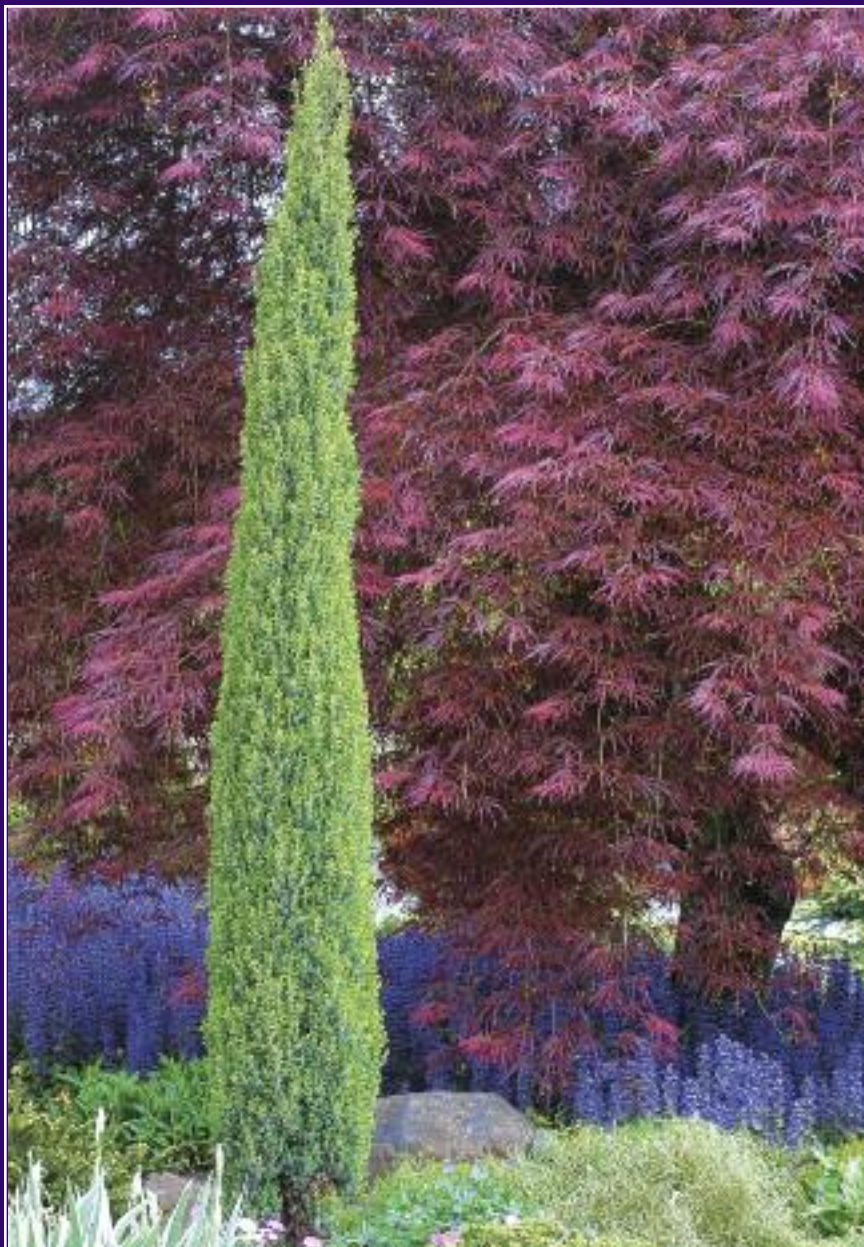


Conifer Quarterly

Vol. 26 No. 3

Summer 2009



Juniperus communis 'Compressa'

Photo Credit: Randall C. Smith, courtesy of Iseli Nursery



Justin C. "Chub" Harper
Photo by Dennis Groh



Richard Frederick "Dick" Bush
Photo courtesy of Robert L. Fincham Coenosium Nursery

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You are invited to join our Society. Please address membership and other inquiries to the American Conifer Society National Office, 175 Charisma Lane, Lewisville, NC 27023-9611. Membership: US \$30 (indiv.), \$35 (joint), \$30 (institutional), \$50 (sustaining), \$100 (corporate business) and \$130 (patron). If you are moving, please notify the National Office 4 weeks in advance.

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MUSINGS...

Twenty years ago, we finally found, after months of looking, the lot where we have our home and gardens. This acre-and-a-half lot was then forested with walnut trees, scrub elms, a few Osage orange and black cherry, and a tangled understory of honeysuckle, buckthorn, poison ivy, and wild grape. A huge American elm, probably more than 75 years old, stood on the north side of where the house was to be.

That was then. Now, we have a front garden, a shade garden, a woodland garden, a rock garden, and a meditation garden. Quite a few of our conifers have reached mature size, and the roof needs replacing. Many of the walnuts and elms are long gone. The front of the house needs a landscape makeover.

As I reflect on these visible changes close to me, I also reflect on the changes in the ACS, thoughts prompted by the loss of two of the founding members of our American Conifer Society, Chub Harper and Dick Bush. I did not know Dick, but comments from those who did all speak of his plantsmanship and friendly, open personality.

I did know Chub. In fact, I have always given him credit for my conifer addiction, which began with a presentation he gave at a Hosta Society meeting. (Hostas would grow under those long-departed walnuts.) The rest of the story I view nearly every day as I look out our windows and take my daily walk around the gardens. Chub always chuckled at my blaming him. I know he was pleased to get the credit.

These two, and the rest of the small group of founders, began something of which they can be justly proud. All of them were professionals in some area of horticulture. Though started as an organization for horticulture professionals as a way to get together and share information, our membership now includes not only professional educators and nursery owners but also long-time collectors, newly infected home gardeners, and some people who are just checking us out.

These wanderings bring me around to plugging what I think is one of the most important benefits of membership in the ACS—the opportunity not only to view and acquire conifers but also to get to know and learn from many of the wisest individuals in horticulture. It's one thing—and very valuable—to read the *Conifer Quarterly*. It's another to actually walk around and listen to one of these

experts. The only way to take advantage of this is to attend a Rendezvous, a regional meeting, or the national meeting.

The current economic situation may keep some from attending the national meeting or even a regional meeting. But, I hope there is a Rendezvous within driving distance of each member. If not, planning a Rendezvous is a great volunteer opportunity to organize a one-day get-together. Your national board is promoting these smaller gatherings. We hope that the comraderie developed whenever coniferites get together will result in many new friendships, greater knowledge, and a stronger Society.

Visit www.conifersociety.org to find the Rendezvous nearest you.

Pleasant wanderings,

Ellen Kelley



EDITOR'S MEMO

This issue is dedicated to the memory of two pivotal ACS leaders, Chub Harper and Dick Bush. Both played important parts in shaping the Society and their respective regions. In tributes to Chub and Dick; Don Howse, Jack Wikle and Dennis Groh share with us how these two legendary figures added plants and spice to life. You may see their names or plants sprinkled throughout this issue as you have in the past and will, no doubt, in the future; for their accomplishments and devotion to the Society are far reaching.

Another tribute to Chub by Dr. Bert Cregg appeared in the June 2009 issue of *The Michigan Landscape* which is published by the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA). Chub and Dr. Cregg met about ten years ago and planted the seed for a series of articles in the MNLA magazine designed to promote conifers. The series became the "Conifer Corner" column in the publication. Some of the articles from that column have been reprinted in the *CQ* and have been very well received by our readers. Reprints of a four-part series by Dr. Cregg addressing basic size categories of conifers has for some time been scheduled to begin in this issue. It is fitting that this series begins at a time of tribute to these two special men.

Chub, in his sharing, caring way was always willing to get the word out on conifers and make specific recommendations as you will see in the first part of this series. It starts on the low end of conifer size estimates, discussing miniatures. For those of you who can't resist filling up the tiniest spaces in your garden bed or



trough, here are some miniature recommendations that are just right for you.

