

From Forest Nursery Notes, Summer 2008

52. Friendly for fish: Salmon-Safe, Part 1. Stoops, R. OAN Digger 52(5):46-49. 2008.

friendly for



PROVIDES RECOGNITION

WARDSHIP

Imagine an advertising campaign where snappy-looking salmon — the quintessential symbol of the Pacific Northwest — are swimming in your irrigation pipes or leaping over your greenhouses, reminding us of a time when rivers in the Pacific Northwest were full of healthy salmon and river water was clean enough to drink.

Or imagine a customer walking into a garden center where your container stock is proudly wearing a stamp of salmon-friendly approval.

This is all closer to reality than you might think.

Salmon-Safe is a Portland, Ore.-based nonprofit whose primary mission is to certify salmon-friendly enterprises, giving them a nationally recognized eco-label they can wear proudly in the marketplace.

While labels such as “organic” are focused primarily on management practices that have a direct effect on the given crop, Salmon-Safe takes more of a whole-system look at your site’s relationship to the surrounding watershed.

Established in 1995, Salmon-Safe has focused over the last decade on

the Oregon wine industry, resulting in the certification of half of the Willamette Valley’s total wine-grape acreage. Other farm certifications led to a retail farm-product promotion in more than 250 stores.



The Salmon-Safe tag appears on Northwoods Nursery plants when they are sold at retail. It lets consumers know the nursery has been recognized for fish-friendly production techniques.

In more recent times, Salmon-Safe has begun certifying urban campuses and parks, such as the Nike World Headquarters in Portland; Kettle Foods

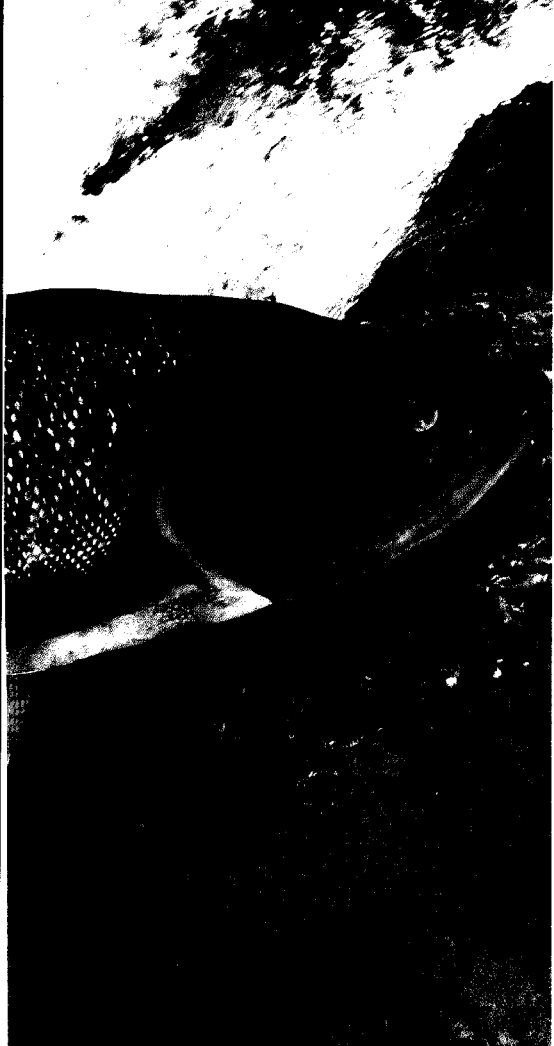
in Salem; and approximately 10,000 acres in the Portland Parks system.

Dan Kent, managing director of Salmon-Safe, hopes Oregon nursery growers can be next.

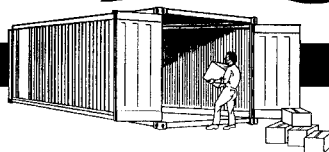
“Like the Oregon wine industry, the nursery industry has a story of environmental sustainability to tell,” he said. “Salmon-Safe certification can help communicate that story with integrity and in a way that resonates with consumers.”

Certification is based on a rigorous set of peer-reviewed standards that focus on water management practices, integrated pest management techniques, and the impact of your operation on local watershed health (regulatory agencies also participate in the peer review).

Many Oregon nurseries have long been committed to sustainable management practices and may already be meeting many of these rigorous standards. Many of these standards also overlap with the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act (a.k.a. Senate Bill 1010) enforced by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, but most nurseries do not receive any



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HOW ONE NURSERY DID IT

Northwoods Nursery
in Molalla, Ore. became
the first Salmon-Safe
certified grower.

