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The Adventurous Grower

by Judy Alleruzzo

Exploration and new opportunity has always been the pathway Grace Dinsdale, owner of Blooming Nursery, has taken in life.

During Grace's college years she explored many subjects in her quest to find a career that would make her truly happy. Among the many degree attempts, Grace studied Law, Veterinary science and eventually Botany. She didn't get there directly by any means. She found a love of working with plants when her brother asked her to set up a small produce stand on his property in Independence, Oregon. It was here that Grace constructed her first greenhouse and display garden filled with flowers. It was some of the hardest work and the longest hours she had worked, and she loved it.



Continuing on one path, but in multiple directions, Grace worked at several nurseries and worked in every possible area of the nursery business.

In the 80's she decided to head back to her family's home and dairy business in Cornelius, Oregon in an area called Blooming. It was around this time a new trend in perennial growing was surfacing in the gardening market. Grace, who loves a new and exciting adventure, consulted with her Mom about perennials she might try growing. Most people would start with 10 to 20 if they were brave. Grace started with 150 varieties, starting with many old favorites like Delphiniums and Columbines.

Grace's list has never shrunk. I'm sure it would bore her to pieces if she wasn't able to constantly be supplying gardeners with many of our favorite perennials as well as new and exciting releases. Blooming Nursery's plant list has now grown to over 2000 varieties, and now includes perennials, shrubs, vines, herbs, ornamental grasses and ground covers.

To handle this need, Blooming Nursery sits on 130 acres with 45,000 sq. ft. in plant propagation houses, and over 200,000 sq. ft. of heated and cold frame greenhouses. They do it all here, plugs, potted liners and bare root plants that are shipped across the U.S and Canada. They keep 45 acres alone in field grown plants to support their wide assortment of bare root crops. Their "retail-ready" plants roll over acres in their trademark burgundy pots that read "Blooming Advantage". This trademark name and tag line is well known to gardeners in the 5 surrounding states that Grace ships to every season.

Grace's sense of exploration also feeds her desire for innovation. She is continually evolving her business using leading edge technology that not only stands out in the nursery industry, but in all of agriculture. One of the



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technologies Blooming Nursery uses is the Ebb and Flow watering system in some of its greenhouses. Water literally floods the floor of the greenhouses filled with plants sitting on the floor. The plant will take up only the water it needs before the water recedes back to a holding pond. It saves both in water and labor, and it's great for the plant's health.



Blooming Nursery recently started another business adventure called Green Feathers. This exciting venue grows green roofs in modular systems. Among Green Feathers' new roof top client is The Portland Airport. They are currently growing modules to cover 12,000 sq. ft. of roof top. It will look like an ocean of sedum plants.

I don't think plant lovers will have to worry that Grace will run out of new ideas for the plant industry and she might need to find another career to keep her entertained. Recently, and most notably Grace made a huge commitment into the leading edge of solar thermal heating. Driving past Blooming Nursery you can't help but see the enormous holding tanks that hold approximately 300,000 gallons of water. The water heated by solar panels will then travel through tubing to heat the greenhouses from the bottom up on our colder days. This innovative way to heat greenhouses will not only save on the heating bill, but Grace is already excited about all the new additions she will be able to add to Blooming Nursery's plant list. One idea is to grow tropical plants for the retail customer.

Grace definitely has the drive and dreams, but she'll mention it over and over how impressed she is with her team of people. She is continually amazed with the amount of talent she has available to her and Blooming Nursery. "We all work together to grow the best plants for our customer's gardens. We want them to be successful," Grace commented.



So besides being an innovator, business person, and environmentalist, at the core, Grace is a plant person. When asked, what is your favorite plant, Grace replies, "you mean today, right now?" Sounds like a plant geek's reply. Lucky for us she is one with an attention deficit. You can fill your inner-plant-geek by going to www.bloomingnursery.com for great plant photos and info.