Of course, an article with recommendations usually stimulates a gardener's mind toward acquisition. If that happens when reading Dr. Cregg's article, also take time to read Frank Goodhart's article before heading out to the nursery. He shares some tips on selecting plants and getting them ready to transition into your garden.

If you need more help, remember the ACS is always looking for ways to encourage and assist people with conifer gardening. If you sometimes don't know where to turn, look for Chris Daeger's article announcing a user-friendly way to ask for help when you need it.

We welcome a new contributor with this issue; David Rasch, the only ACS member in New Mexico. And he's a good

Next Issue: Fall 2009

Our next issue will feature: **Cones**

Many people describe conifers as plants with cones. Usually they mean pine cones. Many don't know what they are missing but conifer lovers do. Send us pictures of your conifers, or ones you discovered elsewhere, with the special adornment that coning can bring. Don't forget the atypical display put on by *Cephalotaxus*, *Taxus*, *Juniperus* and *Podocarpus*. We welcome your photos and/or articles about the significance of cones in the conifer world.

Future Issue themes: Please look at future themes and consider sending your articles in advance of published deadlines.

Lesser-known Conifers

Companion Plants

Spring Flush

We welcome news alerts about conifers or about our members. Contact Evelyn Cox to discuss your ideas.

one, writing an interesting article about the native junipers of New Mexico. He is also quite a photographer and shares some great shots of the alligator juniper (*Juniperus deppeana*). I hope we hear more from David in the future.

Our National Meetings are always fun as we see old friends and make new ones. Soon, perhaps one of these opportunities will present itself to you and me. If not this summer, then hopefully next.



The Native Junipers of New Mexico

by David Rasch

New Mexico is certainly a place where conifers rule and junipers can be found throughout this fifth largest state from high on the mountain slopes to scattered along the edges of low-elevation plains and deserts. However, juniper reigns supreme on the middle elevations in vast acreages of New Mexico known as pinyon-juniper woodland and juniper savanna. These regions inspire a stereotypical image of the state in brown grassy hills dotted with green bushy blobs. It is here that the definitions of “tree” and “shrub” are challenged.



There are six species of juniper that are native to New Mexico. The highest dwelling juniper is *Juniperus communis*, the common juniper. It can be seen in the forested mountains up to timberline. This juniper is most beautiful in the open aspen groves where these low bushes at 1 to 2 feet high coexist with numerous wildflowers in the dappled sunlight. There are many cultivars of this species that are perfectly suited for rock garden plantings or other small spaces.

In my opinion, the king of junipers in New Mexico is *Juniperus monosperma*, the one-seed juniper. In my Zone 5b yard somewhere between the woodland and the savanna outside of Santa Fe, this juniper becomes quite tree-like with several stems up to 15 feet tall and 20 feet wide. In years of heavy pollen production from this wind-pollinated tree, yellow dust can be seen covering all horizontal surfaces and allergic people are in pain for several weeks in late winter. A parasitic mistletoe infests the one-seed juniper and these yellow-green spheres are visible from a distance but they don't appear to kill the trees.





Record alligator juniper

Two other junipers occur at the edges of the state that are similar in appearance to one-seed juniper. They are: *Juniperus osteosperma*, the Utah juniper from northwestern New Mexico in areas of the Great Basin and the Colorado Plateau, and *Juniperus pinchotii*, the uncommon redberry juniper from scrubby areas of southern New Mexico.

Juniperus scopulorum, the Rocky Mountain juniper, is the most tree-like with only one straight trunk. It typically forms a large symmetrical pyramid. The overall appearance is often a weeping, blue-green, airy mass and there are several cultivars of this species that accentuate these characteristics.

But, my favorite native juniper of them all is *Juniperus deppeana*, the alligator juniper. This tree can be seen in the southwestern quarter of New Mexico.

Its bark forms in thick, blocky, gray chunks, hence the reference to the reptile hide. The tree is also distinguished with reddish bark on the smaller branches and very bright-blue new growth. All junipers grow relatively slowly; therefore, they take a long time to get large. Imagine my fascination when I saw the record alligator juniper in El Malpais National Monument near Grants, New Mexico with a trunk more than 4 feet wide. This monster dwarfs the surrounding trees and it must be at least a few centuries old.

About the author: David Rasch, the sole member of ACS in New Mexico, is the head of historic preservation for the City of Santa Fe. In his spare time, David has planted more than 100 conifers in his garden, frequently travels throughout the west seeking large, old, rare, and individually beautiful conifers, and collects photographs, prints, and paintings of western conifers. During summer months, you'll find him at timberline.



Remembering Justin C. (“Chub”) Harper

by Jack Wikle

In the early 1960s, I gave a lecture at the annual convention of the International Shade Tree Conference (today’s International Society of Arboriculture). At that meeting, Ralph G. Carmichael, the man who supervised Davey Tree’s installation of the landscaping at the new John Deere Administrative Center, introduced me to his traveling companion, Justin C. (“Chub”) Harper. Ralph’s introduction was the beginning of my long friendship with Chub.

As supervisor of the showplace grounds at John Deere’s headquarters in Moline, Illinois, one of Chub’s great prides was the quality of its extensive lawns, but his interest in plants extended to many areas. At one time, he was an iris hybridizer. He also once maintained an extensive collection of African violets. Then there were the roses—hundreds of plants meticulously grown, producing a great succession of prize-winning blossoms. To say that the roses gave way to Chub’s greatest passion, collecting dwarf and rare conifers, is reasonably accurate but ignores an ornamental grass collection and an extensive vegetable garden. (I recall Chub advising me on popcorn varieties and telling how to keep raccoons out of sweet corn using an electric fence.) Once, he decided to collect viburnums. This lasted about a year and a half before his efforts were stymied by limited availability. As viburnum collecting slowed to a stop, his conifer acquisition accelerated rapidly.

As a visitor to Chub’s home, it always struck me that I experienced much more there than just a nice variety of plants, pleasingly arranged. The maintenance was superb, absolutely weed free. I

could not find a single dandelion! And Chub was doing all this work himself with no hired help.

Chub was not one to let space limitations in his lot-and-a-half-owned and lot-rented-from-a-neighbor slow him down. Like an up-to-date Johnny Appleseed; when the conifers accumulated, he found ways to spread the wealth. Over the years, he gave away two major collections, hundreds of plants in each case. First, he gave to Michigan State University’s Hidden Lake Gardens, where I was employed at the time as the one-person education staff. Ten years later, he gave another major collection to the Bickelhaupt Arboretum in Clinton, Iowa. Both collections have become “must see” destinations for touring conifer experts and enthusiasts from around the world. This “sowing” of conifers continued with ongoing donations to Hidden Lake Gardens and to Bickelhaupt, in addition to gifts of smaller numbers of plants to other institutions.

A lower-profile Harper contribution to MSU began in 1996, some years after my retirement from full-time employment at Hidden Lake Gardens. At that time, Chub asked if I would be willing to do part-time maintenance in the Harper Collection if he and his wife, Anna, would donate money to cover the cost. I was not looking for this work, but it was a request I could not refuse. Since then, it was my privilege to spend 80 to 90 hours a year for 12 years working in this beautiful setting, pruning, labeling, and occasionally weeding with the help of some

great volunteers.

Through this ongoing involvement, I became very aware that Chub's gardens are having an impact well beyond the kinds of activities and recognitions recorded in the usual listing of his accomplishments. How many would be difficult to say, but without question, there are a number of people very active in promoting, growing, and planting garden conifers for whom visiting a Harper collection was a life-altering experience. These are people who earned their livings in very different ways before being so taken with the variety and beauty of Chub's conifers that they began new careers.

One of those who have described this radical change to me in detail is Rich Eyre of Woodstock, Illinois. Another is Dennis Hermson from Farley, Iowa, who tells people he was "normal" before he met Chub. A third is Hans Thumm of Temperance, Michigan, who earned his living as a mechanic for 40 years and was eventually in charge of keeping a large fleet of garbage trucks on the road. According to Hans, he "literally went overboard" when he discovered the Harper Collection at Hidden Lake Gardens. He retired from his career as a mechanic and began designing and installing gardens for customers, drawing on what he believes may be the biggest and most varied stock of unusually large and unusually rare conifers in the country.

