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 American Conifer Society Southeast Region

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia



As March rolls in, I can't help but feel the excitement in the air! Spring is just around the corner, and there's plenty to do to prepare for the coming season! As the frost recedes and the first green shoots of color peek through the soil, our hearts beat in anticipation of spring, the season of renewal and boundless beauty.

In addition to the arrival of spring, we have the ACS 2024 National Meeting just around the corner. This year's meeting will take place in Cincinnati, Ohio, from June 13 through June 15. Cincinnati is such a vibrant city and this year's National Meeting promises to be thrilling, with a wealth of outstanding public and private gardens to enjoy, excellent speakers, fun times with friends, and of course lots of conifers! Make plans now to attend. Early registration ends April 15, and the optional Lloyd Library Lectures before the official start of the meeting is limited to 60

attendees, so don't wait too long because you might miss out! Here's the link to register: <https://www2.conifersociety.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1759690>

Last but by no means least, we're still looking for a spot to hold our Southeast Region Rendezvous this coming fall. If you have any ideas about where you'd like to see it take place or if you know of someone who'd like to host it, please reach out and let me know. You can find my email address on the last page of this newsletter.

Meanwhile, be well and enjoy spring in the Southeast! See you in Cincinnati!

Michelle Reimert, SER President

In this Issue

President's Message	Page 1	Walking the Garden Path with Jimmy Williams	
		Covering a Lot of Ground	Pages 11 - 12
ACS and Southeast Region News	Page 2 - 5	My Favorite Conifer: <i>Picea orientalis</i>	
♦ Harveys Invite You to Their Daffodil Open House!		by Jennifer Harvey	Pages 13 - 14
♦ In Memoriam: Byron Richards			
♦ National Meeting News		List & Map of SER Reference Gardens	Page 15
♦ Announcing ACS NewBroom Award			
Get Thee to a Nunnery (and Garden) in Hong Kong!		Final Thoughts, Officers, etc.	Page 16
By Sandy Horn	Pages 6 - 10		

Around the Southeast Region

What's Your Favorite Conifer? Share It in Our New Column!

All of us have trees that bring a smile every time we see them. In this edition, Jennifer Harvey shares her love for *Picea orientalis* in a brief article with lots of great photos for your viewing pleasure (Thanks, Jeff!). As you can see, you don't have to write a lot—just enough to tell our readers what is special about the tree or trees you love. You can talk about a species, as Jennifer has, or you can choose a single tree that speaks to you. You can even share a grouping of trees—maybe the ones you see from your kitchen window or back porch, every day.

This column will be a photo essay, which puts a heavy emphasis on the pictures. I'll need at least one good photograph for each column, and more is better. The text and photos can be sent to me at sphxxx3@gmail.com. Photos should be high resolution, somewhere between 600 KB and 2 to 3 MB. I'll take it from there.

Thanks in advance for sharing your love of conifers with me and our fellow Coneheads!

Let's Get Together! Plan a Rendezvous!

The Southeast Region needs your help in planning for a rendezvous! Please contact one of your officers at the addresses on the back page of this newsletter as soon as possible if you are willing to host a gathering in your area. We will help with organizing the rendezvous and getting the word out to our members.

A rendezvous usually includes visits to several gardens that are relatively close together. Often, friends and garden clubs are happy to share their gardens, or perhaps there is a public or academic garden nearby that we could cooperate with.

Rendezvous are important to the success of the SER for a number of reasons. They are a chance for us to renew old acquaintances and develop new ones. They inspire us with new ideas for our own gardens and introduce us to new plants. They allow us to share what works and what doesn't work in our attempts to keep our gardens healthy and beautiful.

You can support the mission of the ACS and the SER by taking the lead on a rendezvous, sometime this year. Let's start planning it, now! Contact us with your ideas and we'll figure out how to get it done.

