "So if we were to disappear, would we be missed? We strive in small and large ways to become that business who would be dearly missed if we went away. It's a great exercise for any retailer." ☺

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.



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EMPLOYMENT

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Key Responsibilities:

1. LMA — lead, manage, and hold the production team accountable for execution of tasks, processes, and procedures.
2. Organize, prioritize, and manage work flow — plan ahead and monitor work flow to provide for the most efficient operations to ensure the highest possible quality and yield of the crop.
3. Inventory and Crop Grading Accuracy — oversee and ensure that processes are followed to maintain the accuracy of the production inventory and grading of the crop.
4. People and Equipment Utilization — Organize, plan and execute the allocation of equipment, people and supplies for Production and Harvest Seasons.

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EMPLOYMENT

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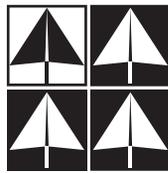
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GROWING KNOWLEDGE

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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A bee's eye view

Testing for UV reflectance to gain insight into the benefits of natives compared to native plants

BY GAIL LANGELLOTTO

MARKET DEMAND FOR native plants in ornamental landscapes has drastically increased since the early 2000s, as consumers, landscapers, landscape designers and landscape architects are increasingly aware of the environmental benefits provided by native plants.

But despite their popularity, native plants remain a relatively small portion of the overall ornamental plant market. Only 13–26% of plants sold in the U.S. are native, and a majority of the plants marketed and sold as native plants are often native cultivars.

Native cultivars are native plants that have been bred or selected for specific ornamental traits (e.g., novel color or com-

pact form) or resistance traits. In ornamental markets, native cultivars might fit better into nursery propagation protocols, or may better appeal to shoppers at the point of purchase, compared to true natives.

Many gardeners are interested in native plants because of the purported benefits to bees and other pollinators. However, it is unclear what impact native plant breeding might have on pollinator perception and use of these plants.

Testing what bees see

In 2019, we started an experimental garden at the Oak

Creek Center for Urban Horticulture at Oregon State University, to examine pollinator visitation to Oregon native plants and native cultivars. Our study includes seven native species, and one to three cultivars of each native plant. In 2020 and 2021, Jen Hayes, a Ph.D. student at Oregon State, monitored bee abundance and diversity associated with each plant. She's also measuring plant traits, to better understand how changes in particular plant traits might increase or decrease pollinator visitation to each plant.

One of the plant traits that we are measuring is UV reflectance from flowers. Humans can't see into the UV spectrum. Thus, any changes to UV flower patterns would be largely undetectable to us. However, bee vision is optimized in the UV spectrum. In fact, many flowers have UV nectar guides, »

