



**Por La Mar**  
NURSERY

# Por La Mar Nursery

**SUSTAINABILITY REPORT • 2022**



# ABOUT THIS REPORT

Por La Mar Nursery is proud to present our inaugural 2022 Sustainability Report. As we enter our 50th anniversary, our goal is to highlight the key achievements we've been making as a company towards a more sustainable world. With our stakeholders in mind, this report summarizes the status of our efforts throughout the 2021 calendar year and encompasses programs and practices we've implemented since our company began. For further information or feedback on this report, please contact [social@porlamarnursery.com](mailto:social@porlamarnursery.com).

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*Cultivating health & happiness  
through American-grown plants!*



# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Reflecting on the last 12 months has been unforgettable. We began 2021 entering our 50th anniversary, a milestone we are incredibly proud to achieve as a family owned and operated wholesale nursery business on the west coast. Entering the second year of battling the COVID-19 pandemic, many challenges were presented that shed light on the resilience of our business and our people. Through increased internal communication and trainings, in addition to the requirement of masks at all times, we were able to minimize the risk of COVID-19 on our farm and remain in business. With our roots planted deeply in our resources, our land, and our people, Por La Mar Nursery has always had the utmost respect for being good Samaritans and taking care of our employees and our community. Although we are reporting on sustainability for the first time publicly, our efforts date back to 1972 when our company began.

At the end of 2020, we made a complete change in our product line and introduced over 300 different varieties of foliage onto our farm. With that transition came a plethora of sustainable practices and procedures we've outlined in this report. Through the natural durability & hardiness of many foliage varieties, we were able to reduce our inputs, eliminate waste, and provide our customers with a product that has 5x the shelf-life.

Our people and our communities have always been a top priority for our nursery, and through the COVID-19 pandemic we increased all health and safety procedures to reduce virus spread. We care for our employees, both inside and outside the workplace, and in 2021 we developed an internal health and wellness committee to promote initiatives for both physical and mental well-being. In addition, we launched our *Growing Plants for Growing Minds Program*, with the goal to educate our youth on the importance of plants in their lives, and the daily impact they can make on our planet. We are proud to release our first sustainability report to highlight the key achievements we've made throughout the years and outline our goals for the future.

Welcome to our inaugural Sustainability Report.

Ronald and Patricia Caird  
Founders, Por La Mar Nursery







## 1970s Setting Roots in Santa Barbara

In 1972, a few years after settling in Santa Barbara, Ron & Pat Caird began selling *Asparagus retrofractus* prunings at the Los Angeles Flower Market for use in flower bouquets, and so began Por La Mar Nursery (Spanish for "by the sea"). They expanded by growing Baby's Breath and Daffodils for sale, and soon thereafter hired a production manager, Dan Jauchen, (still with Por La Mar today) to build more greenhouses, and add more new varieties of indoor plants for sale at local stores.

## 2000s The Business is Flowering

With business growing steadily over the previous three decades, Por La Mar Nursery added cut flowers to their offerings through the purchase of Glad-A-Way Gardens in Santa Maria, California. Glad-A-Way continues to be one of the only gladiolus growers in the U.S. with its own hybridization program that exclusively grows their own varieties of "glads".



## 1980s Growing at a Rapid Rate

After establishing a production facility due to their rapid growth throughout Southern California, Pat and Ron traveled the world in search of plants and flowers that would fit the needs of their growing list of customers. Their son and daughter, Brian and Erin, officially brought their skills to the family business, and a team of knowledgeable, professional growers, managers, salespeople, accountants, mechanics, and shipping experts, joined the team.



## 2010s Innovating & Growing

During the 2010s, Por La Mar increased their efforts to find new foliage and plants from new locations around the world. Some of which were completely new to North American markets. Foliage now makes up the vast majority of our products and we continue to innovate and seek unique species from around the world.



## 1990s Rootbound and Time to Expand

With growing demand, Por La Mar further expanded into two spacious pieces of property. New greenhouses were put to use, and Por La Mar Nursery continued to grow the list of available plant varieties.

## 2020s & Beyond Five Decades & Another Generation

As they enter their 50th anniversary, Por La Mar continues to grow its footprint, search for new varieties, and stay innovative. Por La Mar now welcomes the 3rd generation of the Caird family with the addition of Ashlynd Williams, Aidan Williams, and Megan Caird.





# THE BENEFITS OF PLANTS

Houseplants provide numerous mental and physical health benefits in addition to beautifying your living spaces. Especially, as more of us are working from home, introducing some foliage into your living spaces will provide many benefits that will affect both home & work life.