These gentlemen are just a few of the hundreds of people from across our country and beyond who became Chub's associates and friends through involvement in collecting and promoting conifers. Looking back, it is clear that Chub was always a nurturer and that this nurturing attitude

extended well beyond the plants in his gardens to his relationships with people, especially to those sharing his passion for "growing things." Include me as one of the many who have been inspired and have learned from Chub Harper.



Thank You “Chub”

by Dennis Groh

Justin Chandler Harper had a significant and beneficial influence on most people he met and certainly on the world of conifers. He served the American Conifer Society (ACS) as its President from 1994–1995. He is, as of this writing, the only individual who has won both of the major ACS awards, the Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award of Merit for Dedicated Support of the ACS in 1996 and, in 2008, the Award of Merit for Development in the Field of Conifers. He helped found the ACS and later the ACS Central Region. By supporting many conifer-related educational efforts both within and outside the Society, Chub, on numerous occasions and in many different ways, helped this Society carry out its stated mission: *To encourage the development, conservation, and propagation of dwarf and unusual conifers; aid in the standardization of conifer nomenclature; and educate the public about conifers.* I can think of few individuals who may have contributed more to the availability, awareness, and use of the rare, unusual, beautiful, and dwarf cultivars of conifers than Chub.

Many others, including the national gardening author, Starr Ockenga, have recognized Chub’s significant contribution to the art of gardening. In her book, *Eden on their Minds - American Gardeners with Bold Visions* (2001), she devotes an entire chapter to Chub’s contributions. She especially discusses his efforts to find and propagate witches’-brooms. Amazingly, Chub personally harvested more than 400 brooms. In addition, he passed his enthusiasm and

harvesting techniques to other “broom-hunters,” who have gone on to further increase the available supply of new genetic material.

Among many broom hunters, Chub stands out for what he did once he had new plant material: maintaining a scientific record of origin and propagation method; donating his plants to a variety of public collections, once he judged them to be worthy plants; and personally making sure they were properly planted, labeled, documented, and maintained.

Chub was a humble and gregarious man with a smile, handshake, and kind word for all. He lived a modest lifestyle, in a modest residence, even though he could have easily indulged himself with monetary rewards from his hard work and reputation. Instead, he gave generously, without fanfare, for the benefit of others.

In many ways, Chub had a profound positive effect on my life. The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers was the inspiration for the significant personal collection of conifers surrounding my home. He also inspired me to volunteer my time and energy as an officer of the ACS in an effort to give something back for all the benefit gained from working with and learning from Chub.

Chub Harper’s boundless energy, enthusiasm, humor, generosity, knowledge, and love of plants positively impacted a large number of other people who, in turn, cascaded this positive energy and plant knowledge to others. His mentoring and

collection efforts have added to the diversity and quality of plant material available to beautify our homes and gardens. While Chub's passing has been a loss for the ACS and a personal loss for me and many others whom he touched, his legacy is alive and well. For it lives in the hearts of people he mentored and the collections he generously labored to establish. It is now our task to continue to cascade his enthusiasm and knowledge to others and to preserve, maintain, and enhance those collections for future generations.

For more about Chub Harper and his achievements, visit:

www.conifersociety.org and

www.coenosium.com

A memorial fund has been set up for Chub.

Checks should be made out to "Michigan State University" and have the code "AB8437" written in the memo line. This is the code for the Harper Endowment.

Mail checks to:

University Development

Michigan State University

300 Spartan Way

East Lansing, MI 48824-1005



Justin C. "Chub" Harper

Photo by Dennis Groh

Richard Frederick “Dick” Bush

9/13/1927 - 3/27/09

A Tribute

by Don Howse

Jean Iseli called me into his office and asked that I go out and check the wind, its direction and velocity. Jean was speaking to someone on the telephone. When I went out the door, it was dead calm, which I thusly reported. A few moments later there was a gale blowing. About 20 minutes after my misguided weather report, we could hear the drone of an airplane engine, coming in low over the hill south of Iseli Nursery. We all ran outside to see a bright yellow Piper Cub appear as it slowly descended and wobbled in the blowing wind, aimed toward the new office building at Iseli Nursery. As the airplane passed over the office, a parcel with a small **p a r a c h u t e** attached was tossed out of the airplane. It descended to the ground near the office door. Dick Bush had made a “Special Delivery” of scions to Jean Iseli.

Jean, and subsequently I, too, had become acquainted with the “Red Baron” through a mutual interest in collecting and growing unusual conifers. Jean and Dick often shared conifer plants, conifer scions, conifer lore, limited conifer knowledge, and lots of red wine and scotch. They also shared gossip about fellow nursery people and conifer collectors. Dick had a passion for flying and would bring his Piper Cub to Iseli Nursery and set it down on an empty nursery bed, with the wings barely passing over the upright irrigation risers. One such bed, on a hill top that was steeply

sloped, was kept as his landing strip.

Dick would call ahead to make sure the landing strip was clear and to hear how the wind was blowing, as if it mattered. One of his most memorable flying events was May 18, 1981—the day Mt. St. Helens erupted. Dick, alone with camera in hand, flew up to the volcano near the rising column of hot ash. Hot cinders and pumice boulders were being tossed out of the mountain and were falling around his airplane’s wings while bolts of lightning flashed out of the dark, vertically ascending cloud. Dick’s photos, which he later shared with friends, showed the falling cinders and the horrendous column of ash and smoke, complete with lightning bolts.

Dick was no ordinary fellow. He and his wife Sally and daughter Margie moved to the Willamette Valley of Oregon and purchased about 160 acres along the Pudding River, near the farming community of Canby. They had come from California, where Dick had been involved with Rockwell International Aerospace Engineering. Dick had a degree in horticulture from the University of California, Davis. They quickly adapted to the rural setting and established a nursery and farm. Besides nursery stock, they raised ducks and geese, black swans, and other farm livestock and tried to be self sufficient on their estate, emulating the style of an

English manor. Visiting them was always an entertaining and enjoyable event. Goose poop was part of the experience.

A man of many talents and interests, Dick collected rare and unusual conifers, with a special interest in hemlocks. He worked with Theodore Dudley, PhD, and the publishers of Timber Press to bring about the printing of John Swartley's book, *The Cultivated Hemlock*, in 1984. Dick realized the importance of having this vital work published because the author had become incapacitated.

He wrote several articles in the early editions of the *ACS Bulletin*. His article, "The Hemlocks of the Pacific Northwest," appeared in Vol. 1, No. 2 of the *Bulletin* (Fall 1983). The article is accompanied by a photo of Dick at the podium at the first Annual Meeting of the ACS

where he made two presentations, both about hemlocks. At the first Board of Director's meeting, Dick was appointed to work toward the possibilities of regionalization of the Society, with a specific interest in forming a Western Region.

Dick collected Native American artifacts, many of which he found on his farm as he turned the rich soil. I can recall framed displays of arrowheads, spear points, scraping instruments, and other Native American paraphernalia adorning the walls and shelves of his home office. His article in the *ACS Bulletin* (Vol. 4, No. 3) recalled how the Indians of the Pacific Northwest used conifer trees in their ways of living.

Dick was a founding member of the American Conifer Society, traveling east with Jean Iseli, Cindy Lou Pease, and



Richard Frederick "Dick" Bush

Photo courtesy of Robert L. Fincham Coenosium Nursery

Morris Van Meter from Portland, Oregon, to the early gatherings that resulted in the formation of the Society. He served as a director for the ACS during the early years of its development and later served as president of the Western Region, contributing greatly to its success. He was instrumental in contacting Humphrey Welch in England and getting the ACS involved with the Conifer Data Pool, Conifer Registration and Nomenclature, in which Mr. Welch was an integral participant. In the late 1990s, Dick served along with eight other Oregon members of the ACS in designing and building the Conifer Garden at the Oregon Garden in Silverton, Oregon.

