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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Shared Leadership Announced at Fall Creek**

**Lowell, Ore., U.S.** – Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc., has announced succession of its top leadership. After forty years, company co-founder and blueberry industry innovator Dave Brazelton will step aside as chief executive officer (CEO) to assume a new role as executive chairman of the privately-held global company's board of directors. Effective January 1, 2019, Amelie Brazelton Aust and Cort Brazelton will assume the roles of co-CEOs. In addition, Oscar Verges, who joined Fall Creek as chief operating officer (COO) in 2016, recently was promoted to president and COO of the blueberry breeding and nursery company. The three executives will lead the company's strategy and growth, and the team of functional and regional directors will continue to report to Verges.

"We have experienced tremendous growth at Fall Creek during the past years. Our 'go where our customers grow' strategy has led us to new geographies and has required us to continually reinvent the way we do things," says Dave Brazelton. "This transition of leadership is really about commitment to our customers. It gives us a top-level leadership platform to launch the company's next chapter of growth and to serve the industry in the transformative way our mission calls on us to achieve."

This unique leadership model was recommended by Fall Creek's board of directors after assessing the company's growth plan, internal talents and team-based corporate culture.



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“I’m looking forward to seeing each member of the new leadership team work together while they also develop their individual areas of focus: Cort, on global business development and key relationships; Amelie, on strategy and company culture; and Oscar, on the management of a growing global entity,” says Roland Wolfram, the newest member of the Fall Creek board, a past vice president at Nike, Inc., where he worked under co-presidents. “Their biggest challenges in the coming years are to continue to drive growth and build a global platform of people, culture and process, while also driving product innovation on the licensing side. They’ll also need to develop strong regional teams to successfully manage at the global scale. There is a lot of added value with their three perspectives and diversity of talents, so the team is poised to meet these challenges.”

Mark Frandsen, a member of Fall Creek’s board of directors since 2013 and veteran executive of the food and beverage industry, emphasized the importance of a thoughtful approach to leadership succession. “Dave’s careful planning, communications and guidance to the board, especially starting the process early, were key to success. I’ve been on other boards – public, private and nonprofit. This company is well-positioned with these three individuals as its leaders. Cort and Amelie have exceptional business skills in addition to having been brought up in the company and the industry. They fully have the leadership capabilities to succeed. Oscar is highly respected by the industry, shareholders and company. The leadership he brings is fundamental to the company’s aspirational growth plans.”

**Amelie Brazelton Aust** joined Fall Creek in 2008 to manage the company’s intellectual property and licensing after receiving a Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree from the Munich Intellectual Property Law Center at the Max Planck Institute in Germany, where she was a Fulbright scholar. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature with a minor in biology from the University of Oregon. Over the past decade at Fall Creek, she broadened her focus to include product development and global commercialization as Fall Creek’s own breeding program began to release varieties, including the current commercial blueberry varieties, as well as the branded home gardener program BrazelBerries™ which was eventually sold to Ball Horticulture. More recently, Amelie has served on the company’s

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board of directors, and as the interim director of product development and commercialization, responsible for re-shaping the company's licensing strategies to better position its genetics.

“When the board of directors recommended this leadership structure, Cort and I were both surprised,” says Amelie Brazelton Aust. “A co-CEO model had never occurred to us, but it should have. As we have spent most of 2018 diving into what this will look like, studying the pitfalls, and gaining vision into how this has worked well for other global companies, we are excited. Cort and I are as different and as similar as can be. We challenge each other and hold each other accountable to focus opportunities, manage risk, and protect our company values. At the same time, Oscar brings decades of global corporate experience that is essential for us to enrich strategy and to bring what's most special about Fall Creek to the entire organization and the people we serve, everywhere in the world.”

**Cort Brazelton** is currently the director of business development and interim director of sales for Fall Creek's European business. Before joining Fall Creek in 2008, he was the blueberry business manager for Driscoll's, the global marketer of fresh berries, and principal of Brazelton Ag Consulting. He produces and authors the biennial World Blueberry Production Report for the United States Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC), the industry's primary reference for blueberry production statistics and trends. He is an active member of the USHBC USDA Commission and one of the founders of the International Blueberry Organization (IBO) where he currently serves as an advisor to the board. He studied economics and policy at Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, Calif., and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history, German and music from Oregon State University.

“Our industry is on the verge of enormous change. We'll have to continually renew our strategy and preserve what is most valuable in our culture to serve our customers,” says Cort Brazelton. “The three of us will share that responsibility. Our father didn't do it alone. He fostered a team atmosphere with shared decision-making, recognizing where others could fill knowledge and technical gaps. The three of us serve the organization – especially the team of directors that is empowered to run and grow the company – and our job is to clear the way forward.”

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**Oscar Verges** brings extensive executive international business and produce industry experience to Fall Creek. Successful in both entrepreneurial and corporate environments, he was founder and managing director of two separate cell phone service providers in Spain before joining Fall Creek. Previously, Verges worked with fresh produce icon Chiquita Brands International, Inc., for 12 years in several countries and continents. In 2007, he helped develop some of the earliest blueberry plantations in Morocco with fruit producer and marketer Royal Natural of Barcelona, Spain. Verges holds a Master's degree from the Thunderbird School of Global Management, and earned a dual Bachelor's degree in international relations and management from the University of Tampa in Florida.

“Only eight years ago, Fall Creek was a nursery in the U.S. Pacific Northwest with some exports, licensing and business relationships abroad. Now, true to our commitment to serve our customers and the industry, Fall Creek has bricks-and-mortar throughout the Americas and Europe,” says Verges. “As the company grows, maintaining our company culture and values becomes ever more important. Collaborative decision making, serving each other and our customers, and shared leadership are principles Amelie, Cort and I vow to maintain and plan to model throughout the organization.”

All three members of the leadership team are based at the company's headquarters in Lowell, Ore. They frequently travel to other Fall Creek locations and industry events around the world.

Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc., is an international blueberry breeding and nursery company with nursery operations and research and development centers in the U.S., Mexico, Peru, Spain and The Netherlands, founded 40 years ago by Dave and Barbara Brazelton in Lowell, OR. Fall Creek breeds and delivers blueberry varieties, nursery stock and grower support to commercial fruit growers throughout the world. For more information about Fall Creek, visit [www.fallcreeknursery.com](http://www.fallcreeknursery.com).

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PHOTOS ATTACHED:

- 1) Dave Brazelton, Chair of the Board of Directors, Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc.;



- 2) Amelie Brazelton Aust and Cort Brazelton, Co-Chief Executive Officers, Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc. with Oscar Verges, President & Chief Operating Officer, Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc.

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