

Nursery celebrates 70th anniversary

By JANAE SARGENT
Capital Press

J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. celebrates its 70th anniversary this year — and the 50th anniversary of its introduction of the Redpoint Maple tree.

The 2,500-acre wholesale nursery in Boring, Ore., sells more than 500 varieties of trees and has become one of the nation's largest wholesale nurseries with one of the leading tree introduction programs.

Even with such a large operation, Nancy Buley, the nursery's communications director, said a high standard of respect for employees and treatment remains a cornerstone of the company's success.

Buley considers herself a "tree journalist," and has been with Schmidt for 26 years — making her one of many employees who have made the nursery a home.

She handles marketing and communications outreach



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Veronica Lopez and Anna Moralez plant cuttings made from harvested trees in one of the greenhouses at High Forest Farm.

with Jeff Lafrenz, the marketing manager. Both found their way to J. Frank Schmidt unexpectedly and stayed for the supportive environment.

Lafrenz, who has been with

the company 30 years, said the creative freedom he has is as close as it gets to being self-employed but with a lot of support from the company.

The company is owned and



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Sam Barkley, J. Frank Schmidt's grandson, treats tough seed before planting it so that it is able to more easily germinate and grow.

operated by J. Frank Schmidt III, a third-generation nurseryman. His father, J. Frank Schmidt Jr., started the company in 1946 after growing up on his father's nursery.

J. Frank Schmidt Jr. saw a need for trees of consistent quality, form and survivability and began cloning and introducing new trees. The nursery has introduced more than 70 trademarked cultivars.

The nursery's best-known tree, the Redpoint Maple, took 17 years to develop.

Thirty years ago, Schmidt also started selecting trees for heat and drought tolerance.

"Developing trees is a long process that takes a lot of patience, dedication and vision," Buley said. "Frank Jr. had a lot of vision for the future."

To clone and introduce a new tree, up to 2,000 seedlings are planted and the best ones are grown out for several years. They are then sent to evaluation trials in various regions around the United States.

Introducing and growing trees has become such a large operation that production had to be split among five smaller farms across the property.

In the first stage of the growing process, cuttings are made to reproduce trees at High Forest Farms, what Buley calls the "nursery of the nursery."

Manager Celina Villaseñor said her team makes more than 30,000 cuttings per day at the farm.

Eva Alvarez has been on the cutting team for 18 years. Her husband and son also work at Schmidt.

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