Dick developed unusual propagation and growing techniques and shared his new knowledge with enthusiasm. Later in his nursery career, he devised and built techniques for grafting beech (*Fagus* sp.), now known as Hot Callus Tube Grafting. Dick also employed a propagation method known as Duplex Grafting on his hard-to-root hemlock varieties, so the resultant plant would grow on its own roots, not that of the seedling rootstock. In later years, Dick taught plant propagation and, specifically, grafting techniques at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City. He could be counted on to give grafting demonstrations at ACS and Oregon Nursery events.

Dick's interest in plants was broad, and he was keen on conifers. There are several plants that can be traced to Dick's involvement as introducer, propagator, and grower. He eagerly shared his finds. Among his introductions that I can recall are *Cedrus deodara* 'Bush's Electra', *Picea engelmannii* 'Bush's Lace', *Tsuga canadensis* 'Humphrey Welch', *Tsuga*

canadensis 'Green Lace', and *Pinus banksiana* 'Bush's Twister'. I am sure there are others. He was also very involved with growing *Cornus kousa* varieties. He had an interest in propagating and growing other deciduous trees, such as varieties of European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), and was instrumental in bringing the tiny lace leaf birch, *Betula alba* 'Troost's Dwarf' into production.

Dick Bush was a Renaissance man, giving us new light to understand the nature of conifers, their propagation, and their growing techniques and to develop an appreciation for their many variations. Conifer lovers and the American Conifer Society benefited immensely from Dick's involvement. The "Red Baron" was in our midst, and he has flown on to the sunset.

For more information, visit www.conifersociety.org and www.coenosium.com

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Chronicles of a New Conifer

by Dow Whiting

In the spring of 1997, at our family-owned nursery in southwest Missouri, I happened upon an interesting mutation. Genetic mutations are not uncommon in the plant world however; many are twisted, gnarled, deformed growths that require nurturing to bring out the beauty. This one was different: it was a graceful, soft textured growth that I immediately fell in love with. Like all love affairs, this one has had its trials and tribulations, but true love never fades. This is our story.

The original mutation was found in a block of 'Boulevard' false cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Boulevard'). 'Boulevard' is powder-blue in color with "feathery" textured foliage. The mutation had the same blue coloration, but the foliage was fern-like and quite graceful. I separated the plant from the others for further evaluation and in the early summer, I took the first step in what would prove to be a long, frustrating, yet satisfying process. I took the first cuttings in the summer of 1997 and by the spring of the following year the original plant had mostly reverted back to 'Boulevard'. In the summer of 1998, I took cuttings only from the cuttings I took in 1997, but some of them had lost the blue color and were a soft green. Over the next several years many cuttings were taken, many reversions were disposed of, and lots of changes had happened to the plant.

By the summer of 2003, after six years of reversions and further mutations, the plants had finally stabilized, but did not look like the mutations I first started with. At this point the plants were dark

green in color, with the same graceful, fern-like foliage of the original mutation. They were conical in shape, and very compact, like their parent. Here in the Ozarks, 'Boulevard' will rarely exceed 6 feet and these plants showed the same habits. I should share with you that I live in a region of the country where many conifers struggle. We have heavy clay soils, hot summers, and high humidity. Our only native conifers are eastern red-cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and short-leaf pine (*Pinus echinata*). A beautiful spruce here is the exception, rather than the rule. Many people plant dwarf Alberta Spruce (*Picea glauca* 'Conica'), but the failure and subsequent replacement rate is quite high. Blue-needled conifers, 'Boulevard' included, struggle unless they are creatively placed. This plant gave me high hopes of an upright, dwarf conifer that could not only be grown successfully, but would also thrive in our less than desirable conditions.

In August 2003 I contacted Mr. Tim Wood, head of product development at Spring Meadow Nursery, to see if they would be interested in trialing the plant. Spring Meadow specializes in the development and introduction of new plant varieties. Mr. Wood agreed to evaluate the plants and in April 2004 I sent approximately 25 plants to them to plant in their test gardens and evaluate them for how well they reproduce and grow on in the nursery. This was the nervous part for me. Would anyone else see the beauty and usefulness of this plant?

I received word from Mr. Wood in

May 2007 that Spring Meadow had decided to introduce the plant. It would be patented as *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Dow Whiting', trademarked as Soft Serve Chamaecyparis and marketed under the Proven Winner brand. Mr. Wood said the name choice was a reference to the shape and texture of the plant, and that he wanted to provide a good positive feeling about the plant.

You can find more about Soft Serve™ at www.SpringMeadowNursery.com.

About the author: Dow Whiting and wife Linda own and operate Garden Adventures Nursery in Nixa, Missouri. They recently joined the American Conifer Society,



Chamaecyparis pisifera
'Dow Whiting' Soft Serve™

Ten years had passed, and a lot of sweat and tears had been shed, but it now seemed that the love and nurturing was going to result in a viable plant. In the spring of 2008, Spring Meadow Nursery officially released Soft Serve™ to its growers, and it should be available in limited quantities at garden centers sometime in 2009.

CONIFER BRIEFS

Wollemi nobilis (Wollemi pine)

by Tom Cox

Recently I received a Wollemi pine for evaluation and prior to planting it, made an inquiry with the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, Sydney, Australia. For ACS members residing in areas where the plant can be cultivated, you might find this of benefit:

Dear Tom:

In Australia, where the sunlight is very intense, the Wollemi pine does best when it is young under about 50% shade (shadecloth) or in filtered or dappled light.

1. This species prefers an acid soil, think Camellia and Azalea, but has been found to be adaptable to a variety of soil types.

2. It does best with regular watering. There is nothing particularly different about this species. Severe under or over watering may predispose this species to disease.

3. It does best in a climate in the range min -5 to max 45C (23—113F). They do tend to do best in areas that experience the upper temperatures no higher than in the upper 30C (86-92F) range, but of course will survive up to 45C as long as everything else is in balance. They may survive lower temperatures but there will be accumulated damage with successive events

4. We recommend where people have problems growing them in-ground that they keep them in a pot to control the above factors. I understand that that might not be what you want in an arboretum however.

Hope this helps.

Yours sincerely,

Cath Offord

Dr. Catherine A. Offord
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Letters to the Editor:

Highlighted words inserted by Editor

Dear Evelyn,

The article of Scott Burrell, page 16-19 in the Conifer Quarterly Vol. 26 No 1, Winter 2009, induces me to give some comments.

Picea abies 'Pusch' is not a WB (*witches'-broom*) of a WB, as *Picea abies* 'Acrocona' is no WB at all. 'Acrocona' is a *seedling* cultivar and the original 'Acrocona' which had that 'Pusch' WB stands in the Kalmthout Arboretum in Belgium. It is a pity that the WB has been taken off for propagation. The original tree is now +/- 10m (33 feet) high and is so no WB.

I planted *P.a.* 'Pusch' in 1993 and the sizes are broad 1m (3.3 feet) and high



70cm (2.3 feet) in the Arboretum Trompenburg in Rotterdam.

Five years ago my wife detected a real WB in 'Pusch' and I named this *P.a.* 'Pusch Mini'.

From this WB Nelis Kools, a Dutch nurseryman who specialises in dwarf conifers, took some scions for grafting. These are still dormant, keeping a good dark green colour. No young shoots however. He asked me what the reason could be.

Last year the WB made 175 cones! I took these off and left only 5. The seeds were empty. However the year before Nelis took the scions, which in my opinion had already the cones invisible in them. That could be the reason of not making a terminal shoot. I told him I



expected the grafts to make each several shoots this year.

Perhaps you deem it worthwhile to include these comments in next Conifer Quarterly. For this purpose I enclose two prints of slides. The first of the WB on 'Pusch' with cones on 'Pusch' and on 'Pusch mini' simultaneously. The second of 'Pusch Mini' with 175 cones!

