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## Welcome

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Welcome  
John C. Owens  
Aug. 21, 2001  
Bluebird Nurseries/NNLA

It is a real pleasure to have this opportunity to visit Bluebird Nurseries and talk with everyone gathered here, and I join John Trumbull in welcoming you this morning. I am looking forward to learning more about the Nebraska nursery industry today, and I look forward to visiting and working with you now, and in the days ahead. Getting to know Nebraska and its residents is one of the real pleasures of my new job, and has been since I started in January. My wife Virginia and I literally slid into the state one snowy day last December – almost hard to remember that icy, snowy winter, given the past few months – and ever since our arrival we have been impressed and delighted by the friendliness and warmth of Nebraska's residents. This is a great state, and we are very happy to be here. As I welcome you I also want to offer Chancellor Harvey Perlman's regrets that he could not accept the invitation to be here, too; he is unable to join us because of conflicts in schedule.

I was asked to give you a brief update today on how the new Department of Agronomy and Horticulture is progressing, and I am happy to do so. We all know that when changes are made in the organizational structure of any university

academic departments, there are valid concerns about maintaining the visibility and quality of the programs involved. The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources embarked on the integration of agronomy and horticulture committed to maintaining and improving the strengths of both programs. Already the department is moving forward to take advantage of a number of opportunities to enhance programs through collaborations in teaching, research, and extension activities.

Two faculty positions presently are under recruitment. One is a teaching/extension position in landscape horticulture and the other a research/extension position in horticultural landscape ecology. Research, teaching and extension are the three vital missions of land-grant universities, and we are fully committed to each of them. I understand these positions were developed in an interactive process that involved both horticulture and agronomy faculty and feedback from industry, and I want you to know we will invite active participation of the nursery and landscape industry in the recruitment process. In addition to our existing strengths in ornamentals, nursery production, and landscape design, we see these positions as pivotal components of our long-term commitment to the nursery and landscape industry.

The Institute also has made a commitment to refill Dermot Coyne's position in dry bean genetics, following Dermot's retirement. Dermot's position was an integral

part of the horticulture department, and a position description currently is being developed.

We've established a Horticultural Advisory Board, which met for the first time in many years this past April. The Board will meet again later this fall, and after that on an annual basis. We look to the board to help as we develop strategic plans for our teaching, research and extension programs in horticulture, and to provide feedback about the quality and relevance of our programs.

Appointing Kim Todd as a temporary lecturer with both teaching and extension responsibilities has helped us strengthen our communication and linkages with industry. As you know, Kim serves in a liaison role with the Nebraska Nursery And Landscape Association, as well as teaching our landscape design courses.

Our faculty in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture have successfully established a new administrative and governance structure that allows full representation and participation of all disciplines and interests in the department. We think this democratic form of management will allow the department to actively develop its strategic vision to serve all the plant production sciences in Nebraska, including agronomy, horticulture and range science.

While there are sure to be challenges ahead – challenges are part of life – we think that after one year the new department has made significant progress towards

implementing the integration while laying the foundation for stronger programs in both agronomy and horticulture.

Thank you. I look forward to visiting with you during our time here together.

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