

FARWEST SHOW DISPLAYS STRONG GROWTH

2016 marks the second consecutive year of higher attendance

Portland, Oregon — The Farwest Show continues to grow — just like Oregon’s high quality plants, trees and shrubs.

More than 6,300 industry professionals turned out for the 2016 edition of the national nursery and greenhouse industry expo. It was a 6 percent increase over 2015, making it the second consecutive year that attendance went up.

The show also saw 53 new exhibitors to the show, which was the most since 2012. The total number of exhibitors was over 400, representing a 4 percent increase over 2015.

“Exhibiting at Farwest is good for business, both short and long term,” OAN Executive Director Jeff Stone said. “Handshake agreements are still part of how business is done, which is why it was great to see so many new connections made on the show floor, on the tours, or even at events like the Farwest Pub Crawl. We are thrilled with the number of new attendees and exhibitors, the number of formal and informal tours people took during Farwest week, and the fact that we’ve kept our show unique, successful and green.”

The Farwest Show was held Thursday–Saturday, August 25–27, 2016 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon. Founded in 1973, it remains the largest green industry trade show in the West. It is produced by the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN), which represents Oregon’s \$894-million-and-growing nursery industry.

For the second year, the show was marketed with a theme of “Far From Ordinary,” including ads that featured the “Farwest Fanatics” — industry leaders who were coiffed with green plant material.

“The marketing campaign was intentionally provocative and it is really cool to see how it has garnered such national recognition and attention,” Stone said. “To have Dr. Charlie Hall in a mohawk made of plants is just awesome. Farwest is an experience, it is educational, but most of all, it is a premier way to show off the industry on our home turf.”

Attendees responded with a strong turnout, not just in numbers, but in quality. Exhibitors were pleased with the traffic to their booths, as well as the increased number of orders placed at the show.

“I wasn’t getting lookie loos — I was getting real buyers,” said Tom Brewer of HC Companies Inc. and ProCal, based in Twinsburg, Ohio.

“It surpassed all of our expectations as a first-year exhibitor,” said Daniel Madland of Bridgetown Garden Tools in Portland, Oregon.

“We were getting some people from other parts of the country — some folks from the East Coast,” said Chris Harling of Eshraghi Nursery in Hillsboro, Oregon. “With the tightening of supplies, people are coming out West again.”

“The show allowed us to catch up with old contacts we hadn’t seen in a while,” said Kyle Russell of Russell’s Nursery in Aurora, Oregon, which was exhibiting for the first time in five years. “We were really busy. We had a lot of conversations. I’m pretty happy.”

This year’s show featured a free keynote presentation by globally-known green industry economist Dr. Charlie Hall of Texas A&M University, who stated that he expects continued industry growth for at least the next two years, and only a remote chance of a recession during that time.

Other highly regarded experts also appeared, including Judy Sharpton, Lloyd Traven, Dan Hinkley, Suzanne Wainwright-Evans, Ron Rosenberg and many others. They shared new ways the green industry can anticipate and meet evolving customer needs and capitalize on the market opportunities of the future.

Continuing Farwest features included the following:

- New Varieties Showcase, with 55 amazing new plant introductions;
- Idea Center for Retailers, with mini-seminars aimed at garden center operators;
- Solutions Center for Growers, featuring mini-seminars aimed at helping wholesale growers improve their operations and profitability;
- Growers Showcase, a show floor display highlighting the exciting possibilities of plants for pollinators; and
- Walk the Show Floor with Experts, where Sharpton, Hinkley and Wainwright-Evans gave small-group tours highlighting some of their favorite plant picks and products on the show floor.
- Networking events including the Farwest Pub Crawl, the Emergent event for young nursery professionals, and the Women in Horticulture gathering.

Planning and marketing efforts are already underway for the 2017 Farwest Show, which will take place next August 24–26, 2017 at the Oregon Convention Center.

“We are determined to make sure that Farwest keeps building and building on the success of the last two years,” Stone said. “The value of the show depends on who is there. By offering a ‘Far From Ordinary’ experience that stays fresh every year, we can ensure that more people attend, more exhibitors sign up, exhibitors and attendees get more out of it, and everyone wins. Oregon may make the best laurels — as well as the best shade trees, flowering trees, shrubs, perennials and much more — but we don’t believe in resting on them.”

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The Farwest Show is produced by the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN), a trade organization that represents and serves the interests of the ornamental horticulture industry. Any revenue realized by the OAN is reinvested into the industry through education, research, marketing support and government relations. For more information about Farwest, visit www.FarwestShow.com or call 503-682-5089.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN), based in Wilsonville, represents more than 800 wholesale growers, retailers, landscapers and suppliers. Oregon's ornamental horticulture industry is among the state's largest agricultural commodities, with annual sales of \$894 million. Oregon's nursery industry is a traded sector; nearly 75 percent of the nursery plants grown in Oregon are shipped out of state. For information, visit www.oan.org or call 503-682-5089.

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Other comments from the show:

Gerald Enthoven, Plantaflor USA Inc., Summerland, California

“We had a great show. We had a lot of walk up people and we wrote a very reasonable number of orders. We had a constant flow of people.”

Peter Berkhout, Gavita Canada Inc., Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada

First time exhibiting at Farwest with this company.

“I’m really satisfied. We have made some very good contacts.”

Brian Connelly, Bridgetown Garden Tools, Portland, Oregon

“We were surprised at the networking. We didn’t expect to meet so many people who could help us.”

Vinny Grasso, A & R Spada Farms, St. Paul, Oregon

“This year I’m seeing more people who came here from a distance.”

Josh Robinson, Robinson Nursery, Amity, Oregon

“We uncovered a few potential accounts we didn’t know were there, including from New Mexico, Arizona and California. There’s been a good value in the show.”

Don Sprague, Garden Gallery Iron Works, Hubbard, Oregon

“I love the positive attitude that’s in the air and a lot of that is created from the organization itself. A lot of it is about the industry — what we’ve done, where we’re going.”