With best regards,
Dick

J.R.P. VAN HOEY SMITH
3062 Rotterdam
Grone Wetering 46

Ed. Note: In Conifer Quarterly Vol. 24 No. 2 Fall 2007, we published Daniel Luscombe's article "In Search of *Abies nebrodensis*". Marjorie Lauer recently wrote the following letter to Dan, copying us. If anyone else is interested, contact Marjorie.

From: Marjorie Lauer
To: Daniel Luscombe
Cc: ConiferQuarterly@bellsouth.net
Sent: May 07, 2009
Subject: *Abies nebrodensis*

I have gathered cone scales from the tree that was planted as *A. nebrodensis*. You indicated that, if it coned, it must have been fertilized by another tree—in this case, most probably *A. cilicica*.

Have you any interest in the cone scales, or know of anyone who might want them?

Marjorie H. Lauer
Administrative Manager
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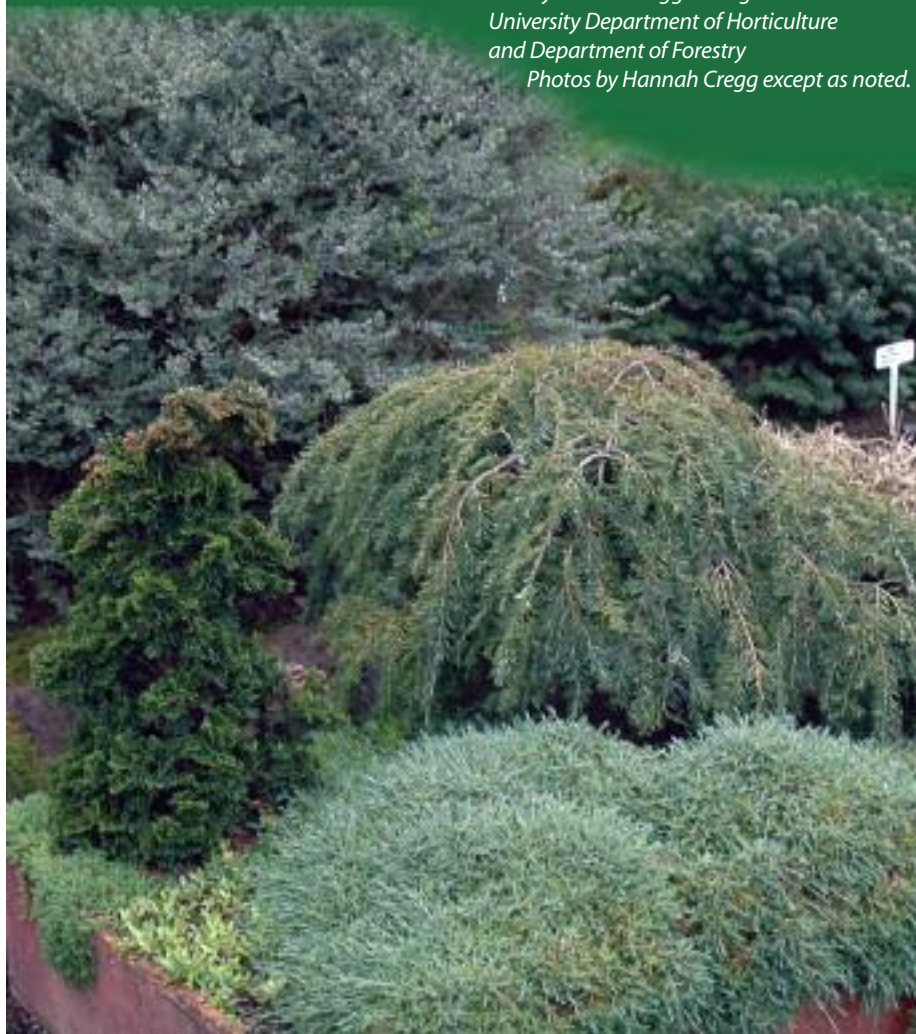


Conifer Corner

Mighty Miniatures

*Text by Dr. Bert Cregg Michigan State
University Department of Horticulture
and Department of Forestry*

Photos by Hannah Cregg except as noted.



This article was originally published in the June 2007 issue of The Michigan Landscape magazine, a monthly publication of the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association (www.mnla.org).

It was the first of a four-part series in the Conifer Corner section of the magazine which will be reprinted with permission in four issues of the *CQ* beginning here and continuing quarterly. We had arranged to reprint this series prior to the passing of our friend Chub Harper. The references to Chub point to his significance in the world of conifers.

One of the challenges of writing the *Conifer Corner* series of articles is developing a means to organize the discussion of a group of plants as diverse and complex as conifers. Ornamental conifers come in such an incredible array of sizes, forms, shapes, and colors they nearly defy description or categorization. Fortunately, the American Conifer Society (ACS) has developed several guidelines for categorizing conifers. One way the ACS groups conifers is by their growth habit; columnar, weeping, irregular, and so on. The other principle way the ACS categorizes conifers is based on growth rate and size at maturity. The ACS classifies conifers as miniatures, dwarf, intermediate or large (see sidebar). While the ACS lists typical growth rates and mature sizes for the various categories, most people familiar with growing trees will recognize that trees vary widely in the growth rates, growing more on good sides and less on poor ones. Nevertheless, discussing ornamental conifers based on growth rate makes sense since size is a major criterion in selecting plants for a given site; looking for plants that will best fit the space available and our design intent. With this in mind, the next four editions of *Conifer Corner* will discuss conifers in each of the four size categories defined by the ACS.

In this edition we'll start with the small end of the conifer spectrum and discuss *miniature conifers*. These are plants that typically have growth rates of less than 1 inch per year and may only reach two or three feet in height after three decades. Miniature conifers highlight the amazing diversity of ornamental conifers. When wandering through a collection of miniature conifers it's sometimes hard to

grasp that a miniature white pine (*Pinus strobus*) or miniature Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) that may be less than 30 inches tall at maturity are still members of the same species as trees that grow to 120 feet or more. Miniature conifers typically arise from genetic mutations as sports or witches' brooms. As a result of the mutation, the plant produces extremely short internodes that are only a fraction of their typical length. Conifer collectors and nurseries preserve the mutation by grafting and then propagate the plants by grafting or rooting cuttings.

The extremely slow growth and short stature of miniatures can make them a challenge to incorporate in a landscape. Miniatures can often serve as accent plants or as specimens in perennial beds. It's important to be careful in choosing a design or site for miniatures. As conifer expert Chub Harper notes "The little fellas can get lost in the shuffle." A common use for these slow growing

forms is in rock gardens where they are able to stand on their own and not get overshadowed by faster growing neighbors. Some nurseries that specialize in dwarf and unusual conifers market miniatures for container gardens and railroad gardens.

If you're designing a rock garden, container garden, or just looking for an accent plant for a container bed, here are some miniatures that merit consideration.

***Picea abies* 'Pumila'**. This Norway spruce cultivar forms semi-prostrate mounds. Unlike many of the "nest" forms of *Picea abies*, which tend to flatten out, 'Pumila' maintains a rounded habit with shoots pointed upward. Conifer expert Chub Harper notes "This is an outstanding versatile plant and it's tougher than a nail."

***Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Little Jon'**. This Douglas-fir is unusual in that in



Picea abies 'Pumila', Dwarf Norway spruce



Pseudotsuga menziesii 'Little Jon',
Little Jon dwarf Douglas-fir.

Photo courtesy of Chub Harper

Pinus parviflora 'Hagoromo'. This plant is noteworthy since there are few good miniature pines. Hagoromo is a dense slow-growing plant that does well with relatively little attention. Its fine texture makes it an excellent choice for rock gardens or landscapes with limited space.