## Removing Toxins from the Air

In addition to converting carbon dioxide into oxygen, many of our plant varieties are great at cleaning household toxins from the air. As shown in the 1989 NASA study<sup>1</sup>, plants like those in the genus *Dracaena*, such as the Cornstalk Plant (***Dracaena fragrans***) and Snake Plant (***Dracaena trifasciata syn. Sansevieria***) do a great job at removing benzene, while other plants like the Boston fern (***Nephrolepis exaltata***) and English ivy (***Hedera helix***) remove formaldehyde.

## Caring for Plants May Reduce Stress

A study<sup>2</sup> from 2015 showed that working with and around plants lowered the stress response in participants. Participants were randomly split into two groups - one group was instructed to repot a plant while the other group was given a simple computer task to complete. The repotting group showed a much lower stress response, while the computer task group participants showed elevated heart rate, blood pressure, and other stress indicators.

## Plants May Boost Productivity

Multiple studies show that plants around the workspace increase both creativity and productivity. A 1996 study<sup>3</sup> noted a 12% increase in reaction time on computer tasks and increased attentiveness in participants surrounded by plants. A 2004 study<sup>4</sup> showed increased creative performance in the presence of plants & a 2007 study<sup>5</sup> showed employees took fewer sick days and had higher overall productivity when near plants.

In addition to the benefits listed above, there are many other benefits that may present as well. Increased oxygen and lower stress can help improve healing and overall physical health, and having a living organism to care for can confer improvements in mood.



# GROWING OUR PEOPLE

Our people are the backbone of our business and the reason we are one of the leading wholesale nurseries on the west coast. At the heart of Por La Mar Nursery are more than 200 employees dedicated to cultivating health and happiness through American-Grown plants. Our goal is to provide the finest workplace for our employees and continue to grow and develop our internal practices to adapt to the needs of today's society. Beyond financial compensation, we care for our employee's overall well-being, and have developed several health and wellness initiatives to promote a healthy environment for our employees both inside and outside of the workplace.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

At Por La Mar, our employees are our biggest stakeholders and the most integral part of our success as a company, which is why we place the utmost importance on health & safety in our work culture.

Starting with new employee onboarding, all employees are introduced to our employee handbook, which serves as our doctrine for integrity, culture, and behavior at the company.

All employees participate in general health & safety education, and receive hands-on training in the following categories depending on their role:

- Injury & Emergency Response
- Vehicle & Equipment Operation
- Technical Maintenance Work
- CPR Training
- Sexual Harassment Training
- Monthly general health & safety trainings

Additionally, in 2021 we installed ceiling harness equipment on 100% of our greenhouses.

45+

Forklift Certified

30+

Tractor Certified

30+

Respirator Trained



## OUR COVID RESPONSE

We implemented the following practices to meet the needs of our employees while adhering to the guidelines dictated by OSHA, the CDC, and our local government:

- COVID-19 trainings on hygiene, prevention, and care
- Requirement of facial masks and protective equipment at all times
- Distribution of free personal protective equipment
- Increased internal communication & staff training regarding COVID-19 protocol

### Health & Wellness

We hold monthly production safety meetings to ensure OSHA compliance.

In 2021 we revamped our health & wellness program, transitioning to standing desks and more ergonomic office equipment. Additionally, we introduced quarterly health & wellness campaigns, a discounted gym membership, and started an internal health & wellness committee to develop new initiatives.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

At Por La Mar Nursery, we are committed to providing an inclusive environment with equitable access to hiring, advancement, development, and pay. Our goal is to attract employees who reflect our beliefs and strive to ensure our team members provide our customers and vendors with similar perspectives to enhance our customer experience.

### Employee Demographics

41% Female - 59% Male



95% Hispanic/Latinx - 5% Caucasian/White



### Tenure

Out of our 235 total employees at Por La Mar Nursery:

- 99 employees (42%) have been here for more than 10 years
- 49 employees (21%) have been here for more than 20 years

### Industry Affiliations

We participate and hold positions in the following highly respected organizations, to stay up-to-date with our industry and current governmental affairs.

- International Fresh Produce Association
- California Grown Certified







# WHAT WE'VE DONE

In 2021, we successfully launched our *Growing Plants for Growing Minds* program, with the goal to educate our youth on the importance of plants in their lives, and the daily impact they can make on our planet. Thus far, we've partnered with over 15 schools in the Santa Barbara County, and will to continue to grow, develop, and broadcast this program for years to come. Our long-term goal is to expand this program nationwide and continue uplifting and educating the youths in our country & beyond.

