

K's Nursery: Wide selection key to success

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

COLTON, Ore. — By the time Ken and Kathy Carroll got together 28 years ago, they already shared many years of nursery and greenhouse experience.

They decided to start their own nursery in the countryside near Colton, Ore., on the 4 acres where Kathy grew up. They started K's Nursery in 1993.

One greenhouse has become 10, and over the years they have built a diverse collection.

"We have everything," Kathy said. "We grow baskets, annuals and perennials; trees, shrubs, vines, berries, herbs; and vegetables of all kinds. We try



Brenna Wiegand/For the Capital Press

Kathy Carroll of K's Nursery is surrounded by the hundreds of flats of annuals she and her husband, Ken, propagate every year.

to have a large variety of things."

In previous years, the Carrolls participated in plant sales and farmers markets, but after the closures of the COVID-19 year, they realized that wasn't necessary to keep their nursery profitable.

Kathy said it helps to be part of the Molalla Country Farm Loop, a community of family farms and businesses that have banded together to provide visitors with a taste of the bounty the Willamette Valley has to offer.

K's Nursery is open about 7 months a year during spring, summer and fall. They have some wholesale sales but most of their business is at their retail nursery.

On a recent day Kathy was finishing some color-themed baskets for an upcoming wedding. The nursery produces hundreds of flats of annuals and perennials every year.



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F&B Farms & Nursery: Keeping in touch with customers year-round

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

WOODBURN, Ore. — Much has changed since 1997, when brothers Fred and Bill Geschwill and their wives, Leigh and Heidi, started a small retail garden center in Woodburn, Ore.

Though mostly wholesale now, the family has kept the retail center, which is run by Bill's wife, Heidi Geschwill.

Leigh Geschwill, who is Fred's wife, says it provides them with "direct access to market research."

F&B Farms and Nursery grows organic vegetables, flower baskets, bedding plants, grasses and perennials. They also have a farm where they grow about 1,000 acres of hops, row crops, hazelnuts and grass seed.

In addition to the plants and flowers in the greenhouse, F&B has a brisk business in propagating hops for other farmers.

The nursery ships product 52 weeks a year. In a typical year it sells around 3 million plants.

The plants go to independent retailers all over Oregon and Washington and into Idaho, accommodating the various terrains and climates that make up their market.

"The beautiful thing about being a greenhouse business vs. a nursery business is having frequent contact with our customers all year," Leigh said. "We will keep using some of the ways we stayed in touch during COVID. Our buyers are busy and it is difficult for them to get away to visit vendors and see products in person, so we post pictures with our availability lists and have done Zoom tours of the nursery



F&B Farms

Leigh Geschwill of F&B Farms and Nursery amid the millions of plants shipped annually. The Woodburn, Ore., operation includes a retail store, wholesale and retail greenhouses and a farm.

to stay connected."

But in-person visits are still the best, she said.

"The Farwest Show is coming back this summer and we're really looking forward to seeing people again," she said.

The nursery has 35 to 40 permanent employees and hires contract labor in the spring.

"We try to take care of our employees and make sure they know we appreciate them, which includes finding ways to make their jobs less labor intensive," Leigh said.

"We also spend a lot of time making sure our computer system and how we process our order-pulling, planting line and other paperwork is efficient so we're not having to do extra work or rework," Leigh

said. "It makes a huge difference not having to run out to the same greenhouse 10 times in a day."

It also leaves more time for industry involvement. Leigh remains heavily involved in the Oregon Association of Nurseries, of which she is a past president.

Fred, past president of the Oregon Hop Commission, is Oregon Aglink's current board president. Leigh and Fred are big proponents of its Adopt a Farmer program.

"There are so many benefits to that program," Geschwill said. "Probably the most important is connecting kids to the land. The kids love going out to farms and seeing how things are done and where their food and their plants come from."