Pinus parviflora 'Hagoromo', Hagoromo
Japanese white pine

maintains a relatively upright form and is one of the slowest growing Douglas-firs reaching about 3 feet at age 20. This is a well behaved plant with rich green color.

Ornamental conifer size classes recognized by the American Conifer Society

Category	Growth per year ¹	Approx. size at 10 years ²
Miniature	<1"	<1'
Dwarf	1" to 6"	1' to 6'
Intermediate	6" to 12"	>6' to 15'
Large	>12"	>15'

¹Size may vary due to cultural, climatic and geographical region

²Refers to growth in any direction

Source: American Conifer Society: www.conifersociety.org



Picea omorika 'Guenter', Guenter's Serbian spruce

***Picea omorika* 'Guenter'**. This plant is a very dwarf and dense conical plant with dark green needles that have silvery back sides. This plant is an excellent candidate for the rockery or other small garden. Cultivar may be listed as 'Hexebessen'.



Made in the shade: dwarf Canadian hemlocks such as *Tsuga canadensis* 'Lewis', Lewis Dwarf Canadian hemlock are a great conifer choice for shady spots.

Photo courtesy of Dax Herbst.

***Tsuga canadensis* 'Lewis'**. As usual, hemlocks provide the answer when looking for conifers for the shade. Lewis has an upright, irregular form. It's dark green with dense needles. Site selection is important with hemlocks; the rule to remember is to avoid winter sun.



Picea glauca 'Pixie Dust', Pixie Dust white spruce

***Picea glauca* 'Pixie Dust'**. This plant is slower growing and more dense than the typical dwarf Alberta spruce (*Picea glauca* 'Conica'). Like many of the miniatures, it makes a great addition to rock gardens.



Pinus strobus 'Minuta', Dwarf white pine.

Photo courtesy of Dax Herbst.

***Pinus strobus* 'Minuta'**. Nice low mounding white pine with short needles. Prefers full sun.

CHUB'S CHOICES.

Chub Harper lists his "top five" favorite plants in miniature conifer size class.

Miniature Conifers - Growth per year: less than one inch. Size at age ten years: one foot.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Picea abies</i> 'Pumila' | Dwarf Norway spruce |
| 2. <i>Picea glauca</i> 'Pixie Dust' | Dwarf Pixie white spruce |
| 3. <i>Pinus strobus</i> 'Minuta' | Dwarf white pine |
| 4. <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> 'Little Jon' | Dwarf Douglas fir |
| 5. <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> 'Lewis' | Dwarf Canadian hemlock |

***Picea abies* 'Little Gem'**. This is a superb rock garden specimen. It was a witches' broom that had developed on *P. abies* 'Nidiformis', which itself was a witches' broom that had been found on a Norway spruce.



Miniature conifers such as *Picea abies* 'Little Gem', Little Gem Norway spruce add contrast when planted near larger trees.

***Picea abies* 'Bant'**. This slow-growing form of Norway spruce forms a neat globe. Larry Stanley of Stanley and Sons Nursery in Oregon suggests this may be the best new small Norway spruce on the market.



Picea abies 'Bant', Bant's Dwarf Norway spruce

Dr. Cregg is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Horticulture and Forestry at MSU.



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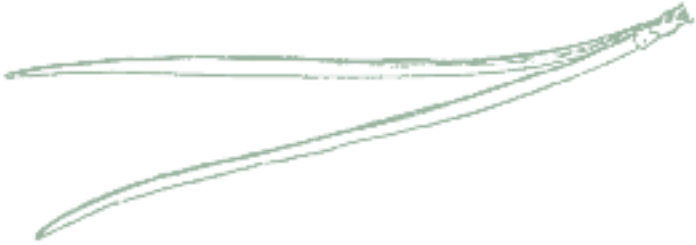


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Conifer Culture

Things to Consider in Selecting Plants and Getting Them Ready to Go into the Garden

by Frank Goodhart

Buying and growing conifers can be an emotional experience and a financial shock if the plant dies. This is especially true if the conifer is rare, slow growing, and difficult to find. In the end, the experience is a test of one's mettle and emotional health. The following information is a summary of my own experience. This doesn't make it correct but it is what has worked well for me. Other alternative approaches or modifications may be appropriate for one's own geographic area. Many of us buy plants in small sizes as well as ones that are large enough to be put directly into the garden. The objective here is to give some information on selecting plants, growing plants to suitable size for garden planting, and what to consider in the final planting. This is the first part of a two part series that will be continued in the fall issue of *CQ*.

I live in Mendham in northern New Jersey, Zone 6a. Morristown which is only 8 miles to the east of Mendham is Zone 6b while Schooley's Mountain, 10 ten miles to the northwest, is colder, perhaps Zone 5a. Both Morristown and Mendham are under the influence of the Atlantic Ocean which brings summer humidity. Higher elevations and areas further north and west in New Jersey are colder (Zone 5a). Those areas are more suitable for conifers that are native to colder climates and higher elevations.

It is important for members living in different areas of the country to care-

fully assess their own climate and soil for suitability of different plant groups. One should then get some idea of what plants grow well in one's own region by observation. Experience or expert advice from keen gardeners in one's own area will indicate which ones require special location and care and which grow really well. Factors such as soil type, drainage, and exposure need to be identified. However, if a particular plant isn't growing in your area it may be because it has not been tried or yet deemed to have ornamental value. Gardeners on the edge have the mental attitude to try new plants realizing that they may not achieve success.

The risk in acquiring untested plants is dependent not only on a plant's intrinsic hardiness but also on its ability to withstand weather extremes. Our members live in different zones and we unfortunately cannot stretch growing conditions far enough to allow us to grow everything. But there are times when plants can be grown outside their recommended hardiness zone if there is special protection or if the soil mix is modified.

Nativity is an extremely important factor in choosing plants for your garden. Some plants are very adaptable to both different weather and different soil conditions. Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum*) is a good example, since it can grow in zones 5 to 9 and tolerate standing water. It grows

well in ordinary soil as long as the pH is not too high. Other conifers like the eastern white-cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) and eastern arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) can tolerate some flooding but not constant high water levels.

Provenance has been shown to be an important factor in the adaptability of conifers to non-native sites. Conifers that grow at high elevations or have a more northerly distribution are often not suitable for warmer zones or areas that are humid, especially at night. Examples from the east are Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) and the balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*). Fir cultivars from the western United States like *Abies concolor* and *Abies lasiocarpa* are problematic growers in my area. Considering conifers from the Rocky Mountains, for example from Colorado: *Picea pungens* grows at lower elevations, *Pinus flexilis* at lower to higher elevations, and *Picea engelmannii* at the upper elevations. The most adaptable of these is the Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*).

The best chance for growing those from higher elevations here in my Zone 6a is in alpine scree similar to that used by rock gardeners for the diminutive sub-alpine and alpine plants. My alpine scree is about 80% grit and 20% compost. My dwarf conifers in this area include *Picea engelmannii* 'Hoodie', *Abies magnifica* 'Nana', and *Picea rubens* 'HB'. Scree provides the excellent drainage that these plants require. I haven't been successful in growing *Abies lasiocarpa* 'Duflon', 'Lopalpun' and 'Utah'. Two firs that do grow well in my area are *Abies veitchii* and *Abies nordmanniana*.

A possible solution for growing

sensitive conifers in the humid areas of northeastern and southeastern United States is for the propagator to use a different understock for grafting. The understock most often used for firs is the Canaan fir. Dr. J. C. Ralston publicized the idea of using *Abies firma* as an alternate understock. Since then, nurserymen have been testing this theory and also started to experiment using other fir understock. This idea is based on the hypothesis that the problem of slow growing conifers at lower elevations can be remedied simply by grafting them onto a rootstock that tolerates clay soils and resists root rot. Some nurseries have conifers with an alternate understock available, but it is too soon to render a final judgment on the long-term viability of this technique.

