



# Direct Delivery of Diverse Tree & Shrub Selection

Interview with Steve Hauquitz, Owner

## How long have you been growing trees?

We started our family business kind of as a fluke. Back in 1999, a man asked us if we could grow 300 aspens, and if so, he'd buy them. Having the land and water available, we said, "Sure, why not?" Well, we kept our end of the deal, but he didn't—we were stuck with the aspens. Since we already had the aspens in the ground, we decided to start growing trees on a commercial basis in 2000.

## What do you grow?

We grow only B & B trees and shrubs on 50 acres, and that includes about 30 varieties. We dig about 3,500 to 4,000 trees and shrubs each year, and 80 percent of our business is wholesale for landscape contractors and other nurseries. We also sell trees that we don't grow here—we work with about 25 growers across the country to meet the demand. Our biggest sellers are aspen and spruce, but we sell crabapple, fruit trees, maples, cottonwoods and many other species, too.

## What markets do you serve?

Right now our strongest markets are in the mountain resort towns such as Aspen, Vail, Telluride and Silverthorne. One of the advantages we offer to our customers is we do our own hauling. Since we can control delivery schedules to suit our customers' needs, it saves them time and money on freight costs. For the local market, we offer retail sales through our full-service nursery, which offers trees, shrubs, perennials and hard goods.

## What changes are you making to your operation?

Using less water is one of our main focuses. We use drip irrigation on all of our planted stock, with injection systems to supply fertilizer and pesticides when needed. We've gone to overhead irrigation for our container stock, which is saving on water and labor—we need three less employees now for watering operations. We value the input that our children have brought to the business. They've come up with lots of ideas that have been good for us.

## How is the demand for your plants changing?

We're seeing two key changes. First, in this stronger economy, people want bigger trees. Where the typical size we used to sell was 1 3/4" to 2 1/2", now there's more demand for 2 1/2" to 4 1/2" trees. The other is an increased demand for native and drought-tolerant species.

## Are you experiencing labor issues?

Finding enough seasonal labor has been a nightmare for us this year. The workforce we need just isn't here. We even tried a temp agency, but it took hiring 25 people to end up with just three. With such high turnover, we're always retraining, everyday. The work ethic has changed, too, especially among the younger generations that don't know how to work.

## What do you like most about CNGA?

We like that CNGA keeps us informed, and in different ways—especially through the magazine and the newsletters. The lobbying and regulatory work CNGA does is important to us, too. It helps us better understand the impacts of new regulations as well as how to maintain compliance. You're doing a great job! 🌱

