



MEDIA RELEASE

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SAUNDERS BROTHERS RECOGNIZED AS AGRIBUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Family Business Awarded for Contributions to Agriculture Industry

(Upperville, VA) Saunders Brothers, Inc. of Piney River in Nelson County received the 2015 Agribusiness of the Year award from the Virginia Agribusiness Council. Council Board member Doug Phillips, of Phillips and Turman Tree Farm in Floyd County, presented the award at the 2015 Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association field day at Shade Tree Farm in Upperville, Virginia on August 20, 2015.

Each year, the Council acknowledges one of its members for outstanding contributions to Virginia's agribusiness industry.

This year marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the company, which began as a partnership of five brothers in 1915. Today, third generation brothers, Tom, Bennett, Jim and Robert, with their dad, Paul, operate the wholesale nursery, orchard, and farm market.

The wholesale nursery operation now consists of approximately 75 acres of container production and 75 acres of field production. They ship over 1,000 products to garden centers, landscapers, and re-wholesalers throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Their 125 acre orchard provides fresh fruit for their farm market as well as other wholesale and retail markets.

Saunders Brothers has also become an industry leader in boxwood production, which has been the foundation of their nursery operation for over 60 years now. They work with the National Boxwood Trials to continuously evaluate different cultivars for measures including aesthetic appeal, grower friendliness, and landscape performance.

The consumer face of Saunders Brothers' operation is their Farm Market, which provides fruits from their orchard, and also their own jam, jellies, ciders, relishes, and salsas. Saunders Brothers uses this market to provide a connection with local consumers and to educate them about how their food is raised.

As long time members, Saunders Brothers continues to be active in supporting the work of the Virginia Agribusiness Council. Both Paul and Jim Saunders have served on the Board of Directors and served terms as Chairman.

Danny Shreckhise, a Council Board member with Shreckhise Nurseries in Grottoes, said, "Saunders Brothers epitomize what is good in our industry of agriculture and nursery production. They are creative and innovative, always on the cutting edge of the industry. They don't just adopt new production techniques, but they work to make them better and often they introduce them into the industry."

Agribusiness Council President Katie Frazier said that “you would be hard pressed to find a more engaged industry leader and involved Council member than Saunders Brothers. Apart from the tremendous success they’ve enjoyed in all of their businesses, they remain committed to participating in the Agribusiness Council and offering their support to our work. They are a model operation in the state of Virginia.”

During the presentation, Mr. Phillips commented that Saunders Brothers’ “commitment to the agribusiness community has had a lasting impact upon Virginia’s economy and agribusiness industry.”

About The Virginia Agribusiness Council

The Virginia Agribusiness Council is a non-profit organization committed to representing the interests of the agriculture and forestry industries in the Commonwealth through effective governmental relations efforts and initiatives. Its membership includes farmers, foresters, and other agricultural producers; industry suppliers; marketers and processors; and commodity and industry associations. It is headquartered in Richmond. For more information, please visit www.va-agribusiness.org.

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Attached Photo, left to right: Paul Westervelt, Sonya Westervelt, Jim Saunders, Doug Phillips, Brad Copenhaver