



Published on *Northwest Seed & Pet* (<http://www.nwseed.com>)

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About Us

The company was founded by Harry Gross in 1944, operating out of the front of his house on the present site of the East Sprague store. Harry was a natural promoter. This and his desire to grow his business led him to start selling pets and pet supplies along with the traditional lawn and garden products. His interest in exotic animals led him to bring in more and more into the store, eventually leading to the concept of "Jungle Town", Spokane's only zoo. The company, called Northwest Seed & Insecticide Co., continued to grow. Meanwhile, in 1946, Ken Hester Sr., with his wife Frieda and two young sons, moved to Spokane from Seattle to pursue a career with the Duthee Seed Co. Hester was recruited by Gross to join Northwest Seed & Insecticide around 1950. In 1953, Hester left the company to start his own tree spraying business but was lured back when the opportunity to buy Northwest Seed presented itself. In partnership with Walt Williard, Hester bought the company in 1954.

During this time, the animals on display at the store included an elephant, lion, puma, chimpanzees, baboons, ocelots, bobcats, wallabies and many other interesting specimens. Hester bought out Williard in 1961 and continued to run the company with his wife until the early 70's when their two sons, who had graduated from college and tried their hands at other professions, returned to work in the family business. It was about this time that the name of the company was changed to Northwest Seed & Pet in order to better reflect the true nature of the business. In 1979, Hester, Sr. retired and sold the business to his sons. The brothers decided to aggressively build the business by expansion and when an opportunity to lease a location on North Division came available, a small pet store was opened in 1983. After two successful years in this location another property on North Division came up for sale and the brothers purchased it, remodeled it and opened it for business in 1985. In 1978 Bob Mauk started to work at Northwest Seed & Pet and in April of 2003 he purchased the business from the Hester brothers. Northwest Seed & Pet has enjoyed almost 60 years in business. Mauk says, "We know what works in the yards, gardens and ponds of the Inland Northwest."

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