Plants are like pets. They want to know their status when they have a new owner. They are thinking, "Will I be repotted or will I be put directly into the garden? What will my new owner feed me or will I get nothing at all and have to fend for myself from poor soil? I sure hope I get planted at the right depth; I don't want my roots to girdle and slowly kill me. Hopefully I will get the right amount of water because I just can't stand too much and I don't like to be exceptionally thirsty either".

When you acquire a new plant, examine the pot soil condition. Most nurseries grow plants in artificial soil (media) in order to achieve maximal growth rate. Extra fertilizer and frequent watering help them to produce a stellar plant in a relatively short period of time. These are important factors in transitioning the plant into the garden. A few nurseries still use some soil in their potting mix. I have found this helps the plant to adapt better to the garden and the success rate is higher. Determine if the media is either moisture retentive or non-moisture retentive. This understanding will help to determine the best watering practice to use if the plant is held in the original container.

First remove the plant from the container and take a look at the roots to determine if the plant should be put into the garden or held in a container for later planting. Some plants may have been recently upgraded in pot size from a peat pot to a larger plastic container and the root system has not developed throughout the pot. In this case the plant can be left as is. Other times, the pot is filled with roots or is even pot bound. It is best to plant them immediately. If that isn't feasible, upgrade the plant into a larger pot size, being careful to disperse the roots really well and use a soil mix containing some garden soil.

Pot bound plants are especially vulnerable. They need to be watered very often as normal watering doesn't penetrate throughout the pot because of the solid root mass. Even after a thorough drenching, parts of the pot can still be dry. In effect they have been living on the edge and are just clinging to life. Their roots need to be broken up

thoroughly before planting either in pots or in the garden. Among plants that are often root bound are azaleas and rhododendron. High levels of peat and very little coarse grit in the potting mix gives a dense root mass that will be retained for years after planting in the garden. They will not be able to withstand the slightest drought or may not ever be a good looking plant if the roots can't extend outward. Sometimes it is important to find another vendor and save the time and aggravation of dealing with pot bound plants.

It is best to use a larger, generous pot size when transplanting. The additional cost and labor involved here is well worth it based on the cost and perhaps the rarity of the plant. And, of course, the larger volume of soil retains more moisture and the pot will be cooler than a smaller one when placed in the sun.

Young grafted plants need special care for several years. I prefer to leave some of the understock growth on for up to three years. To pot them, remove the rubber band first. Then the plant can be loosened by tapping it against a hard surface. I use six inch square pots, six inches deep for transplanting even though the graft may be very small. If the plant is low grafted, the graft union should be covered by the soil mix up to one inch. The transplants should be given substantial shade for maybe a year but should be gradually weaned into the sun and given full sun in cool autumn weather. Generally, I keep first year grafts in a cold house above freezing for the first year. After that, a cold frame or a white plastic bag closed with a plastic twist tie works well for me.

Individual soil mix preferences for pot culture differ among gardeners. As a propagator, I have made changes over the years based on new information and methods reported in the literature. My basic mix contains pine bark, compost, top soil, and grit. Partially decomposed bark is preferred but is not always available for me. The compost comes from one of two composting facilities in my county. It is tested periodically for toxic substances such as pesticides and heavy metals. It is high in nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. The pH is just a little over 7 but I can use 25% compost in the mix and still have a pH between 6.0 and 6.5 in the final mix. Additives to choose from include wetting agents, polymers that retain moisture, mycorrhiza, trace minerals, calcium in the form of lime and calcium sulfate, phosphorous, and slow release fertilizers.

For plants already established in pots, try to put sun loving plants like fir, pine, and spruce in mostly sun. Others can be put in part shade, i.e., *Tsuga*, *Chamaecyparis*, and *Cryptomeria*. Sun loving plants will have longer internodal branching and can become leggy if kept too long in shade. Some artificial soil mixes are rather highly retentive of water and the plants need to be watered less while others require a lot of watering, maybe every day or two in hot weather. After watering and observing the containers, one can determine how often watering is required. I always allow plants to dry a bit and water less frequently. The current outdoor temperatures, humidity, rainfall, and degree of shading will also affect watering frequency.

The handling of plants differs as to the time of year that they are received. Plants received in the fall, if not root bound, may be held over by several means or they can be planted before the winter arrives as long as they are suitable size. An ideal time to order and receive plants via mail order is in late winter while they are dormant. Then one is able to transplant to larger pots or hold plants that are not in an active growth mode to be planted when the weathers permits. One needs to have a cold protected area such as a greenhouse kept above freezing, a cool basement, or enclosed porch where the plants will not freeze and will be protected from unfavorable outdoor weather. Plants ship better in the winter since they are less subject to hot, humid conditions within a box that promote fungus infections and severe brown-out. The more miniature conifers and those derived from high in the mountain are the most risky. I will discuss overwintering plants and moving them into the garden in the next issue of the *CQ*.

To summarize, one should understand the state of a plant when it is received and contemplate its placement in the garden. After that a determination can be made as to whether the plant can be put on hold by providing the tender loving care in its current container or a new one. If and when it is planted, it's important to place it in the best possible location and provide the proper soil for optimum development.



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Every year the American Conifer Society honors its members with Awards of Merit. Nominations for next year's recipients must be received by November 30, 2009.

Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award of Merit for Dedicated Support of the ACS

This award recognizes those who have made outstanding contributions to the American Conifer Society through their service, enthusiasm, commitment and promotion of membership in the Society.

Also, this award acknowledges those who have been deeply involved in the activities of the Society, organizationally or otherwise.

Award of Merit for Development in the Field of Conifers

The criteria for this award include the collecting and displaying of conifers, a willingness to share knowledge of plants, and the enthusiasm and drive to discover and develop noteworthy cultivars.

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To be considered, your nomination must be accompanied by an outline of the nominee's contributions in the appropriate category. If you wish to nominate a member for either of these awards, include your candidate's name, address, and phone number as well as a brief description of why the person is deserving of the award.

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News From The ACS

Coming Soon: The Answer Guy

by Chris Daeger

What the heck is this? You'll just have to read the rest of this article for the answer.

Conifer and gardening questions have been directed to our home office for years, and inquiries sometimes arise during ACS gatherings that generate a good deal of discussion. An idea to help answer these questions came to mind at the ACS National Meeting in Dubuque, Iowa, and I proposed to the Board to add another benefit of membership in the Conifer Society—a user-friendly way to answer questions about conifers or gardening and spread the information to other members. Your Board of Directors agreed.

I want to begin with this introduction, a kick-off for this project or program. I think each ACS member is in it for the plants. However, there are various levels of expertise among us, from professors of horticulture to those who haven't even gotten dirty yet. I also think you will be hard pressed to find someone among us who isn't willing to share his or her plant knowledge with another plant lover. Because we are not all walking encyclopedias or horticultural experts, every one of us needs, at one time or another, help or advice from a fellow coniferite.

We want to help everyone enjoy this great world of conifers and have the same amount of enthusiasm as does the nuttiest of us all. So, if you want to know how to design a bed, plant a tree, build a garden, or identify a plant, send us a note. Notice

that I said “us.” Your current Board has agreed to be on the staff of, dare I say, experts? This is a group effort, and I will forward questions to members in the Society who may have an answer to something, if I haven't a clue. (I do not need any more help in pointing out that I am clueless. I am married.)

Someone coined the phrase, “there is no stupid question, just the one not asked,” and I believe in it. This is for everyone! Do not be afraid to ask. The ultimate goal is this: we want to keep each of our members interested in this great hobby of ours and share in excitement about conifers.

Before I get too sappy here (nice pun huh?), I'd like to ask you a question. Will you help us get started? This service will be handled through e-mails rather quickly when possible. Who among us isn't a little impatient? If you have questions, send them to answerguy@conifersociety.org.

Sometimes, we may decide that a question and answer should be included in a future issue of the *CQ* because it is of educational value to other members. This may attract more insight from fellow members. Anonymity is up to you; so, let us know at the time you ask your question if you do not want your name to appear in print.

