

Dennis' 7 Dees sets sights on growth

By **JANAE SARGENT**
Capital Press



Janae Sargent/Capital Press

David Snodgrass, owner of Dennis' 7 Dees, says his family-owned retail and landscaping business relies on the judgment of employees.

also looking to expand retail in the future.

"I really like that we're so diversified," Snodgrass said. "I enjoy all aspects of this industry."

Growth has been a priority for the company since it started as a wholesale rhododendron nursery in Portland in 1927.

As the company grew, so did the family. When David's father, Robert Snodgrass, married into the Dennis family, took over the wholesale business and had seven children, all with names starting with a "D," the business officially adopted the name "Dennis' 7 Dees."

David Snodgrass first bought into the landscape division. When he took over in

1977, it was doing approximately \$70,000 annually. He said in 2005, revenues hit nearly \$25 million.

In 2005 Snodgrass bought out the brothers he was partnered with and brought in his brothers, Dean and Drew, as partners.

Snodgrass said family is vital to the company's success. That includes both the immediate family and the managers and staff, which he calls the extended family.

"We really encourage empowerment and growth from within here," Snodgrass said. "We have people who have worked here for 40 years and family members of employees working here, and I'm very proud of that."

Nursery industry rebounds from recession

By **JANAE SARGENT**
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As the nursery industry continues to rebound from the housing market crash of 2008, those operations that survived the recession are sometimes struggling to meet the growing demands of landscapers and consumers.

Breanne Chavez, executive director of the Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association, said the landscaping industry is booming and sales are up at retail businesses but that the smaller number of nurseries sometimes struggle to meet the reinvigorated demand.

Approximately 30 percent of nurseries shut down during the recession in response to low demand and a lack of homes being landscaped, she said.

Josh Zeilinski, Oregon Association of Nurseries vice president, said the supply is being built back up to meet the renewed demand.

Zeilinski said the products that are in the highest demand right now are the ones growers decreased production of

during the recession. Japanese maples, hedge material and landscaping products are rebounding with the renewed focus on homebuilding.

Chavez said annuals, flowers and hanging baskets stayed strong and continue to be consistently popular. She added that kitchen gardens, herb gardens and edibles kept the industry going when demand for large plant products was down.

The concept of an urban "farm" — backyards with chickens and vegetable gardens — has also gained in popularity.

Alongside the concept of urban farms, sustainability and plants that attract pollinators such as honeybees have become more popular.

"Edibles do really well with young people," Zeilinski said. "I wouldn't say they are increasing because they have held really steady."

Zeilinski said he thinks the

North American nursery industry will move toward the European model in the future — focusing on impulse-buy plants that peak when they are in the garden centers.

While he is concerned about the pressure that puts on growers who ship their plants to keep them fresh and peaking, he said it is a good bet to ensure the industry remains strong.

He also sees a future in plants as gifts.

"If young people don't start buying houses, we need to push the mindset of plant buying toward gift-giving," Zeilinski said. "We need to make people view plants in a different way."

Zeilinski and Chavez agreed that it is exciting to have a strong nursery market again and that the industry will continue to generate innovative new ideas in the years to come.

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