Jeff and Jennifer Harvey Cordially Invite You to Their Daffodil Open Garden

March 16, 17 & 23, 24, 2024

9-3 PM

Jeff and Jennifer Harvey's Garden

2910 Poplar Hill Road

Watertown, TN 37184

615-268-7089

**An official American Daffodil Society Display Garden in
a conifer garden! Over 580 labelled varieties! Thousands of blooms!**



Enjoy the emerging spring flowers along with the Harveys' amazing collection of conifers, including the specimens Jennifer mentions in her article about her favorite conifer species, *Picea orientalis*, later in this issue.

Around the Southeast Region

In Memoriam Byron Richards

Byron Richards died this past December at the age of 91 and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. He was a kind and generous man, well-known to many of us in the American Conifer Society and in the Southeast Region in particular for his lovely arboretum in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Byron was a passionate collector of conifers and became a member of the ACS shortly after its founding. He and his wife, Hazel, created a beautiful three-acre arboretum around their hand-built home, and they welcomed many garden tours over the years, including the post-meeting tour following the 2018 ACS National Meeting. He counted Chub Harper, Bruce Appeldoorn, Larry Stanley, Talon Buchholz, and many other renowned plantsmen among his mentors and friends.

Byron was a mechanical engineer who, after working at General Motors for fifteen years, moved on to working on fiber optic bar code readers for which he earned a patent. After retirement, he and Hazel built their dream home, which included a wonderful and meticulous shop for Byron's woodworking activities. His creativity craftsmanship was on display everywhere throughout his house and gardens. We have lost a good friend.



JC Raulston Japanese Garden Photo by S. Horn

Support Your Favorite Reference Gardens with a Designated Donation!

Members can now make donations to support the ACS Reference Garden of their choice! One way you can help is to pay for your Reference Garden's membership in the ACS. Each Reference Garden is required to maintain their institutional membership in the ACS to keep their status as a Reference Garden, but this can be trickier than you might think, since funding for each garden is different and changes in personnel can mean that the small detail of keeping current with the ACS may fall through the cracks. That problem is solved with a \$40 donation that you designate for that purpose. We'll stockpile years if more than one year's membership is covered. Here's how:

Log in to <https://www2.conifersociety.org/> and click the Donate link at the top of the home page. Choose the top option, General Operating Fund, and click Donate Online. On the following page, enter the donation amount and payment option and specify your Reference Garden in the Comments section. Make a difference and support the gardens you love best. Donate today!

2024 National Meeting News Call for Sponsors for 2024 National Meeting!

The Central Region and Southeast Region are excited to be co-sponsoring the ACS national meeting June 13-15 this year in Cincinnati. The Central Region has done the hardest part of the planning in organizing a great group of gardens for us to visit, but the Southeast Region is contributing as well. We have been very conscious of keeping the costs as low as possible, but just like with everything else, prices have gone up. The National Meeting helps cover the costs of many ACS programs and expenses, so we really could use your help in defraying some of the costs of the meeting.



AMERICAN
CONIFER SOCIETY

Enter the Cone Zone!

First, if you haven't already done so, register for the meeting! Registrations are going very well, but June is fast approaching. Sign up, now! There are many very exciting gardens to see, not to mention our famous plant auctions and all the coneheads you get to meet! ACS is not only the American Conifer Society but also home to Acquired Conifer Addiction and we would love to help satisfy that addiction! Even if you can't come yourself, consider sending some plants for the auction or a gift certificate for your nursery and/or your favorite nursery/garden company.

Second, be a sponsor! There are many opportunities available, and sponsors are listed on the website and receive a lot of exposure at the meeting, too. Companies can also have their logos displayed on some of the items mentioned below. You can make up to a \$100 donation on the website in the store or if you prefer to mail a check with your information and artwork you can send it to ACS National office 8441 Wayzata Blvd., Suite 270 Golden Valley, MN 55426.