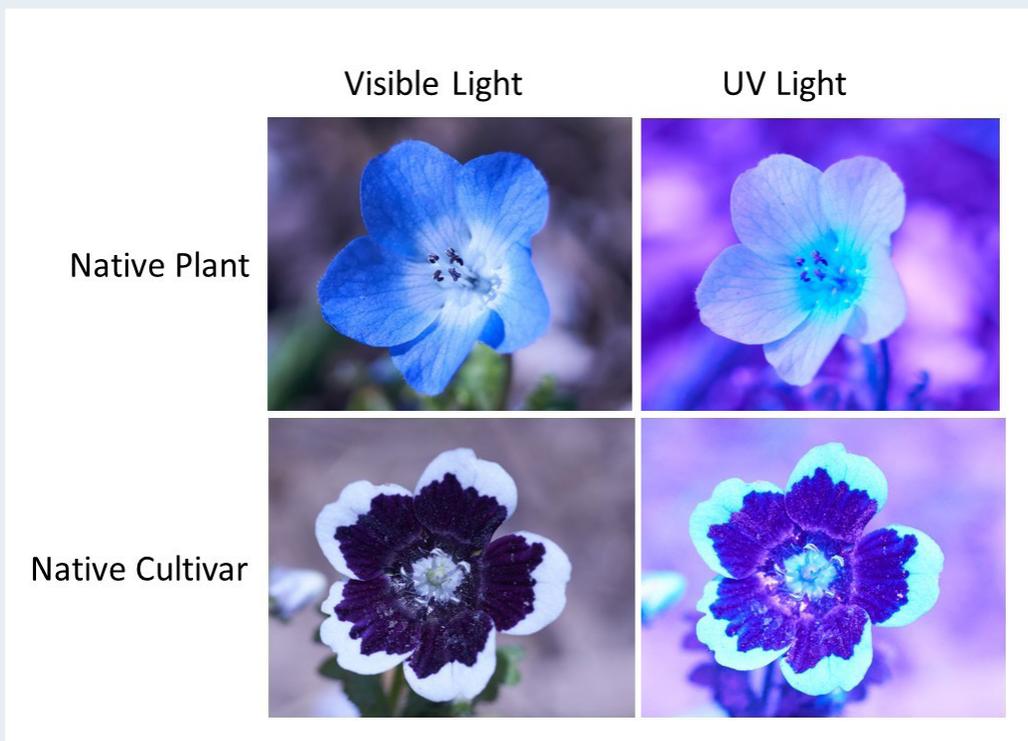


Figure 1. *Nemophila menziesii* (top row) and the 'Penny Black' cultivar (bottom row) under visible light (left column) and photographed with UV filters (right column).

PHOTOS BY SVEA BRUSLIND

A bee's eye view

Figure 2. *Clarkia amoena* (top row) and the 'Dwarf White' cultivar (bottom row) under visible light (left column) and photographed with UV filters (right column).

PHOTOS BY SVEA BRUSLIND.

that better attract bees' attention. A nectar guide is a region of UV reflectance that helps a bee quickly locate the center of flower, and thus facilitates the rapid collection of nectar. When a plant breeder selects for brighter flowers or unique color patterns, if UV color patterns are also affected, these changes could impact bees.

In 2020, we started working with OSU honors biology student Svea Bruslind, who is minoring in photography. Svea and Jen are working out insect-vision photography protocols to help us see a bee's eye view of our study flowers. The goal is to document differences that might be invisible to us, but visible to bees, between native plants and native cultivars.

Ultimately, we will compare these differences to our bee visitation data, to help us better understand how different suites of plant traits might increase or decrease

bee visitation to particular flowers. For now, let's take a look at three sets native

plants and native cultivars, to see how breeding can alter UV messaging to bees.

Visible Light

Native Plant



UV Light



Native Cultivar



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Nemophila menziesii (native plant) and 'Penny Black' (native cultivar)

Nemophila menziesii, commonly known as baby blue eyes, appears blue to us in visible light. However, under UV filters, we can see the classic UV "bullseye" in the center of the flower. This bullseye is one type of nectar guide that helps bees to quickly locate pollen the reward center of the flower. You might also notice that under UV light, the pollen-loaded anthers also fluoresce bright blue against the lighter background of the petals.

The 'Penny Black' cultivar appears dark purple, with white fringed petals, under visible light. Under UV light, we see a reduction in the classic UV bullseye. We also see an inversion of the UV markings, which now appear at the edge of each petal. The anthers also appear to be duller, compared to the native plant, under UV light.

Clarkia amoena (native plant) and 'Dwarf White' (native cultivar)

Clarkia amoena, commonly known as farewell-to-spring, bears a pink blossom. Under UV filters, the entire flower appears to be a diffuse shade of UV blue. The native cultivar, 'Dwarf White' has white petals. Under UV light, the flower appears to bear the same shade of UV blue, as the true native.

Eschscholzia californica (native plant) and 'Purple Gleam' (native cultivar)

Eschscholzia californica, commonly known as California poppy, appears bright orange to us under visible light. Under UV light, the petals largely appear orange. But, we can see that the anthers fluoresce bright blue, under UV filters. Unlike the baby blue eyes and farewell-to-spring, California poppy does not provide nectar to bees. When bees visit California poppy, they are only collecting pollen. Thus, it makes sense that this flower lacks a nectar guide, and that the anthers fluoresce UV.

