

Ryan Basile

**Northwest Nursery Sales/
Distribution Manager,
Dayton Bag and Burlap**

The Farwest Trade Show chairman loves providing great products and services for the nursery industry



Background: I am a second-generation nurseryman with a Bachelor of Science in ornamental horticulture. I graduated from Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Penn., in 1998. Although I have always known I wanted to work in agriculture, I wasn't sure what field would be right for me. Instead of following my father's footsteps directly, I tried out vegetable and animal farming while growing up in Connecticut, dairy science in college, ranching in Wyoming, arborist work in the Northeast, and landscaping, before I eventually found my way back to the nursery industry.

Guiding principle: It's a small world, and everyone in this industry knows everyone. I've found being honest and having integrity and respect have been the only ways to treat my colleagues, customers and myself. I always say, "I don't work for Dayton Bag and Burlap — I work for my customers." If you need a product, you will get it, and my customers can rest assured when they place an order with me they will get the right thing ASAP.

Goal yet to be achieved: Oregon is on the edge of legalizing hemp as an agricultural commodity. For years I've had my eye on this market and crop. Ultimately I'd like to get into

this budding market by owning or managing a manufacturing plant or hemp processing plant.

Best business decision: To leave nursery production and get into the sales side of the industry. Although I left a good job with Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas and took a risk by jumping into sales, it's made me really happy and certainly has proven to be a good fit for me.

Hardest business decision: To move out west. When I left the Northeast, I was a foreman for an arbor company doing high-end tree work, but it did not satisfy me. Growing up, I visited the Northwest countless times and had a feeling I wanted to end up here. My degree in horticulture helped seal that decision — where better to be than Oregon? So, leaving all my family and friends, I took a chance and made the move.

Greatest missed opportunity: After college I was offered a job in a retail nursery center with exceptionally good pay and great benefits for a kid just out of college. "I wish I knew then what I know now" would be a good quote regarding that time. Instead, I took a lower-paying job as a groundman, was unhappy and ended up leaving six months later for another low-paying arbor job. Although I did

enjoy it at the time, I knew I had to get out of that industry because it was hard and dangerous work and not a job I wanted for a career.

Most significant mentor: The most significant mentor would have to be my father, Steve Basile. He never pushed me into the nursery business. He showed me what a great industry it was. He is a great businessman. I saw him take chances and keep moving forward. He told me sales is a satisfying and dynamic career where you meet interesting, great people, and you never get bored. Although I didn't see myself as a salesman, I took my father's advice and I'm glad I did, because I truly enjoy my job.

Best business advice: Listen and know when it's your opportunity to speak. I think that makes a good salesman. Also, I remember what older, wiser folks have said to me. Here are a few quotes I stick by: "Don't have too many irons in the fire" — if you try to sell everything, then you can't focus on your primary goods and your service will suffer; "Pay attention to detail" — listen to what your customer wants and get them exactly what they want; and obviously, "Buy low, sell high."

What do you love most about the nursery industry? The people who work ►



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in this industry. I love the entrepreneurial spirit, the "Yes, we can" attitude. I appreciate how much hard work goes into every tree and plant grown here, and the friendships I have made are invaluable. When friends who work in healthcare and other industries talk about their difficult cases and hard days, I just inwardly reflect about how nice it is to be outside and to work around beautiful shrubs and trees.

What is your greatest challenge?

My greatest challenge is trying to predict what tree size is going to be the most popular size to dig. With our manufacturing plant 2,000 miles away, we can be sold out at any time on one size of basket or burlap. I am always keeping an eye on my inventory and talking with customers to make sure we don't run out.

What motivates you to go to work every day?

A lot of people rely on me to provide products they need to begin their day. If I'm not up and ready to be of service, then they will go to a competitor to buy their supplies. I do my best to be reliable, so my customers motivate me the most. Additionally, I am really proud to work for a company like Dayton Bag and Burlap, and I want to uphold their reputation. They have been around for more than 100 years, and that's something to be proud of.

What are you most proud of? My family. I have a wife and two young boys. Whenever I can be outside with my family, it's a good day. I am also proud of the business I have built for Dayton Bag and Burlap. When I started 10 years ago, I was just a kid peddling burlap. Now we are one of the market leaders.

Involvement with the OAN: Previously I was chairman of the Insurance Committee as well as a committee member for many years. I just retired from that position so I can focus on my new position as the chairman of the Farwest Trade Show Committee.

In your opinion, what are the most critical challenges facing the nursery industry? Transportation and labor are two tough areas. Both are capable of driving up prices, availability and quality of our products. ☺

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