Here are a few options:

- ◆ Meeting Tote Bags - Your company logo on tote bags \$700
- ◆ Meeting Badges - Your company logo on badge holders \$300
- ◆ Silent Auction Pens – \$400 to have 500 made, pens or donate 500 pens with your company logo, if you already have some.
- ◆ Bus Hospitality (water and snacks) - \$500, or \$200 for one bus
- ◆ Sponsor a lecture for \$1000
- ◆ Notebook for badge holder - \$500
- ◆ Table decorations - \$200
- ◆ Unspecified donations of any amount are welcome, too!
- ◆ Auction Plants - As many as we can get! If you need assistance in transporting plants to the conference, just contact Jeff Harvey (president@conifersociety.org) to work out the details. And on that note

Calling All You Plant Rustlers and Haulers!

If you are attending the 2024 ACS National Meeting and are able to pack your vehicle chock-full of plants with no damage, we need you! We are always looking for members to help deliver auction plants to the meeting site. Inevitably we get donations from growers or members who can't attend the meeting, so if you are driving to Cincinnati for the 2024 ACS meeting and are willing to haul plants, we'd love to hear from you. Our plan is to have one member in each of our states responsible for securing donations and transporting plants. If you can help with this effort, let us know.

Our region is known for securing great plant material for our silent and live auctions and if you've attended our regional meetings, you know what I'm talking about. Join us in Cincinnati, and if you can offer some auction assistance, **please contact Jeff Harvey at president@conifersociety.org.**



2024 National Meeting News, Continued

Double Your Fun by Lending a Hand at the 2024 National Meeting!

We all enjoy attending gatherings of like-minded conifer enthusiasts, but as should be obvious to everyone, these events don't just happen on their own. In addition to people who are willing to share their gardens, more people are needed to help with registration, name tags, finding caterers, and organizing the plant



Moments later, plant fever infects the meeting!



The peaceful scene after volunteers have worked their magic, just before the doors open.

Photos by Jennifer Harvey

donations. The auctions need volunteers who can write auction slips for each plant, arrange them on tables, and help with the auction itself. You can assist at the sales table during the meeting to answer questions from meeting attendees who need information and to sell ACS logo items and books, too.

There are lots of other tasks to be done as well, so contact Jeff Harvey at president@conifersociety.org and offer an hour or two. You'll end up making new friends and having fun while helping to ensure the success of the 2024 meeting!

Announcing the ACS NewBroom Award

We are excited to announce the launch of the American Conifer Society's NewBroom Award application for 2024.

The ACS NewBroom Award aims to recognize and support individuals dedicated to the study and research of conifers and related genera. This prestigious award includes registration for the 2024 ACS National Meeting in Cincinnati, lodging, meals, and reimbursement of mileage expenses up to \$100.

If you or someone you know meets the eligibility criteria and is passionate about horticulture in general and conifers in particular, we encourage you to apply. The application process is straightforward and includes sections for personal information, an essay, recommendations, and showcasing your passion for horticulture through media.

Key Dates:

- Application Deadline: April 14, 2024
- Selection Announcement: Early May 2024
- National Conference: June 13-15, 2024

For more details and to access the application form, please visit ACS NewBroom Award Application Page at <https://www2.conifersociety.org>. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to the national office at nationaloffice@conifersociety.org or the scholarship chair, Deborah Hardwick at scholarships@conifersociety.org

We look forward to receiving your applications and supporting the next generation of horticulturists.

Get Thee to a Nunnery (and a Garden!) in Hong Kong

by Sandy Horn

This past December, I traveled to Hong Kong on a whim. I hadn't been out of the country since before the pandemic, and I decided it was high time. I have traveled extensively in Europe, but I've never been to Asia, although I've been interested in Oriental gardens and culture for most of my life. For the first time Asian tourist, especially for solo travelers, Hong Kong is probably the easiest introduction to this vast and unfamiliar continent, since Hong Kong was a British protectorate from 1841

until 1997 when it reverted to Chinese rule. Because of the long-standing influence of the British, a very large proportion of the city's population speaks English to a greater or lesser degree. While this piece will focus on a garden and nunnery I visited while there, I will mention a few



Nan Lian garden, framed by the Hong Kong skyline.

more details for those of you who are curious about Hong Kong.

