

Nursery thrives despite remote location

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Marlene Godfrey started Godfrey Nursery in 1981 with little more than a 50-foot greenhouse.

Located outside the small town of Aumsville in Oregon's Willamette Valley, the nursery is now owned by Godfrey's daughter, Jennifer, and her husband, Darren Schad. It operates on about 3 acres, with an expansion underway.

Godfrey Nursery produces annuals, perennials, vegetables,

hanging baskets and containers, shrubs, trees and a full selection of hard goods including a gift shop and yard art by local crafters.

"We're kind of unique in what we do here," Darren said. "We're like a wholesale nursery for retail; we grow almost everything ourselves. We're propagating every other week from December to March, averaging 35,000 cuttings at a time."

Their biggest trade is in hanging baskets. They produce more than 20,000 baskets annually from the thousands of flats

of annual flowers they put out every year. The number goes up every year.

Also on the rise is the call for vegetable starts.

"The demand is crazy for vegetables now; a lot of people have their own little greenhouses," Darren said. "The biggest pick-up has been among the younger people."

The nursery is open daily March through September. In response to repeated customer requests, this year for the first time it will be open during the holidays. During the three weekends following Thanksgiving, they'll sell greenery baskets, containers and other gift items.

"That's kind of how we've driven the nursery for the past 30 years, people asking if we'll do things," Darren said. "It's risky; you don't want to go too crazy."

They employ some social media for promotions but the bulk of their clientele comes through word-of-mouth.

Watching over the decades, a pattern has become evident: Regular customers being show-



Brenna Wiegand/For the Capital Press
Godfrey Nursery owners Darren and Jennifer Godfrey Schad rearrange newly grown hanging baskets. The Aumsville, Ore., nursery produces more than 20,000 baskets annually.

ing up as soon as the nursery opens for the season, peaking around May 1. June then brings an annual flood of new customers who've just heard about the place from those other customers.

"Mom passed away from Alzheimer's last spring," Jennifer said. "Sadly, this prevented her from enjoying the growth

of the nursery through the past years."

Since assuming ownership in 1997, Jennifer and Darren have learned who's really in charge.

"Without a doubt, Mother Nature drives the bus," Darren said. "When the weather's good, sales are good. You've got to watch for severe cold, too. I do a lot of staying up at night to watch the greenhouses. Though we try to stay preventative there are always things like

heaters that decide they don't want to work."

While their location off the beaten path has prevented even some locals from discovering Godfrey Nursery, it doesn't deter visitors from as far away as Seattle, Idaho and Central Oregon, including landscapers, independent garden center owners and municipalities.

"They'll bring a big trailer or truck and start filling it," Darren said. "Some make monthly trips."

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