

# Little Prince adds creative touches

By JANA SARGENT  
Capital Press

Little Prince of Oregon nursery strives to stand out in the industry.

Whether it's sporting beards made out of succulents at the 2015 Oregon Farwest Show, developing different advertising strategies for each line of plants or painting a giant frog on the side of its delivery trucks, owner Ketch de Kanter and his managers encourage creativity.

Little Prince is a wholesale nursery in Aurora, Ore., that markets perennials, ground covers, ornamental grasses, ferns, native plants and succulents to landscapers and garden centers.

Kanter began the nursery in 1997 with no background



Janae Sargent/Capital Press

Mark Leichty, director of business development, explains the high attention to detail he and the staff pay to plants at Little Prince of Oregon Nursery. Employees hand-water each plant every day instead of relying on automation so they can keep their eyes on how the plants are doing.

in horticulture. Since then, it has grown from 5 to 25 acres and has 160,000 square feet of greenhouse space.

Mark Leichty, director of business development, said branding and product recognition have been huge factors

in the nursery's success and stability.

The nursery has 12 trademarked groupings of plants that the owner and managers brainstormed to be catchy and recognizable. They include such items as "Blades of Glory," which refers to grasses that provide movement and texture.

When the nursery prepares to introduce a new product, the owner and managers gather for a week to brainstorm catchy names for it.

"If you could be a fly on the wall listening to us come up with new brand names, you would be impressed," Leichty said. "We want people to be able to recognize us."

The name and logo for the nursery follow Kanter's theme of different and recognizable.

Leichty said the name "Little Prince of Oregon" comes from the children's book "The Little Prince" that Kanter's father used to read to him as a bedtime story. His father used to call him "the Little Prince of Oregon."

The nursery's logo is a giant frog with a crown on its head. The nursery puts the frog logo on all of the plants, tags, publications and delivery trucks.

Leichty said his favorite part about driving the delivery trucks is seeing the reactions and smiles from other drivers on the highway when they see the giant cartoon frog.

Beyond brand recognition, Leichty said the nursery's attention to detail has played a big role in bringing repeat customers back to the nursery.

While Leichty is looking

at making the nursery more automated, he said it will continue to have the grounds crew hand-water each of the plants.

"We want to have eyes on every crop every day," Leichty said.

Leichty will design the Little Prince of Oregon booth at the Oregon Farwest Show and said he is looking forward to pushing outside of box more than he did last year.

In 2015, Leichty and Michael Hicks, the head grower, sported long beards made out of succulents and moss. The booth won the "Most Outside the Box" award at the show.

Leichty is planning to take it farther this year with an '80s rock band theme complete with Van Halen-style moss wigs, colored lights and drums and guitars as planters.

# Community college has plans to grow

By JANA SARGENT  
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The Horticulture Department at Chemeketa Community College has plans for a new Agricultural Complex that administrators hope will help the region's nursery industry thrive.

Holly Nelson, dean of agricultural sciences, said staff and faculty are working to tailor the program for the current demands of the horticulture industry and to better structure the degree for students who want to transfer to a four-year college for a bachelor's degree.

Chemeketa now offers courses in nursery and greenhouse management and a two-year associate degree in horticulture.

"We feel we haven't tapped in very well to the full potential of this program," said Andrew Hone, Chemeketa vice president of governance and administration.

The program enrollment fluctuates between 60 and 100 students, depending on the season and courses offered.

The biggest part of the program's growth plan is the proposed Agricultural Complex.

The proposal includes classrooms, organic garden areas, crop areas, nursery hoop houses, specialty garden areas and possibly an amphitheater. It will also include the existing community partnership food farm.

Greg Harris, Chemeketa's public information officer, said the community college has submitted the plan to the state for funding.

He said the project is high on the priority list for the state but Chemeketa won't get a decision until the legislative session concludes in spring of 2017.

The first phase of the plan to grow the agriculture department will be the addition of a Woody Ornamental Laboratory. The department was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the J. Frank Schmidt Family Charitable Foundation to build the lab. Chemeketa matched the donation for the lab, which Nelson anticipates will be done this fall.

The laboratory will be on the Salem

campus and dedicated to demonstrations about various woody ornamental grow systems such as pot-in-pot, baled and burlapped and field grown.

The department has also begun working closely with Oregon State University to develop a strong transfer degree in horticulture.

Harris said students are split evenly between those wanting a finished degree or certificate to go to work and those looking to transfer to a four-year college.

Nelson said OSU has been involved in designing courses that create a more seamless pathway to transfer.

Industry advisory committees helped spark another educational innovation. The college is designing five certificates for students who want education in a specific area without pursuing an associate degree.

Joleen Schilling, horticulture faculty member, said Chemeketa will offer certificates focused on landscape design, landscape maintenance, sustainable practices, small farms and integrated pest management.



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Holly Nelson, dean of agricultural sciences, and Andrew Hone, vice president of governance and administration, try the edible plants at the Chemeketa Community College Horticulture Department in Salem, Ore.



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