December is a wonderful time to visit. It's the dry season, and the warmest day during my visit was in the mid-60s, far more comfortable than the hot, humid, and often

wet weather of summer, which sometimes includes a typhoon or two. There is much to see and do in the city, and it is quite inexpensive to visit and enjoy. Fine hotels and restaurants are far less expensive than in major U.S. cities, and transportation is excellent and amazingly cheap, too. If you're over 60, public transportation is half-priced as are many entry fees to museums and other cultural venues. People are kind, generous, and patient with foreigners. I hope to return there, someday.

I spent the last day of my Hong Kong visit at Nan Lian Garden and the adjacent Chi Lin Nunnery. Both are situated in northeastern Hong

(Continued on page 7)



One of the meticulous models of an ancient wooden temple in Nan Lian's exhibition. English signage is clear and informative.

(Continued from page 6)

Kong. The eight acres of this beautiful, tranquil space are surrounded by the skyscrapers and streets of a totally modern, bustling city, as you can tell from the first picture in the article.

Nan Lian Garden

Nan Lian is constructed in the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) style and modeled after the oldest existing Chinese garden, Jianshouju in Shanxi, which is 1,300 years old. In addition to the park, there are several exhibit spaces that showcase Dahua viewing stones, wonderful models of ancient Chinese wooden architecture, and, at least during my visit, lovely ceramics. Most of this is free, but there are always places for donations, which support the park and the nunnery. There is also a formal teahouse. Only those who have reserved tea service may enter, and others are discouraged from approaching the building too closely so that the serenity and solemnity of the ceremony will not be disturbed. In contrast, you can see the riot of form and color in the photograph of the bougainvillea grove to the left.

There are many wonderful and



A contemplative view of the teahouse's exterior space.



Bougainvillea glabra 'Variegata'

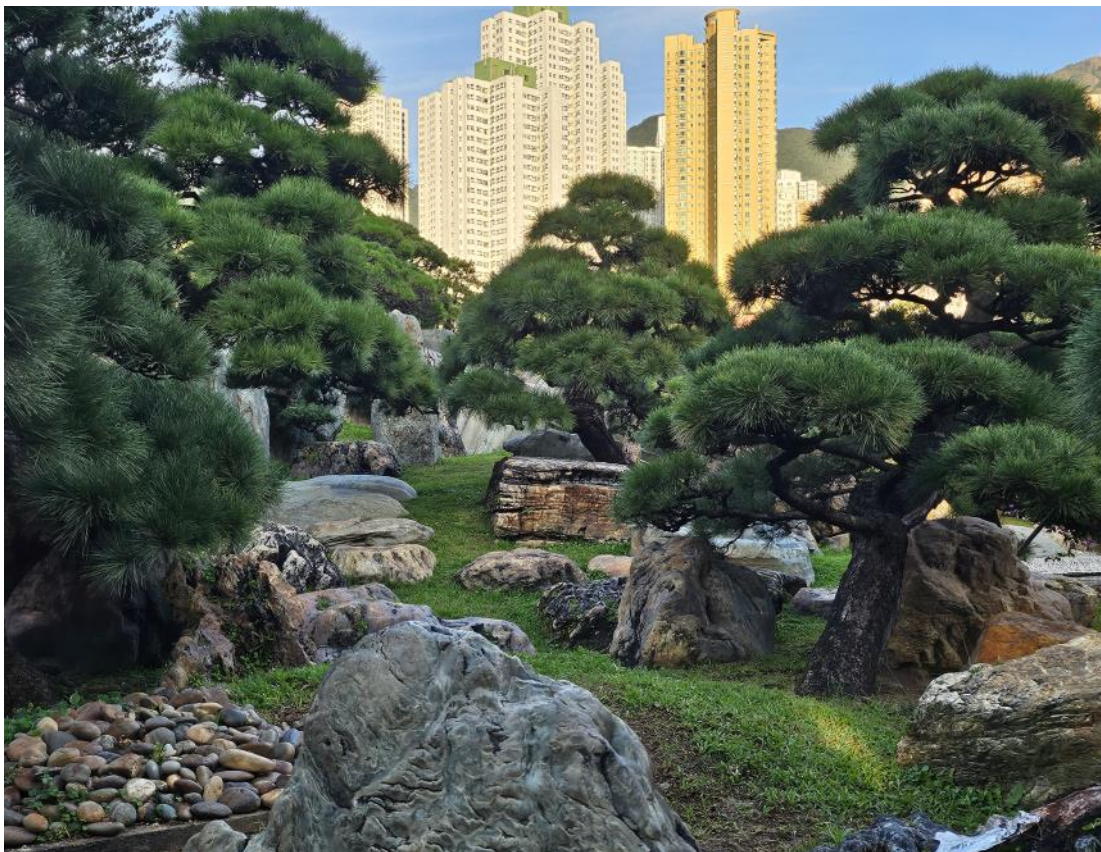
old bonsai and penjing displayed throughout the park in addition to the carefully maintained and pruned larger trees. Rocks and water are essential elements in any Chinese garden and are wonderfully integrated to create the ethereal landscapes of Nan Lian.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Hungry visitors have a choice of on-site options. There is a vegetarian restaurant, reputed to be quite good, and a snack shop, which was my choice. For about \$8, I had a wonderful sampler of five different items including a killer ginger something, dumplings and gyoza, and a bottle of water. There's also a very nice gift shop.

