

Farwest Show brings buyers from around world

By ZANE SPARLING
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Oregon's second-most valuable agricultural product isn't cherries, raspberries or hazelnuts.

It is horticulture, which includes everything from sculpted shrubs to ornamental flowers. Horticulture will be the star of the Oregon Nursery Association's 2015 Farwest Trade Show.

Growers, suppliers, landscapers and wholesalers representing Oregon's \$830 million commercial nursery industry will gather for the three-day show at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. The show begins on Thursday, Aug. 27.

Tom Kegley, the marketing consultant for the trade show, said that after years of delayed plantings and stretched inventories, growers have regained their confidence in the decorative landscaping market.

"Coming out of the recession, attendance is going back in a positive direction, and not just attendees, but booths," Kegley said. "People are really, truly optimistic."

Kegley said that positive outlook is tied to the recovery of the housing market, which slumped after the housing bubble burst in 2008.

"Housing is what runs this entire industry, that's what I think," Kegley said. "And as

housing goes, so goes the nursery industry."

Last year, almost 400 exhibitors were at the show, attracting more than 5,500 attendees from 45 states and 11 countries, according to the 2014 Post-Show Report. Nearly 75 percent of nursery plants grown in Oregon are sold across the country.

This year's trade show includes an expanded exhibitor list, as well as seminars, educational classes and guest speakers.

Ron Rosenberg, a marketing and customer service guru, will give the keynote address, "Must be Present to Win: The Secret to Finding the Opportunities in Business and Life that Other People Miss!"

Allan Niemi, who coordinates events and education for the Oregon Association of Nurseries, praised Rosenberg in a press release for his message of "opportunity and action."

"The industry is on the rebound from the recession. Rosenberg's keynote address will accelerate its momentum and unleash the power of its potential," Niemi said.

The run-up to the trade show is filled with ag-related events. From Aug. 24 to 27, the Oregon Convention Center will host the 2015 International Trials Conference, which brings a multinational group of experts in plant breeding together to discuss methodology and standardiza-

tion of trial testing for annual, perennial and woody plants.

Farwest will also feature its annual pub crawl, as well as other networking events for women and young professionals in horticulture. Kegley, the marketing consultant, said

Equipment Innovation Day, a favorite of attendees, will return on Tuesday, Aug. 25. This year, they will travel to GK Machine Inc. in Donald, Ore., for product demonstrations and a look at automation in farming.

The New Varieties Show-

case, another feature of the Farwest Show, focuses on improvements to plants' form, function and color. While some attendees find the bright colors of flowering perennials most attractive, Kegley said it was the subdued trees that caught his

eye at the showcase.

"We sometimes take those evergreen plants for granted — they're kind of thought of as work horses," Kegley said. "Some of those interesting chartreuse colors and miniatures ... I find very interesting."



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press
A view of the 2014 Farwest Show at the Portland Convention Center. This year's show will be Aug. 27-29.

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