For more information or to sign up for our program, please *Contact Us* on our website.

# GROWING OUR COMMUNITY



# GROWING OUR PLANET



## OUR INITIATIVES

From the mid 1970s to the end of 2020, Por La Mar Nursery was primarily a grower of blooming varieties, namely roses, hydrangea, kalanchoes, and tulips. As our company began to grow, we recognized the need to adapt to market demands, and so began the rebirth of our foliage program. By the end of 2020, we made a near-complete shift to indoor houseplants, while still maintaining a steady supply of blooming products for our customers. Over 70 new varieties were introduced on the farm, and with that, a plethora of environmental benefits. Known for their long shelf-life, durability, and character, indoor houseplants became the dominant category that you'll see on the farm today.

From 2020 to 2021 we:

- Reduced our dumped/unsold product by 46%
- Increased our recycled soil usage by roughly 25% for all planted products.
- Reduced our chemical inputs significantly due to the natural durability and hardiness of our many foliage varieties.



# PLASTIC REDUCTION

In 2021, we invested in machinery that allowed us to eliminate the need for plastic pots at the early stages of plant development and rooting. This not only allowed for better quality and faster growth, but it helped us eliminate a significant amount of plastic on our farm.

From 2020 to 2021, we reduced plastic consumption by roughly 47%.

This amounts to:

- ~8,100 gallons of gasoline consumed
- 24.5 tons of waste recycled instead of landfilled
- Energy to power 8.7 homes for a whole year



As we continue to grow in the years to come, our plastic consumption will naturally decrease through our current investments. With that said, we are conscious of the need to find more sustainable routes from our current practices in production, and will continue to explore other areas where we can fit new alternatives.

# PACKAGING

Throughout the years, we have made a conscious effort to source and supply recyclable materials to provide for our customers.

Our recyclable packaging currently includes, but is not limited to our:

- Grow pots
- Boxes
- Sleeves
- Pot covers

In 2023, we plan on releasing a fully sustainable line of product that fits our company's goal towards a more sustainable planet.





# WATER

Being in Agriculture, we understand that water is one of the most important topics. At Por La Mar, we utilize a variety of practices and technologies that reduce our inputs, minimize pesticide use, and provide our crops with the most efficient conditions in which to grow. Monitoring soil moisture, plant stress, and climatic conditions lead to higher yields, healthier crops, and lower inputs. By constantly monitoring these internal and external conditions on our crops, our growers can minimize water use and reduce the risk of over-watering.

Here are a few of the current precision farming practices that we follow to help minimize our water use and reduce runoff:

- Drip irrigation - roughly 60% of the farm is currently drip irrigated with plans to increase this percentage through the next few years
- Automated irrigation and timers that limit water use and minimize runoff
- Precision overhead irrigation
- Advanced irrigation technologies to track water use and consumption





# OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

As we enter our 50th year in business, we wanted to commit to bringing sustainability & accountability to the forefront of our operation.

## Planet

### • Lighting

It's been proven that LED lighting has shown significant improvements in longevity and cost savings compared to incandescent lightbulbs. In 2021, we began replacing all existing lightbulbs to LED. As we continue through 2022, our goal is to transition to 100% LED lightbulbs on our properties.

### • Water

Right now, we are currently at roughly 60% drip irrigation on the farm. Our goal is to increase that percentage up to 75% by 2025, and continue to reduce run-off and utilize more efficient watering practices where possible.

### • Packaging

In 2023, we will be launching a fully-sustainable line of products that includes 100% recyclable grow pots, pot covers, ceramic, sleeves, and more. As we continue in 2022, we will be developing and marketing new lines of sustainable offerings to our customer base.

## People

Last year we launched our Health & Wellness program to provide employees with opportunities to develop and improve physical & mental health both inside and outside the workplace. This year we plan to continue our program and offer continuing education, health & wellness challenges, and fun events for employees to participate in throughout the year.

## Community

In 2021, we successfully launched our *Growing Plants for Growing Minds* program, with the goal to educate our youth on the importance of plants in their lives, and the daily impact they can make on our planet. Thus far, we've partnered with over 15 schools in the Santa Barbara County, and will to continue to grow, develop, and broadcast this program for years to come.

## Reporting

Our mission is to provide our stakeholders with the most up-to-date information on our sustainable practices and beliefs. Our goal is to release a Sustainability Report to showcase these efforts every 1-3 years.



### Cited sources:

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5. Tina Bringslimark et al. "Psychological benefits of indoor plants in workplaces: putting experimental results into context." *HortScience horts*. June 2007