I then discovered the exhibit hall that was, at least during my visit, dedicated to contemporary Chinese ceramics. I was completely enchanted by the simple forms and exquisite glazes. After viewing the work of the ceram-



Carefully selected and placed boulders give a natural feel to a forest of cloud pruned Japanese black pines (*Pinus thunbergii*) juxtaposed against manmade mountains of Hong Kong skyscrapers.



A Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) in training.

ics master and his pupils, I took a seat in the center of the room and spent some time watching the the video presentation of the pieces that surrounded me, listening to the meditative music that accompanied the visuals and resting from my morning's excursions. Then I revisited the entire exhibit, viewing it with new eyes. It was such a wonderful experience that I enquired whether the presentation were

available for purchase, but sadly it wasn't. Still, I emerged from the pavilion in the perfect frame of mind to move on to Chi Lin Nunnery.

Chi Lin Nunnery

Chi Lin Nunnery can be accessed directly from Nan Lian Garden. The nunnery was established in the 1930s, but it

(Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8)

was mostly rebuilt in 1998 using Tang Dynasty techniques that incorporated no nails or similar fasteners, relying instead on interlocking woodwork to secure the structures. Photography is prohibited throughout much of the site, and I can totally support that, so there are no pictures in this article of the various worship areas, which are very much still in use. Visitors are allowed to view the temples throughout the complex and to watch and listen to the Buddhist rituals, chants, and music, and I spent a lot of time doing that, as I wandered the grounds.

The photos you see here are of the entrance and main courtyard of the nunnery. Surrounding the courtyard is a collection of viewing stones, each on its own plinth with an accompanying quotation for contemplation. It took me quite some time to make my way around the covered walkway and to give each stone and quotation the respect it deserved.

As you can see, there are many, many bonsai and penjing throughout the garden. The one in the lower left of



This may be a Chinese red pine (*Pinus massoniana*) penjing, but your guess is probably better than mine. The trees were not labeled, so it's just a guess.

this picture is probably a Fukien tea tree (*Carmona microphylla*). Penjing differ a bit from typical bonsai because they incorporate stone, figures, etc., to create a miniature landscape. Cloud-pruned Buddhist pines (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*) symbolize discipline, meditation, and wisdom.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

The flowering magenta penjing you see in the photo to the right are bougainvillea.