See article on Page 50 to
learn how they did it.

recognition for their compliance.

In August 2006, Northwoods Nursery of Molalla, Ore., became the first nursery ever to achieve Salmon-Safe certification, based largely on practices they already had in place. Northwoods currently remains the only certified Oregon nursery.

"The nursery industry may not be well-known by the public as environmentally innovative," Kent said, "but we've known for a long time that there are many operators like Jim Gilbert of Northwoods Nursery that are exceptional stewards of their local watersheds."

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SALMON SAFE

To learn more about what Northwoods Nursery is doing to help salmon, see the accompanying article, "A badge of honor," which begins on Page 50.

Nurseries are certified based on the "farm" set of standards posted on the Salmon-Safe Web site, www.salmon-safe.org. The major areas of assessment are riparian/wetland areas; irrigation water use and management; erosion and sediment control; fertility and pest management; and biological diversity conservation. Specific elements in each area are evaluated for best management practices that avoid harm and where applicable, enhance the health of stream ecosystems.

The Salmon-Safe certification process for farms and nurseries begins with an independent certifying agent who will assess the site by the above-mentioned standards and provide a report detailing achievements and recommendations for improvement. The agent will work cooperatively with the grower and take into consideration the specific needs and exceptional characteristics of that nursery's operation.

This report can then serve as an environmental management plan for the nursery, which some businesses have said is well worth the assessment fee. If the nursery agrees to make active progress toward achieving the goals in the report, Salmon-Safe can certify the nursery and begin designing a marketing campaign for the nursery's benefit.

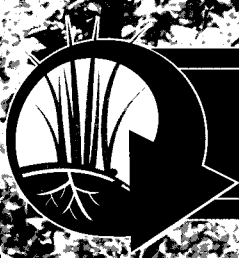
In pursuit of Salmon-Safe certification, here are a few things to consider:

1. **Planting cover crops** between rows or in fallow areas can greatly reduce erosion and sediment loading of nearby streams. Careful choice of the cover species can also reduce weed control efforts and herbicide inputs, which is another benefit to the watershed.

2. **Riparian buffers** at least 50 feet wide can serve as a filter for run-off, provide habitat, and also showcase

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3. **Irrigation efficiencies** such as drip irrigation, well-monitored timers that are connected to weather data, and arrangement of crops with similar water needs close to each other can all help reduce water use and therefore the amount of unused (and potentially nutrient-laden) run-off.

4. **Keeping detailed records** of all nursery practices can validate good stewardship to outside markets and offer an evaluation of where to focus improvements.

5. **Composting** can provide slow-release nutrients to crops in a form that is less likely to be lost in either irrigation or storm water run-off. ©

Renee Stoops is the coordinator of the Sustainable Plant Research Outreach Center, or SPROut, which is based in Silverton, Ore. She can be reached at 503-584-7252 or rstoops@chemeketa.edu.

Sustainable Sites Initiative

Looking for ways to make your sites more sustainable? You're not alone. Many nursery and landscape professionals in Oregon and other states are participating in a nationwide team of technical experts for the Sustainable Sites Initiative. It is a new set of guidelines/standards being developed in cooperation with existing green building (LEED) and landscape guidelines as a tool to "protect and enhance the ability of landscapes to provide services such as climate regulation, clean air and water, and improved quality of life." Visit www.sustainable-sites.org and click on "review process" to register your opinions on how nursery-grown plant material can supply ecosystem services for sustainable landscapes.

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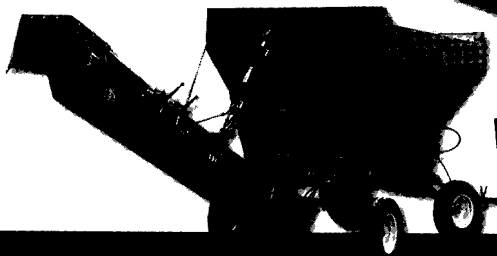
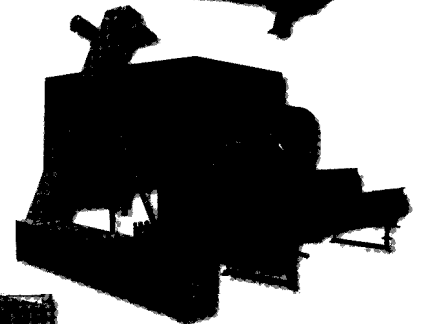
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