The native cultivar, 'Purple Gleam' is a purple blossom with a white center under UV light. Under UV light, this flower appears to have the classic UV >>

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A bee's eye view

Figure 3. *Eschscholzia californica* (top row) and the 'Purple Gleam' cultivar (bottom row) under visible light (left column) and photographed with UV filters (right column).

PHOTOS BY SVEA BRUSLIND.

bullseye, even though this flower does not offer bees any nectar. How bees perceive this floral marking, in the absence of a nectar reward, remains to be seen.

As you can see, changes to floral color under visible light can result in seemingly big changes under UV light (for baby blue eyes and California poppy). Or, changes in floral color under visible light might result in little to no change under UV light (for farewell-to-spring). What these changes might mean to bees is something we will continue to study in 2022, and beyond.

One of the end goals of our program is to identify suites of plant traits that breeders might cue in on, to best attract bees. Rather than having to test every plant for relative bee attractiveness, we hope that a focus on plant traits will help breeders create beautiful and environmentally friendly plants that are attractive to both consumers and to bees. ☺

Native Plant



UV Light



Native Cultivar



Dr. Gail Langellotto is a professor of horticulture at Oregon State University, stationed at the main campus in Corvallis, and the

statewide coordinator for the Extension Master Gardener Program. She can be reached at gail.langellotto@oregonstate.edu.

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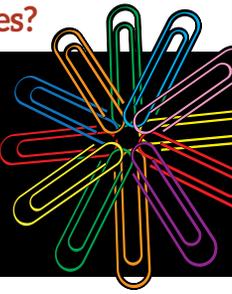
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Digger MARKETPLACE

Ag overtime should not pit owner versus worker

As Oregonians, we have a long and storied tradition of political compromise.

I believe that any policy debate should include a range of perspectives. This discussion can lead to mutually satisfactory solutions.

That's why the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is disappointed with ongoing efforts by PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste), the farmworkers union, to unilaterally move legislation forward that calls for mandatory overtime pay for agricultural workers when they exceed 40 hours per week.

The OAN has previously sat at the table with PCUN to discuss this policy in the form of House Bill 2358, which the Oregon Legislature tabled during its 2021 session. Now it looks increasingly likely the legislature will revisit this issue during the upcoming 2022 session starting this month. Concurrently, PCUN has launched a renewed campaign questioning the integrity of our member nurseries, as well as farms and agricultural businesses around the state.

Compensation means more than pay

Many people do not realize there are numerous ways in which our hardworking and dedicated employees are compensated aside from mandatory overtime. These include paid time off, housing allowances, generous health care benefits, flexible shifts that allow families to thrive, profit sharing, and more. We have many long-term and highly skilled employees who have found success under the current rules.

Seven states, including Washington and California, have approved mandatory overtime laws for agricultural workers. These have caused employers to cap employees' hours to eliminate overtime. This limits productivity during the busiest times of harvest. It also hampers the employees' ability to earn. Other potential responses to mandatory overtime could include automating harvest work with machines or switching to less labor-intensive crops.

Some businesses would adjust by moving operations outside of Oregon or even

selling off small, family-owned farms to large corporate operations. Further, no industry aside from agriculture is quite as dependent on weather and exterior forces, such as the acute labor demand during times of harvest, that impact our ability to do business.

And let us not forget that national and international economic trends also affect us here in Oregon. Our farmers and ranchers have faced significant challenges in the past 18 months that resulted in lost income, including drought and severe weather conditions, market access and a shortage of labor.

Escalating costs and competition

Nationwide, agricultural revenue has grown 9% in the last decade, but the cost of feed, seeds, fertilizer, chemicals, machinery, services, rent, and other needs have increased by 16%. Finally, labor costs have increased 41.5% nationally over that period. Oregon pays well above a comparable operation located between in the Midwest or the East.

