

# Nurseries major portion of the local economy

The Sandy and Boring area contains some of the best land in the country for nurseries.

And local growers are taking advantage of it. In 1980, Clackamas County grossed 20 million in nursery sales which is the top amount in the state and the Boring-Sandy area had a huge part in it. "Boring used to be the leading area in the nation for nursery stock," said Cliff Paul, owner of Paul Brothers and Alpine Nursery, 8655 SE Revenue Road, Boring.

Why is the Boring-Sandy area so rich in nurseries?

"A combination of soil and climate," said Paul, "it is the most ideal climate probably in the world for growing."

The soil is "good, heavy, soil with not much clay" he said. The top soil is two to three feet deep, which allows for drainage.

Dave Dillard, owner of Dillard's Nursery, on 13265 SE Bluff Road, agreed with Paul.

"The climate's perfect for growing plants," he said. "It's moderate — not too hot, not too cold and there's plenty of rain to keep the trees green."

There may seem to be a lot of nurseries in the Boring-Sandy area now, but there used to be a lot more until housing in the area increased and zoning became more strict.

"The taxes became so excessive that the land was sold out to developers," said Paul. "A lot of them (nurseries), moved to Canby. Their land and taxes are cheaper."

But now, because of the high interest rates, there is a lack of building, which is hurting nursery businesses.

"Business is a lot slower this year than last," said Dillard. "If the building and housing doesn't pick up, we'll be out of business."

The recession has also hurt the nursery business. As the costs of everything else went up, so did the costs for labor, shipping and supplies for nurseries, according to Ray McNeilan, local extension agent. Labor costs were the highest because there are so many extra hands hired in summer. So, the nurseries, like all other businesses, raised their costs.

About 95 percent of the stock grown in Oregon is shipped out of state through brokerages, McNeilan said. The remaining five percent goes to retail

nurseries and landscapers. Ninety percent of Alpine's stock is shipped to places like Utah and Idaho. They ship mostly pines, conifers, evergreens and mugo pines and start shipping out in February and April.

"We ship in accordance to the climate and environment that they will do well in," said Paul. "We wouldn't ship azaleas to the midwest because it would freeze out in the winter."

Dealing through brokerages is advantageous to both the buyers and sellers.

"You're selling large quantities," said Paul. "It takes as much to sell one to 10 plants to a customer, as it takes to sell 100 to 500 to a brokerage."

There is also more security in dealing with a brokerage.

"You're dealing with fewer people and more reputable firms," said Paul. "You know you'll get your money from them."

Brokerages are also advantageous to the buyers.

"The company is large enough to supply the needs of the buyers," said Paul, therefore the companies won't lose through the market.

Growers need that security in case of a bad season or bad weather conditions.

Severe winters can be a problem, said Paul, although the past three years of ice storms did not seem to affect most nurseries stock. However, the older trees did feel the effects.

"Ice storms can be very bad if trees are too old," said Paul, "they will give in and break. Young trees are more flexible."

Dillard had no problem with the ice storm either. "Most of my trees just bent over and came back up," Dillard said.

Most nurseries have plastic shelters called lathe houses to protect plants from rain, hail and sun.

Rain can also be a problem, because if there is too much rain, the ground can't be worked and if there is not enough in two to three months it can cause a problem, according to Dillard. But in Oregon, droughts are rare.

A lot of rain is especially good for growing nursery stock especially in the months of April, May and June which are the best months for selling.

Soil, as well as the infamous Oregon rain, is a key to the success of nurseries in the Sandy and Boring area.



Planting evergreens at Alpine Nursery in Boring.

stories, photos by Shannon Kelley

## Local retailers diversify to meet the demand

While Boring and Sandy are buried in a heap of wholesale nurseries, only three retail nurseries touch its ground.

The oldest in the area, Janz Berryland, 37601 Highway 26 in Sandy, has been supplying fruits, vegetables, flowers and nursery stock to local residents for the past 19 years.

Anton Nigdek, manager of Janz, is more partial to fruit.

"At fruits and vegetables, I'm a professional and at shrubs I'm a semi-professional," said Nigdek.

Janz gets most of its fruit from Hood River but gets 80 percent of its nursery stock from wholesalers in the area.

Since Janz first opened in 1961, business has expanded, including its nursery stock. Janz carries varieties of shrubs, bed plants and fruit trees, but plans on expanding its stock next year.

"We're increasing our nursery stock," said Nigdek, including more ground cover and fruit trees.

"Next year most of the plants will be in the lathe-house," Nigdek said.

Nigdek has learned a lot about the nursery business since Janz first opened, including when to order.

"You have to plan in July for (next) June, and the previous year is when you have to order the plants," he said.

Flowers are the favorite for Nigdek at Janz and different times of the year are good for different types of flowers. April, May and June are the busiest months, especially now with so many holidays. This month the popular item is azaleas.

"We can't get enough of them," said Nigdek, "that's our big Mother's Day special."

Most of Janz's customers are



Paul Dube of Wonderview Nursery does a little garden work on his lot.

from the Sandy area, with a few from eastern Oregon and out of state. Over the year, Nigdek has built up a trade with his customers.

"Dealing with the people is what I like most," Nigdek said, "with basically the same people coming back and back, we have built up a reputation."

Wonderview Nursery and garden center, located at 29300 SE

Haley Rd. in Boring, opened for business a month-and-a-half ago. Formerly Glendoveer Nursery, the new business has seen a lot of traffic since it opened.

"I've been surprised how well we've done in the last month," said Paul Dube, who co-owns the business with Kevin Sturdy.

Like Janz, April, May and June are the best months for selling, ac-

ording to Dube.

Wonderview stocks basically rhododendrons, heather, flowering trees, ground cover (moss and ivy), shrubs and bedding.

Being sort of green in the nursery business when he first started, Dube has found that there is a lot to know in the nursery business.

"I knew a little at first but I've

always enjoyed it," said Dube. Now Dube is learning more every day.

"We need to know how big the plant will get, where it should be planted, about fertilizer, chemicals, diseases, when to water and how to protect," said Dube.

"We try to give the customers ideas on what might look best," said Dube, "It makes me feel good

to give good advice to people.

"I learn 10 new things every day," said Dube, "and it's interesting to me because it doesn't come to a climax and stop."

Toney's Farm Marketing, located at 42340 SE Highway 26, is a unique type of nursery. Owned and operated by Anne Wickersham and her husband, Toney's nursery, not to be confused with Toney's berries, began as a back porch hobby that got "completely out of hand," according to Wickersham.

The business began one year ago when a friend asked her if she wanted a green house for her small container plants she was raising. The green house turned out to be 26-feet wide, so Wickersham decided to start her own business.

Now, Toney carries everything from azaleas to birch, from rhododendrons to aborvitas, with all the starters shipped from Hawaii, Costa Rica and other places.

Wickersham raises all the plants herself and sells the seedlings to buyers from California, Eugene, wholesalers and retailers, but mostly to individual customers from Sandy, Estacada and other areas.

"I've gained an awful lot of senior citizens by selling individual plants," said Wickersham, "its too much for them to buy a lot of plants; here they can have their pick."

Toney's has also diversified, which means that when one product, such as berries, are in a slump, everything else can be raised.

"They sort of compromise for one another," Wickersham said. "A lot of businesses have diversified — it's something to fall back on."