



From left: Randy Nelson, general manager of Forest Grove farm, and Pat Hughes, director of sales for the Pacific Northwest.

## GROWER PROFILE



## PRODUCTION:

National accounts	: 50%
iGC* and rewholesalers	: 25%
landscape professionals	: 25%

\*Independent garden centers

## KNOWN FOR:

Wholesale grower with 15 farms in Oregon, California, Florida and Texas. Products include woody shrubs, conifers, perennials, trees, house plants, vines and tropicals.

## PEOPLE

**Jonathan Saperstein**, co-owner and CEO; **David Kirby**, executive vice president; **Bud Summers**, chief operating officer; **Jeff Petit**, chief financial officer; **Terri Cook**, senior vice president of human resources; **Alan Heinrich**, director of horticulture.

## CONTACT:

5151 Mitchelldale Street, Suite B2, Houston, TX 77092

Oregon farm:  
45296 SW Ritchey Rd.,  
Forest Grove, OR 97116

800-877-7823

@ phughes@everde.comm

## ONLINE:

www.everde.com

## Everde Growers®

Founded: 2001 by David Saperstein

BY CURT KIPP

**E**VERDE GROWERS® IS A nationwide wholesale nursery founded in 2001 and based in Texas, but with 200 years of combined experience from its legacy companies.

That includes the company's Oregon operations, which have deep roots. The main farm, located a few miles west of Forest Grove, was started in 1978 as part of Glenn Walters Nursery, then owned by the Amfac conglomerate based in Hawaii. It later became part of Hines Growers in 1995.

Today, after passing through multiple ownerships and situations, it is Everde's northernmost growing operation, as well as the company's only field growing operation to produce cold hardy nursery material. The company's other farm with in-ground production, in Florida, produces palms and other tropical material.

"All of the other [Everde] farms are container grown exclusively," said Pat Hughes, the company's regional sales director for the Northwest.

Nationally, Everde is an emerging powerhouse. It now has 15 farms in four states — nine in California, two in Texas, three in Florida and one in Oregon. Of these, the most recently acquired is the former LaVerne Nursery in Piru, California, purchased late this spring.

These combined farms have more than 2,000 employees and 6,800 acres in produc-

tion, including nearly 6 million square feet of greenhouse production and nearly 11 million square feet under shade structures.

Because of its geographical diversity and vastness, Everde is able to offer over 300 species of plants and over 5,000 unique plant selections, producing in excess of 33 million plants yearly. They claim it is the largest selection of plants available nationwide.

The company produces woody shrubs, conifers, perennials, trees, vines and tropicals, and even made a recent move into house plants. All of this variety and high production capacity gives the company the ability to turn orders more quickly.

Everde grows a number of licensed and branded lines, such as Endless Summer hydrangeas (from Bailey Nurseries), Bloomin' Easy plants (from Van Belle Nursery), Proven Winners plants, First Editions shrubs and trees (Bailey), the Southern Living Plant Collection (Plant Development Services Inc., or PDSI), the Sunset Plant Collection (PDSI), and Bushel & Berry (from Star Roses and Plants).

Everde also has its own breeding program and introductions. The company propagates its own material whenever possible, because that provides end-to-end control of the plant from propagation to shipment. In the case of branded or licensed material, this is not always possible. ➤



“Some things you can get a license to propagate, and some not,” Hughes said.

But for Hughes, who started with Hines back in 1978, it’s not just the company’s breadth of farms and product offerings that makes his job rewarding. It’s the overall vision, which includes significant investments in the people as well as in continuous improvement of its processes.

“I would say that currently we’re in a golden age, looking back on my career for this company,” he said. “The greatest thing about the company is its vision and its culture. The culture is positive. It’s forward thinking. It’s inclusive.”

### Founded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

David Saperstein founded what is now Everde in 2001, under the name TreeTown

USA, and began to build up the company.

He began with a farm in Glen Flora, Texas, near Houston, and purchased a second Texas farm in 2003. He then expanded into Florida in 2004, and added another farm in that state in 2005.

In 2015, Jonathan Saperstein, led a management buyout of the company from his father, David. His sisters, Stefanie and Alexis, also participated in the buyout. Jonathan, then just 29, had a more aggressive vision for the company and began expanding it through a series of strategic acquisitions.

The company purchased two more Florida farms (in 2015 and 2016), then acquired Village Nurseries in California in 2017. It acquired the Hines Growers division of ColorSpot Nurseries in 2018. This gave TreeTown a presence in California and Oregon for the first time. It included the former Walters property, then owned by Hines, in Forest Grove.

All the acquired farms and companies were united under one brand as Everde Growers in late 2000. The name is a portmanteau — what linguists call a combination of two words, in this case “evergreen” and “verde,” the Spanish word for “green.”

