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Geoff Parks/For the Capital Press

Darren and Jennifer Schad operate Godfrey Nursery near Aumsville, Ore.

GODFREY NURSERY

'Every year is an adventure'

By **GEOFF PARKS**
For the Capital Press

AUMSVILLE, Ore. — Jennifer and Darren Schad took over Godfrey Nursery from Jennifer's mother, but like others in the agriculture business, they take their marching orders from Mother Nature.

"Every year is an adventure," Jennifer said of the business they have shepherded through wild weather, economic instability and other "year-around and non-stop" factors over the past 27 years.

Thankfully, the couple easily match the fast pace and labor-intensive nature of their 14-acre retail operation with their own personalities.

Godfrey Nursery was a small operation run by Jennifer's mother, Marlene — now deceased — and father, Pat Godfrey.

But it is now a strictly retail operation — mainly greenhouses growing and propagating all manner of annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs, shrubs and trees.

"We're open year-around, and this type of business is weather-driven

and follows the seasons," Darren said. "We work around Mother Nature."

Jennifer said hurdles over the past three years such as the pandemic, area wildfires, an ice storm, a heat wave, snow and, this year, "the coldest, wettest spring recorded" has tested their abilities to adapt.

The wholesale side of the business was dropped because "we could not keep up with growing enough for ourselves," Jennifer said.

Married 35 years, both worked for other nurseries before coming back to Godfrey Nursery to work for Jennifer's parents.

"And, family-like, we just sort of built it up," Darren said. "When they retired, that's when we took over the business."

"We're very blessed because word-of-mouth is our biggest way of advertising," Jennifer said. "We're the growers, so it's not being shipped or packaged, and we can sell quality products at an affordable price."

The couple grows 90-95% of their products on-site at the small piece of land between the rural communities of Shaw and Aumsville. They have a

large tree selection ranging from smaller varieties such as dogwoods to larger shade and flowering trees like maples and evergreens.

Succulents, house plants and some tropical plants like palm trees also figure into the mix of offerings.

"We grow around 20,000 to 25,000 hanging plants," Darren said. Two acres of plants are under cover, he added, and 2 acres of outside growing area are set aside for the shrub production.

About 10 full-time employees keep things running smoothly at the nursery, which is open in the spring and summer from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and in the winter from 9 to 4.

Some of the rules they have set for themselves over the years include listening to their customers and keeping their products affordable.

"I think you get out of it what you put into it," Darren said, to which Jennifer added, "We don't take days off, we just don't. We enjoy it, but we adapt and we don't follow trends."

She said their philosophy is simple: "We're truly blessed with our customer base, and we strive to better ourselves every year."