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Building Bridges: Seed Your Future Brings Teachers and Industry Together in Portland

Alexandria, VA – September 4, 2025 – Seed Your Future, the national movement to promote horticulture and inspire the next generation of professionals in the green industry, presented at the FarWest Conference in Portland, Oregon. The session, *Attracting the Next Generation to the Green Industry*, featured Rachel Popp, a 2024 Seed to STEM science teacher based in Oregon, alongside Seed Your Future Executive Director Jazmin Albarran and Broch Martindale, Corteva Agriscience.



Seed Your Future knows that the future of horticulture depends on preparing and inspiring the next generation of professionals. That's why we're focused not only on engaging students and educators, but also on helping the industry understand how to connect with young talent.

The green industry faces urgent workforce needs, from hiring new talent to succession planning. The session explored how Gen Z and Gen Alpha students think about careers, what messages resonate with them, and why traditional approaches used to recruit past generations no longer work.

Participants discussed what young people are looking for in careers today – purpose, growth, and balance – while emphasizing the importance of telling horticulture's story in compelling ways that highlight the industry as innovative, sustainable, and impactful. The session also addressed how employers can build meaningful partnerships with teachers and schools to introduce students to horticulture career pathways earlier, ensuring a stronger pipeline of future professionals.

Making the most of this opportunity, Seed Your Future arranged visits to two leading Oregon growers – Bailey Nurseries and Oregon Flowers – to showcase local career paths and innovations in horticulture. Joining Rachel was Erica Hernandez, Research and Teaching Assistant at Portland State University, further reinforcing the importance of connecting educators directly with industry.

At Bailey Nurseries:

- Erica was struck by the expansive fields of plants – “a sight I don’t normally get to see” – and the stunning varieties of hydrangeas.
- Rachel highlighted the growth process, noting “the difference between the new plants and those ready to dig,” and the fascinating genetic and soil-driven variations across the fields.

At Oregon Flowers:

- Erica was impressed by the company’s soil recycling process, a unique sustainability effort.
- Rachel emphasized the employee-centered ergonomic innovations, including the systems used to grow and harvest the flowers.



“These visits remind us that every community has employers who are eager to connect with educators and inspire students about careers in horticulture,” said Albarran. “Our Seed to STEM program is building those bridges so the next generation can see the wide range of opportunities waiting for them in the green industry.”

As growers face urgent needs in hiring and succession planning, programs like Seed to STEM are helping teachers prepare their students – the future workforce of horticulture – with real-world exposure and industry insights.

The local employers we visited also see the value of these connections.

David Pond, Production Manager of [Bailey Nurseries](#) Sauvie Island, shared, *“It’s crucial to open your business to the individuals who will shape the next generation of farming. Otherwise, years of institutional knowledge risk being lost if we don’t pass it on. I’d tell other businesses that this is one of the most important ways we can think ahead. Frankly, it’s what’s lacking most in our industry*

Tyler Meskers, Vice President of [Oregon Flowers](#), added, *“I would encourage every grower to invite students to visit their business. As I get older, I’ve realized how important it is to understand the expectations of younger generations. Like it or not, being aware of the needs of the future workforce is essential to our industry’s success.”*

Seed Your Future continues to look for opportunities to connect educators, students, and industry leaders, ensuring that the power of plants translates into meaningful and sustainable career.

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About Seed Your Future

Seed Your Future is the movement to promote horticulture and inspire people to pursue careers working with plants. We envision a world where everyone understands the power of plants and is aware of the promising careers in the art, science, technology, and business of horticulture. For more information, visit seedyourfuture.org

To learn more about Seed Your Future and to make a donation, please visit [Donate - Seed Your Future](#)