Everde’s operations in Oregon include the main Forest Grove site, west of Portland, and two properties in nearby Cornelius, one of which isn’t in production currently. In all, the properties total about 1,000 acres, or about one-seventh of the company’s outdoor acreage overall.

“As we grow the business, we still have plenty of space,” said Randy Nelson, general manager of the Oregon farms.

These fields produce about 1,400 plant varieties consisting of 60% containerized and 40% field grown material. Some of the noted products include

Alberta spruces, pines, rhododendrons, maples, boxwoods, perennials and more. They are shipped all across the country, from the Rocky Mountain states to the Midwest and through to the Northeast.

“People from the East Coast are willing to pay the freight rates to buy maples from Oregon because they just can’t get the same quality [elsewhere],” Hughes said.

All of it is produced in a spectacular environment of rolling hills on the edge of Oregon’s Coast Range. “This is the prettiest place in the world,” Hughes said. “I can’t think of anyplace else I’d rather live.”

Even before the acquisition by Everde, Farwest Show has always been a highlight of the year for the Forest Grove operation. The nursery will typically host industry members for lunches and tours





the week of the show. The farm has been known for its elaborate themed displays, including a Western theme one year with a chuckwagon. In other words, they'll be ready for when people show up.

"My whole [sales] team will be there that week," Hughes said. "I believe our California and Arizona reps will be there as well."

### Looking to the future

Nelson has worked at the Forest Grove nursery under a variety of ownerships, going back to 1989. He has 45 years in the nursery industry, and most of them have been on that farm.

Nelson started there as propagation manager and later oversaw production and

shipping. He became general manager of the site in 2009. Having seen many changes during various ownerships, he is excited about the changes he has seen under Everde's ownership of the farm.

"I can say that I'm in the back end of my career," he said. "I wish that I had 20 years yet to go, because I think that who we are, what we are, and what we're doing is just ready to take off."

Nonetheless, the farm and the company will face challenges. Most of them center around the fact that reliable labor was much easier to obtain when Nelson started his career, and nurseries could set themselves up with that in mind. Now labor is more difficult to find, and it's something the company and all growers must continually address.

"How do we find the labor? How do we retain the labor? And how do we keep them on a growth path as well, for a career?" he asked. "And I think that in our industry in general, that's something that we all have to take a look at. How do we get the good, qualified people in, how do we train them and how do we develop career paths with them so that they actually stay? Everde envisions mechanization being a key part of the solution.

Everde has made large investments in new machinery from Europe, to get more productivity from fewer workers while making the job less physically demanding for them. They purchased Midas Nursery Solutions from Matt Gold, which was effectively an acqui-hire, bringing him on >>




**OUTSTANDING VALUE  
EXPANDED  
ORNAMENTAL OFFERINGS  
IMPECCABLE SERVICE**

From Acers to Zelkova, and many varieties in between, we specialize in understock for flowering, fruiting and shade.

Our customers come to us for our quality rootstock. They come back for our service and attention-to-detail.



**WILLAMETTE**  
NURSERIES  
Canby, Oregon

WillametteNurseries.com

**VISIT #20045 TO SEE IF FRED MADE IT**



**MAINLAND FLORAL**






**25355 - 56th Ave., Aldergrove, BC V4W 1G5**

**P. (604) 856-1264 F. (604) 856-1273**  
**E. sales@mainlandfloral.ca W. mainlandfloral.com**

## Everde Growers



board to help with mechanization.

“The more mechanization that we can do, the more high-quality product we produce. We look to Europe and look to the things that they’ve had to change and modernize in order to function and stay in business,” he said. “And I think all the nurseries in the U.S. are going to have to do something similar to that as well. For us, it’s mechanization and it’s development of people.”

Hughes appreciates what Everde is doing on the people side, as well. He joined Hines in 1978 in Irvine, California, not long after the nursery was purchased by Weyerhaeuser. Over the past 43 years, he’s worked under “six or eight” different ownership situations, up to when Hines eventually become part of Everde.

Hughes sees a difference since then, noting that management makes a point of

spending time at all of the farms in all of the states.

“Our management team listens,” he said. “They listen carefully to what they hear. Then they ask questions, and they involve everyone at every level. They’re interested in new technology. They’re interested in new plant varieties and new customers. ☺

## GK Machine Builds Heavy Duty Ag Equipment



**TR6 SPRAYER**  
Over-the-Row  
wet/granular system

**H9 Bare Root  
TREE DIGGER**



**GREENHOUSES**  
Covers & Accessories



**GK MACHINE DONALD OREGON**  
503-678-5525 [WWW.GKMACHINE.COM](http://WWW.GKMACHINE.COM)