Also within the courtyard are four interconnected lotus ponds that add the third element of water to the composition.

There is much more for a contemplative viewer and conifer lover to see at Nan Lian and Chi Lin. I left for my hotel and the airport at the end of my day there, completely satisfied with my trip and at peace with the world. If you are ever in Hong Kong, I highly recommend allotting time to wander these spaces, appreciating the ancient cultural roots from a time when contemplation and cultivation of the inner self and its place



within nature were considered essential to a life lived well and with intention. Give yourself plenty of time. In that regard, I suppose I just got lucky. I had several other things I could have done on my last day in Hong Kong, but nothing else was written in stone. As I slipped deeper into the tranquility I found within these spaces, I decided I was where I belonged.

A video tour to Nan Lian and Chi Lin can be found here:

<http://en.chilin.org/tour/nunnery/index.html>.

Sandy Horn is the ACS Southeast Region director and the editor of this newsletter.

Walking the Garden Path with Jimmy Williams Covering a Lot of Ground

Text by Jimmy Williams ❖ Photos by Sandy Horn



This is Ajuga reptans 'Black Scallop' planted beneath an Arizona cypress.

Groundcovers are not for sissies anymore. I heard it whispered the other day that a few of the conifer cognoscenti have gone so far as to use the kindergarten groundcovers as, guess what, groundcovers for conifers! What a disgrace to such an otherwise august collection by conifer "coneheads," as they call themselves. But then I was invited by one of the genuine coneheads to accompany him on a visit to one of his fellow partners in crime who supposedly actually planted some groundcovers under some of his yellow arborvitae!

It so happened this man was using a form of ajuga that has larger leaves and flowers than the more common kinds. They were all in bloom at the time and I must admit how astonished I was at the sight. The ajuga, with its out-sized purple leaves was, at the time, bearing likewise purple flowers on stems at least a foot tall. What a sight. I hereby vow to never minimize the brain power of any

conehead who goes so far as to mix groundcovers with self-respecting conifers.

The ajuga, I was told, was a variety known as 'Caitlin's Giant,' which does indeed bear outsize glossy purple leaves and taller stems of purple flowers. The friend told us that the variety increased at warp speed, but was easy to pull up where not needed or was needed for some other place. And the yellow (gold) of the arborvitae with the color wheel contrast of the purple ajuga was outstanding!

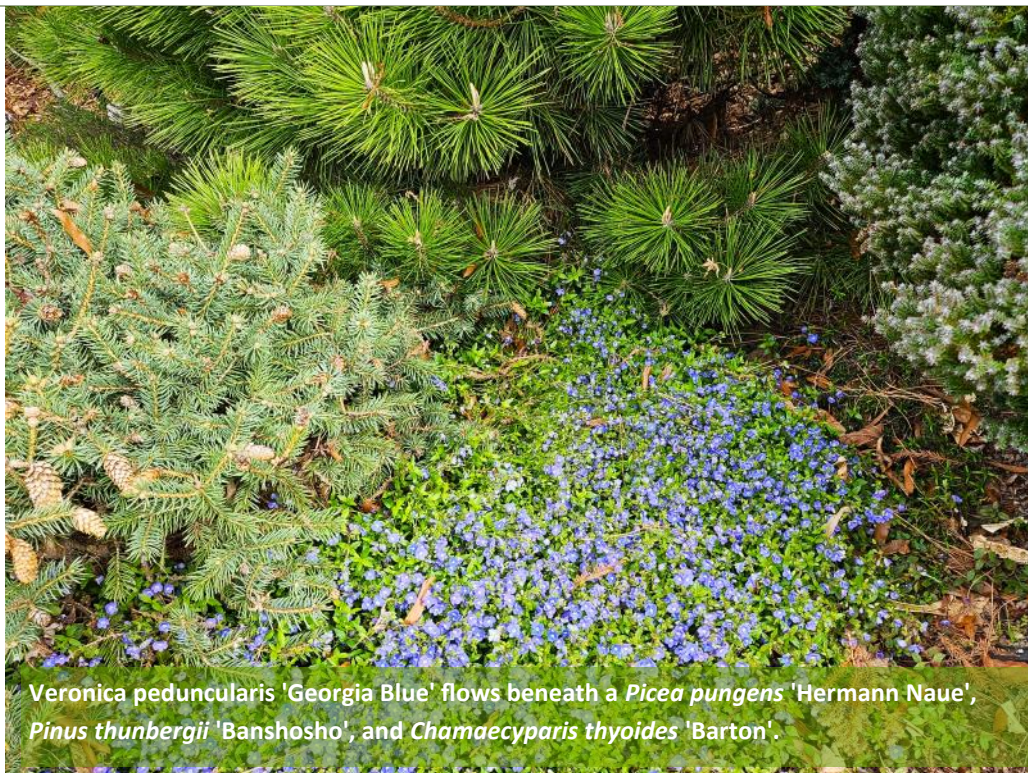
Sometime during the next restless night, it dawned on me sometime around dawn that little old me might copycat the person using the ajuga as a groundcover along with the yellow arborvitae. There might be other combinations also of the same two classes of plants to make up a pleasing combination. Right off the bat I came up with, say, yellow creeping jenny with some blue or dark green

