



**OREGON**  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NURSERIES

29751  
SW Town Center  
Loop W

Wilsonville, OR  
97070

Phone  
503.682.5089

Toll-free  
1.800.342.6401

Fax  
503.682.5099

Web  
[www.oan.org](http://www.oan.org)

Email  
[jaguirre@oan.org](mailto:jaguirre@oan.org)

## **Testimony before the Committee on Ways and Means, Natural Resources Subcommittee**

**John Aguirre, Executive Director  
Oregon Association of Nurseries  
March 3, 2009**

Co-Chairs Walker and Jenson and members of the Committee, I am John Aguirre, Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN). I appreciate the opportunity to share out thoughts concerning the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget for the 2009 – 11 biennium.

In comparison to our peer associations in other states throughout the nation, I find the both the OAN and Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry have an unusually positive and beneficial relationship with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. With respect to ODA, our members see more government as a good thing. In fact, our members value ODA so highly, that industry members pay significant licensee fees under ODA's nursery inspection program: some nurseries pay \$20,000 in license fees. Without a license, industry members cannot grow, buy and sell commercial quantities of nursery and greenhouse plants.

In fiscal year 2008, nursery license fees generated \$1.7 million in revenue for ODA's nursery program and an additional \$282,000 in funds for research. In addition, in 2005, the nursery industry sought legislative authority to establish and fund, through a special assessment of industry operators, a pest and disease emergency fund to be available if and when an emergency requires an immediate response by ODA. The emergency fund balance now currently stands at \$276,000.

In combination with Christmas tree program license revenue, industry assessments support a total of 17 staff, of which 14 serve as inspectors who work to safeguard against the movement of harmful pests and diseases, assist with industry compliance with state and federal phytosanitary regulations and facilitate out-of-state shipments of more than \$700 million worth of plant material. Industry has consistently supported increases in license fees to ensure a strong, credible program of inspection at ODA. However, it's crucial the Legislature protects and preserves the intended use of industry assessments that fund very specific programs of regulation to ensure industry's continued trust and confidence in the current system.

Unfortunately, our industry cannot support through fees the entirety of the many programs and services operating at ODA which contribute to a strong, healthy and vital agricultural economy. Many programs and services are justifiably funded by general revenue and lottery dollars. I would like to quickly review some key program areas that benefit nursery and greenhouse growers and the state, more generally:

### Market Development

ODA's international market development activities deliver crucial support for nursery trade initiatives. Based on a combination of federal market development funds, industry funds and ODA funding, ODA and industry have made tremendous progress

during the last past eight years to develop market opportunities in China and Japan for Oregon nursery stock.

Key activities of ODA trade specialists include:

- Facilitate assessments of foreign market opportunities;
- Advocate for and manage funding from the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (a conduit for USDA market development funds);
- Organize and staff outbound trade missions where an official government presence enables access to key trade officials and buyers;
- Support inbound trade missions of foreign delegations to Oregon's Farwest Show (an industry trade show) and facilitate tours of Oregon nurseries;
- Work with USDA officials to address international shipping barriers and issues; and,
- Provide language expertise and cultural information that has increased sale effectiveness.

As a result of these efforts, ODA has opened markets in Japan and China for Oregon growers, thus providing much needed sales opportunities during this economic downturn. Combined, these efforts have generated \$30 million in industry sales to Asia over an eight-year period.

#### Plant Pests and Diseases

ODA staff have earned a national reputation among state plant health officials for their leadership, effectiveness, dedication and innovative approach to plant pest and disease issues. It is vitally important to preserve those ODA staff and programs that allow Oregon to quickly and effectively address emerging pest and disease threats.

Currently, there are populations of Japanese beetle in and around the Portland Airport and nearby commercial warehouse and transshipment facilities that must be eradicated. A failure to conduct continual surveillance and to eradicate pests like Japanese beetle would place unsustainable burdens on Oregon's agricultural industries and result in increased use of costly pesticides, and the establishment of new invasive pest populations would harm our state's native plant resources.

The Japanese beetle populations around the Portland Airport are believed to have arrived by aircraft and on long-haul trucks.

In Eugene, ODA has detected a breeding population of Gypsy moths. Which likely arrived on goods moved from out-of-state by car or truck to Oregon. We can look to the Eastern United States, where annually more than 1 million acres of trees become defoliated and weakened by Gypsy moth caterpillars, to see how the establishment of Gypsy moth in Oregon would harm our native moths and butterflies, and threaten the health of our forests.

If the Gypsy moth becomes established in Oregon, apart from the negative impact on Oregon's native biodiversity and forestry systems, it will impact our agriculture and forestry industry. During the 1980s, a large Gypsy moth outbreak in Lane County resulted in quarantine restrictions on many agricultural products leaving the county, which required chemical pesticides before they were allowed to ship into commerce.

Today, Oregon faces the threat of Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) introductions from California, which if established in Oregon would result in severe economic repercussions for our

agricultural economy. For threats such as Japanese beetle, Gypsy moth, LBAM or Sudden Oak Death in Curry County, a strong and effective plant health programs at ODA are vital.

#### Oregon Invasive Species Council

The Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC), which the legislature created in 2001, plays a valuable role in protecting our state from invasive species. The council serves four primary functions: (a) create, maintain, and publicize a system for invasive species sightings; (b) enhance awareness of invasive species through outreach and education efforts; (c) develop and maintain a statewide plan to deal with invasive species; and (d) administer a trust account to fund outreach and education, and eradication and control projects. The council also develops a list of 100 most dangerous invaders threatening Oregon.

We believe the Council's effectiveness dramatically improved when a new coordinator was hired in December 2007. The OISC provides neutral ground for various agencies, stakeholder interests and experts to gather, discuss and identify key invasive species priorities, goals and activities. The investment in the coordinator position allows for more efficient utilization of public and private sector funds to address invasive species and failure to fund the coordinator position will mean a significant loss in our state's overall efforts to combat invasive plant and animal species.

The OAN stands side-by-side with other key natural resource organizations to urge your continued support for adequate ODA funding. Under Director Katy Coba, we believe ODA benefits from outstanding leadership and the agency's staff bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge to their jobs. We believe Oregon derives enormous benefit from a strong and diverse agricultural economy and ODA is a key partner in our industry's continued success.