

WOODBURN NURSERY AND AZALEAS

Investing for the future

By **MOLLY CRUSE**
Capital Press

WOODBURN, Ore. — In 1968, changing economic trends and a competency for growing florals were driving factors in Bob and Jean Fessler's decision to shift from raising mink and hazelnuts to starting Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas.

Today, their six children — Tom Fessler, Rick Fessler, Karen Jaeger, Sandy Traeger and Jodi Arritola — are co-owners of the nursery.

Tom Fessler, current president of Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas, grew up pulling weeds and helping his parents run the irrigation equipment. After graduating from high school, he started working at the nursery full-time.

"People ask me if, from my parents' perspective, 'Did they ever dream it would become what it is?' and (my parents) had no idea, it just kind of evolved this way," said Tom. "They didn't say, 'I want to be this size' or whatever it is. It just kept evolving. The cus-



Molly Cruse/Capital Press

Tom Fessler, president of Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas. "Probably the biggest thing that I think I appreciate about my parents is the fact that they were willing to spend money to be innovative with greenhouses with equipment, you name it," he said.

tomer demand was there, so every year they would just do more."

His parents started on 15 acres. Today, Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas has grown to approximately 500 acres. Before Tom became involved with the nursery full-time, Bob and Jean had begun transitioning from solely growing azaleas to also growing landscape plants. Tom expanded on this by growing rhododendrons and other shrubs.

"Probably the biggest thing that I think I appreciate about my parents is the

fact that they were willing to spend money to be innovative with greenhouses with equipment, you name it," said Tom.

For him, the investment his parents put into the business paved the way for both the business and his family's future.

"My parents ran a very successful business and they invested back into it for the long term," said Tom. "And my siblings and I are doing the same thing right now."

And that investment is felt by the next generation of Woodburn Nursery and Aza-

leas growers. Kyle Fessler, Tom's son, is now in charge of growing and production at the nursery. For Kyle, the investment of time, energy and innovative thinking

that the generations before him invested have allowed him to focus on enhancing the quality of the plants the nursery grows. "Quality is the standard here that really sets us apart," said Kyle. "A lot of the mechanization and technology that we've used to help keep that standard up and keep our efficiencies up has been really the driving force over the last few decades."

In addition to the generational support, Kyle says collaborating with other industry professionals has been a huge help with the nursery's success.

"Working with (the Oregon Association of Nurseries) has gotten me a lot better

at our own operation," said Kyle. "I've learned a lot. We work with a lot of different growers and business owners that know a lot about a lot of things. You learn a ton of stuff from those guys."

Today, Tom hopes that Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas will continue to grow and support other nurseries in the area.

"One of the things that my dad always said, was he wanted the West Coast to work together to produce high-quality plants, because we are competitors, but we're not fierce competitors," said Tom. "...We hope that we, as the West Coast, develop a good reputation throughout the industry."



HARVEST CAPITAL COMPANY, LLC

dba Harvest Capital Company of America, LLC in AZ, CA, ID, MT, NE, UT, and WA

DEDICATED TO THE BUSINESS OF AGRICULTURE

Long Term Real Estate Lending for Agriculture

Give us a call at: (503) 263-6616

690 NW 1st AVE | SUITE 101 | CANBY, OR 97013

HARVCAP.COM | [f](#) [in](#) [@](#)

Terms and conditions apply. Financing offered in connection with Farmer Mac and our underwriting partners, and is available only where Harvest Capital Company, LLC is licensed. To qualify, a borrower must meet the underwriting requirements and all credit is subject to approval. Interest rates and fees will vary depending on your individual situation. Not all applicants will qualify. Testimonial is not indicative of future performance or success. NMLS No. - 2237848

Check out the **NEW Self-Propelled Sprayers!**

STORAGE & APPLICATION SOLUTIONS



CALL TODAY TO SCHEDULE A DEMO

WE DELIVER ANYWHERE!

JT SUPPLY
541-928-2937

31989 Cinema Way,
Tangent, OR

From Hwy 34, go North on
HWY 99E for a half mile.
Turn west on Cinema Way