

## COLUMBIA NURSERY

# First generation growers raise a family and a nursery

By MOLLY CRUSE  
Capital Press

CANBY, Ore. — Hundreds of shades of green and purple decorate Columbia Nursery — from hardy conifers to stunning Japanese maples — the relatively new nursery already boasts a wide variety of tree stock.

Wayne and Amanda Staehely bought the 80-acre nursery in 2013. Although neither Wayne nor Amanda are new to farming, being first generation nursery owners has come with its challenges.

“Originally, I had nothing to do with the nursery,” said Amanda, who grew up on a nursery but decided instead to pursue her passion of becoming a ballerina. “When Wayne and I first got married, he said, ‘I think the nursery is gonna be my thing, and you’re gonna have your thing, too. Is that OK?’”

Initially, Amanda agreed. Growing up, both of her parents worked on her family’s nursery full-time. “My mom did office and my dad worked outside in the field,” Amanda said. “I didn’t want that.” So instead, Amanda opened a pilates studio.

But nine years later, Amanda sold her studio and now works at the nursery full-time.

“I started helping with the books and the trucks and shipping, and then I ended up jumping into all of it,” said Amanda. “Now I order everything, I do the fertilizer, I run the crew, and it’s so fun. I’ve learned a lot and



Molly Cruse/Capital Press

**Amanda and Wayne Staehely stand in front of a few of their conifer trees at Columbia Nursery. Although the couple started in the nursery industry in 2005, they moved to their current location in 2013.**

I like that challenge. And then at night when Wayne comes home, he tells me everything I did wrong and what we need to do the next day. And then we just keep moving forward.”

Although Columbia Nursery was initially born of Wayne’s love for plants, it has thrived on Wayne and Amanda’s combined dedication to working together and

Amanda’s industry knowledge and business mindset.

“I think that Wayne and I work well together,” said Amanda. “Because his passion is definitely these plants. He loves plants and I love the business and the nursery industry. I like the people in the industry a lot. And I love the family life it provides for us.”

Amanda has grown to love

working on the nursery so much that even her kids have taken notice. “Last year, my husband was pruning a tree and while he’s cutting it, my youngest (child) goes: ‘No, don’t do that to Mommy’s trees,’” Amanda said.

In addition to the nursery, Wayne works full-time as a steamfitter.

“Time management is the big-

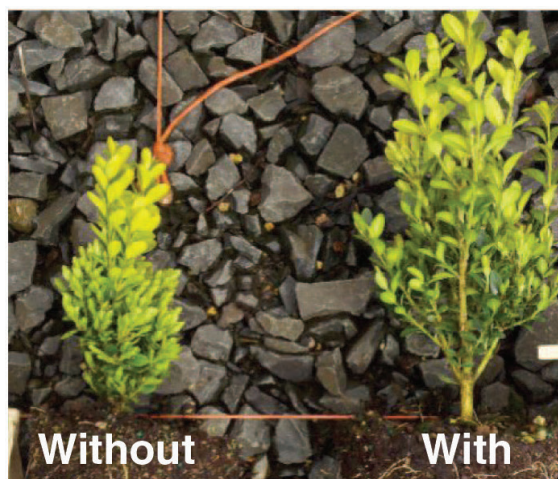
gest challenge,” said Wayne. Together, Amanda and Wayne have three children, all under 8 years old. “Family is important. So I’m trying to focus on family and the kids. But the nursery is a living thing. You always have to be out there, making sure (the plants) are alive. It never stops.”

Throughout Columbia Nursery, there is evidence that it is not only a thriving business, but also a family home. Yellow toy diggers and children’s excavation toys decorate a mulch pile near the Staehelys’ home. For Amanda, the best part of living and working at the nursery full-time has been the lifestyle it’s created for her and her family.

“I love the freedom of the fact I get to do this with my kids,” she said. “...My son, who’s in preschool, is here in the afternoons. And when he’s not in preschool, he’s here helping me load a truck, or my 8-year-old will drive a loader and help me go get plants ready for the next load.”

Although Columbia Nursery has 10 employees, one of Amanda and Wayne’s favorite parts of their nursery operation is being able to work together.

“Wayne definitely says that his absolute favorite times are when we walk around at night, and it’s getting dark,” said Amanda. “In the summer especially, and we go to change water and we have a drink and we’re walking around the fields. And we start asking each other questions about different plants. And he’ll tell me, ‘This is what I used to dream about.’”



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