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

dwarf, or even miniature conifers. Even people with tabletop-size conifers could enjoy more color than they could reasonably expect from the conifer, alone.

Flashback some 15 years or so. Great friends of ours lived at that time near Galva, Illinois, the hog capital of the world, incidentally, where they (the friends) plied their trade at a walk-in perennial nursery from which I left their place at least once a year cumbered with a truckload of perennials and seasonal annuals to be interred into our Tennessee red clay, far removed from the Illinois loam of their area, said to be some of the richest in the world, only surpassed possibly



Veronica peduncularis 'Georgia Blue' flows beneath a *Picea pungens* 'Hermann Naue', *Pinus thunbergii* 'Banshoshu', and *Chamaecyparis thyoides* 'Barton'.



Sedum rupestre 'Angelina' and *Verbena catharinae* 'Lavender Frappe' below a Japanese black pine. The verbena blooms a beautiful lavender, further enhancing the grouping.

by some in the Ukraine. No wonder the evil Russian Putin craves it so. Don't get me started.

Anyway, while on one of our visits to those Yankee friends, we took a guided conifer tour into Iowa. I was new to conifers then, and so were our friends. The thing that impressed us most were the miles and miles of bark mulch surrounding a great many superb conifer collections and nothing else. Bare it was as the proverbial baby's behind except for all that mulch. Even then, in my conifer ignorance, I remarked that a few other plants, even groundcovers (whisper it) would have improved the presentation of the conifers, and having since studied conifer collections in our own state, I am now thoroughly convinced that partnering conifers with other plants is the way to go.

Now then, all that to say this. We can imagine any number of groundcovers that could enhance almost any conifer grouping that is desperately calling for a surround more exciting than crushed bark. To wit: a dwarf blue conifer with yellow creeping jenny. Another yellow conifer with a variegated ivy or other soothing enhancement. And a reverse to that, e.g., a variegated euonymus of white and green or yellow and green, with a coniferous blending color. We could go on a lot further here, but I am out of space until next time and as my father always told me, "Use your head for something besides a hat rack." See what might suit you and your garden.

I remain your obedient servant from the garden path,

Jimmy



My Favorite Conifer

Oriental Spruce – *Picea orientalis*

Text by Jennifer Harvey ❖ Photos by Jeff Harvey

Picea orientalis is my favorite conifer. I love the plastic-like small needles. In Nashville, Tennessee, it keeps its great color no matter what in full sun or part shade. It seems not to be bothered by anything, even the drought conditions we have been having. I have several cultivars, including 'Nigra', 'Instar', 'Compacta', 'Silver Seedling',



A 15-year-old *P. orientalis* 'Instar' in my garden



P. orientalis 'Silver Seedling', about 8 years old.



P. orientalis 'Fat boy' 12 years old

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)



This *P. orientalis* 'Connecticut Turnpike' is 12-15 years old.



