



Heather Smith Thomas/For the Capital Press

Employees maneuver a quaking aspen at Webb Landscape Nursery. The company headquarters and office are in Ketchum, Idaho.

# Employees own this unique operation

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**  
For the Capital Press

KETCHUM, Idaho — Doug Webb came to the Wood River Valley to ski and never left. In addition to enjoying the slopes, he started Webb Landscape Nursery.

Upon retirement in 2001 he placed the business into the hands of his dedicated employees.

“We have an ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan),” said Mark Palmer, current CEO.

Many of the employees have been with the company a long time. Palmer was the nursery director for many years.

The company headquarters and office — the hub for landscaping and maintenance operations around the Sun Valley area — are in Ketchum.

“We also have a garden center there, another garden center satellite store in Hailey, and a big nursery (50 acres of tree pro-

## Webb Landscape Nursery

**In business:** Since 1972

**Owners:** Employee-owned

**Locations:** Ketchum, Bellevue and Twin Falls, Idaho

**Website:** [www.webbland.com/](http://www.webbland.com/)

duction) south of Bellevue,” he said.

The company also has work crews who take care of customers’ properties.

“We grow the plants, install them and maintain them, so it’s a three-pronged service. Three years ago we also acquired a location in Twin Falls, Idaho — 5 acres and a garden center,” Palmer said.

“The business just kept growing as we followed demand. If people ask for something we try to fill those needs. The market changes from year to year,” he said.

“We grow trees that do well

in zones 3 and 4. We grow aspen from seed, but also have everything from crab apples to maples, spruce, pine and fir.”

Aspen trees have been a consistent seller, but it wasn’t easy when Webb first started growing them from seed.

“Back in the ’70s people just collected the trees, going out into the countryside to dig out a small tree in one of those big stands (all connected by the roots), and shipped them to nurseries like ours. But we found that growing them from seed worked a lot better for us,” Palmer said. “We collect seed from different areas to maintain better genetics, rather than just using one source.”

The company also has a large inventory of flowers, with four greenhouses at its nursery in Bellevue, three greenhouses in the garden center in Twin Falls and a small greenhouse in Ketchum.

“We grow our own hanging baskets and decorative planters, and some one-gallon perennial containers. We stock our greenhouses with flowers and vegetables and also have many shrubs and trees,” he said.

Webb Nursery provides all the bulk material for gardening and landscaping, including mulch, barks and ground covers.

“We sell decorative rock and pavers, and provide full-service landscaping,” Palmer said.

Whether people are interested in flowers, vegetable gardens, trees or shrubs, these nursery centers have whatever they are looking for, and the tools to do it.

The business employs a large crew.

“Last year at our peak season in summer we had 185 people. Summer help often includes high school and college students. We’ve had some students who have gotten their degree in horticulture and come back to work for us. We have several people on staff with horticulture degrees or landscape architecture degrees,” Palmer said.

The company stays busy in the winter.

“We do snow removal in winter and sell Christmas trees at our garden centers. We do Christmas lighting, hang garlands and set up trees and decorate them if people want us to. It’s a fun time for us,” he said.

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