Candidly, it has been a challenge to convey the dynamics of the agricultural economy to urban Democrats. They like farming but do not approve of the **act of farming**. Why anyone would get into the business unless they were born into it or have fallen in love with producing something special is a mystery to me.

I respect and admire anyone who makes a living doing any of the 225 commodity crops grown in our spectacular state. It is hard work both to make an operation pencil out and the physical nature of producing green goods. It is not for everyone, and that is OK. However, when rural legislators and the farm community comes forward to educate urban policy makers, their eyes glaze over almost immediately.

Politics getting ahead of good policy

The politics on this issue is dicey. State legislators are seeking higher office and looking to satisfy the hunger of union funders.

The check is due, and I fear that the moderate element of the house and senate Democratic caucus will get squeezed with the threat of running a primary opponent to the extreme left of the political dial. We see this on the Republican side with immigration



Jeff Stone
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

reform and sadly — it is a common denominator for political party agendas.

Lawsuits have been filed by the farmworker advocates, taking Oregon's Labor Commissioner out of play as a positive arbiter. Race gets introduced and rash generalizations are tossed into the public debate. Unsubstantiated scenarios about the labor conditions and abuse go unchecked by the media or within the Democratic Party. In short, the politics is poisoning policy and the ability to reach a compromise.

I am proud of the agricultural coalition the OAN is a part of. Finding common ground for a policy was difficult and was achieved. Egos were set aside to produce an alternative that the Oregon Legislature should consider this month. Within the OAN family, we have those who pay overtime — nothing we do will change that.

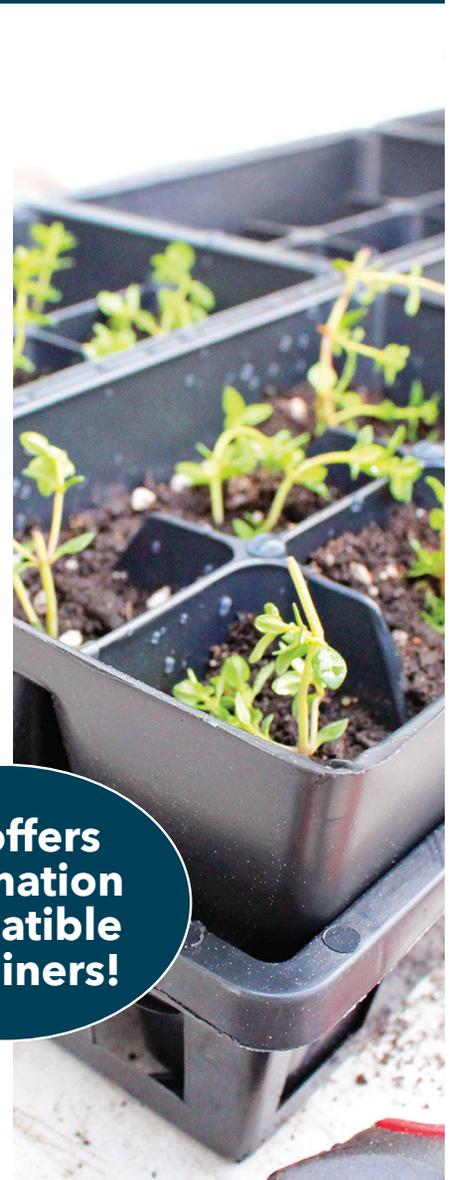
We must craft something that works for large and small growers alike. Let's give growers the choice on how to proceed, and not sacrifice other agricultural sectors, because in the end, we are one community.

Preserving nursery operations

Oregon is blessed to have great growing conditions, and we are the third-largest nursery state in the U.S. behind California and Florida. We have great soil, great farmers and a great nursery industry that has grown steadily over the past 40 years.

Before enacting any agricultural overtime policy in Oregon, we want to examine what other states have done regarding similar policies, and what the consequences have been. Let us not endanger our continued growth by enacting laws that limit productivity and the ability of our employees to support their families and make a living. ©

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