'Spring Frost', 'Gowdy', 'Shadows Broom', 'Early Gold', 'Ferry Creek', 'Prostrate', and 'Skylands'. Now, I have to say that 'Skylands' isn't as happy in Tennessee as it is in northern regions. I have it in a pot now on the east side of the house and it seems to be growing. In the ground, it just sat there and burned. I have had several people say they do burn for the first few years, but once the yellow ones get established, they then grow out of that issue. I just couldn't take looking at the poor thing suffer anymore. I have a few others but they are in my potted special area that is on drip irrigation till they get big enough to go to the garden.

About the Author

Jennifer Harvey is Secretary of the American Conifer Society and also of the Southeast Region. She gardens on 10 acres with her husband Jeff, just outside Nashville, TN. She has been gardening since she was 2 and there isn't any plant she will not try--and try again, if necessary.



Newsletter Wrap-up



Hi, everyone,

It's nearly spring, and I have yet to complete many of the garden tasks that I told myself I'd do during the cool weather of fall and winter. I just returned from a tour of my backyard gardens, and I can see that just clearing the deadfall will require a trip to the yard waste center. But while I was back there, I also saw that the daphnes are blooming and the hellebores are spectacular this year. A little help from me will restore those beds to something far more beautiful and profoundly worthwhile than almost anything else that I can be credited with. I guess that's true of a lot of things, for all of us. Those things we devote ourselves to are the only ones that

really make a difference, to ourselves or anyone else.

I had another thought during that brief sojourn. Maybe the lack of enthusiasm for yardwork that I've been experiencing lately is a result of me devoting so much of my time to weeding. I don't feel as if I've gotten ahead of that job for years! But if that's all that gardening is for me now, how rewarding can it possibly be? I need to change my mindset from fighting a losing battle to finding harmony in my garden, and myself, once more.

You may have noticed an article I included in this newsletter about my trip to Hong Kong, this past Christmas. I got so much from visiting Nan Lian and Chi Lin, and yes, the time in those gardens and Buddhist temples powerfully impacted my state of mind. But if I think back, I have felt as peaceful at times in my own garden, when the results of my care and labor rendered a landscape where there was balance and peace. That's my goal for this year: to lift my eyes from finding what is wrong to focus on what is good and to spend my time on making it better.

Best, always, Sandy

Share Your Tips!

In the Garden

Share your garden tips and tricks, favorite tools or design ideas, successes, and failures. Tell your fellow ACS members how you made a path, built a new planting bed, dug up a stump, dealt with weeds, defeated a fungus or a critter (two-, four-, six-, or eight-legged!). How do you fertilize, make compost, or improve your soil? Do you have a strategy for moving big rocks, digging up stumps, or draining swampy ground? What's the best way to help a new planting succeed?

Send your helpful thoughts to us, along with a picture or two, and be our next "In the Garden" author. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Help Us Raise Needed Money!
Bloomin' Bucks
with Brent and Becky's

You can order bulbs from Brent and Becky's and support the Southeast Region at the same time, so why not take advantage of this opportunity to fill your garden with color, this year? It's easy to do, and you'll be so glad you did! Instead of going directly to the Brent and Becky's website, go to BloominBucks.com and select **American Conifer Society Southeast Region** from the dropdown menu. You will then be taken to the Brent and Becky's website, and 25% of anything you spend there will go to the Southeast Region! You don't pay anything extra for your bulbs, but your purchases will support the Southeast Region. **Happy Planting!**

Submit questions, comments, articles, photos, or suggestions for the next newsletter to

Sandy Horn (sphxxx3@gmail.com)

Remember! Deadline for the June 15 newsletter is May 15!