We want to have some fun with this, and our answers may be a little crazy. We hope you don't mind. After all, we're a group of fun-loving gardeners at heart. For those who want to join the

Answer Guy staff or already have a question to ask the Answer Guy, dig in!

In addition to being the Answer Guy, Chris Daeger is an ACS director and Vice President of the Central Region.



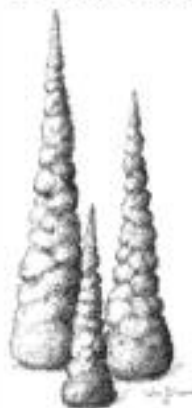
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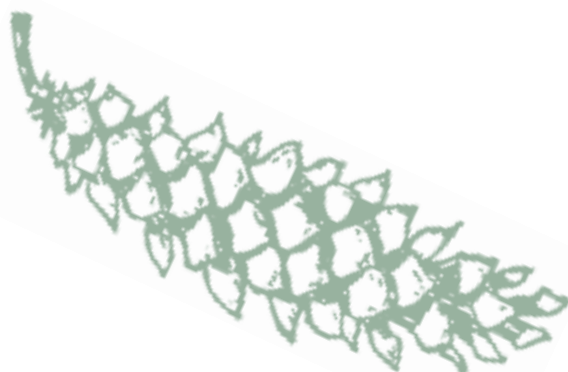
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Spotlight on Leaders

ELLEN KELLEY

President

American Conifer Society



I attribute my addiction to plants to heredity.

My paternal ancestors arrived from England in 1685 to join the Quaker colony founded by William Penn. Family history records the movements of their descendents westward. Always, they established farms and orchards, one of which still exists today near Marietta, Ohio. The westward movement continued with my great-grandfather settling his family in Iowa. In due time, my grandfather took over the farm, and my father was born there.

When I was 10, my family moved to a small 40-acre farm on the edge

(then) of Ames, Iowa, fulfilling a longing of my father's for "a place in the country." Though my father was a college professor, he was also the embodiment of the old adage "you can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy." We raised sheep and had a large garden and fruit trees. Our summers were spent planting, weeding, picking, peeling, coring.... Here, I learned the nurture of plants, but the only conifer on our farm was a jack pine started from a seedling given out by the Iowa State horticulture department.

In the family tradition (now four generations), I graduated from Iowa State University with a Bachelor of Science in English. I married Jim; we moved to the Quad Cities, had two children and annual vegetable gardens. I commuted to the University of Iowa to get an MBA. We sent the children off to higher education and their own adult lives, and decided to move closer to our jobs in Davenport.

This is our 20th year in the home we built on a lot that was a gardener's nightmare in the beginning. More than a dozen walnut trees created a huge mess of leaves and nuts in the fall, and though most are long gone, still have the power to inhibit the growth of some plants. The scrub elms and black cherries produced (still do) copious numbers of seeds; seedlings pop up everywhere in the spring. Then there is the clay. We still fight wild grape, bedstraw, horsetail, and various other weeds. Now if we could just train the deer and the rabbits

to eat those!

In fall 1996, Jim and I attended a Hosta Society meeting where the guest speaker was Chub Harper, whose presentation was a slide show on conifers. Bedazzled by the beauty of the conifers and the landscapes they inhabited, we joined the Society and began the process of re-landscaping half of our 1.5-acre lot. The other half we have left for the deer.

Our enthusiasm for (and addiction to) this group of plants has only increased over the years. Many of our favorite plants came from ACS auctions. After several years, we realized that we had become “collectors” and that the usual landscape design advice was, well, unreasonable. A landscape plan? For each of the auction plants? But we can always make room, right?

My path to the presidency of this Society has been totally unexpected. Volunteer activities have long been a part of my adult life. I gladly served as secretary/treasurer of the Central Region for four years. I was then encouraged to run for the national board, which I did, and was elected. But then, I was asked to CONSIDER becoming president. Ha! The trap was set, and here I am.

KATHLEEN POTTRATZ

Secretary

American Conifer Society

My interest in plants started back in the early 1970s with the big houseplant craze. Recently out of high school, I was attending community college and looking for a career. Horticulture seemed like a good fit for me. I went on to Oregon State University to eventually get a BS in Ornamental Horticulture. After working in the industry for a number of years, I went to work for Cindy Lou Pease at Evans Farms.

Cindy took me along with her to local Conifer Society meetings where I met Don Howse and Larry Stanley, as well as many other knowledgeable society members and growers. Don encouraged me to get more involved in the Society, which led me to my current position as National Secretary. I also work at the regional level, helping with meetings and with the new Conifer Garden at the Oregon Garden. My involvement in the Society has given me the opportunity to visit many exciting private and public gardens, as well as meet a lot of great people, many of whom have become lifelong friends.





Oops! In the last issue, we left *Pinus parviflora* 'Goldilocks' out of Figure 10 on page 25. She's shown here in the left foreground with her neighbors *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' and *Picea jezoensis* 'Chitosemaru' in the group of rocks to her right.



Regional News

Southeastern Region

History and Conifers in Richmond

History and conifer lovers will have a blast this fall by joining us in Richmond, Virginia, on September 18–19 for the annual Southeastern Regional Conference. Richmond is rich in experiences for both the history buff and the conifer lover. A post civil-war architectural Renaissance is reflected to this day in uptown townhomes and neighborhoods more reminiscent of Old Europe than the Old South. Beautiful architecture and fabulous gardens are well represented in this historical city.

Attendees will explore the gardens at Virginia House and Agecroft Hall (more than 30 acres between the two sites), the only two transplanted English houses built side by side in America. Both houses date back to the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Virginia House was originally dedicated in 1125 by the first Earl of Warwick as the Priory of St. Sepulchre. Agecroft dates back to the 16th century when it was a large estate in Lancashire, England. Both were brought over by wealthy Americans, eager to create their own version of the grand European estates. Lunch will be served at Virginia House, giving members a taste of how the landed gentry of old lived.

Also on tap, we will visit Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, with more than 30 acres of gardens. Members are sure to get plenty of ideas for their own gardens while strolling through the many themes that LGBG has to offer. Then on to Scott and Beth Burrell's 1.5 acres of home gardens, where conifers of all kinds play a crucial role in the presentation of this diverse ornamental display garden. Scott



Virginia House



Burrell Garden

is an ACS Director representing the Southeastern Region. He and wife Beth own The Giving Tree, LTD, a landscape design and installation/maintenance firm.

In keeping with the educational emphasis started last year at the Clemson meeting, informative sessions are scheduled. Brent Heath (owner of Brent and Becky's Bulbs) is slated to give a presentation on companion bulbs for the conifer lover. A propagation workshop by horticulturalist John Wise will take some of the mystery out of how to propagate from cuttings.

Good food, great friends, and a mesmerizing amount of conifers and gardens will fill a plant lover's weekend with delight. The region's plant auctions are an experience unto itself. Plus, with so many historical and horticultural sites in and around Richmond, members will want to extend their stay. Mark September 18–19 on your calendar as a "can't miss" event. You won't be disappointed!

Duane Ridenour –
President Southeastern Region
Scott Burrell –
Director Southeastern Region

Western Region

The Western Region meeting will have been held when this *CQ* is published, but Marc McCalmon sent in the following link with good publicity for the meeting and the ACS in *Sunset Magazine*. The link may be still there when this issue arrives. <http://freshdirt.sunset.com/2009/05/hood-on-conifers-connect-with-likeminded-gardeners.html>

Northeastern Region

The Northeastern Region will host the ACS National Meeting on August 6–9 and the Post Tour on August 9–12 in Hauppauge, New York. Hope to see you there.

Directorate

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Juniperus conferta 'Silver Mist'

Photo Credit: Randall C. Smith, courtesy of Iseli Nursery



Juniperus horizontalis 'Limeglow'

Photo Credit: Randall C. Smith, courtesy of Iseli Nursery



Juniperus communis 'Gold Cone'

Photo Credit: Randall C. Smith, courtesy of Iseli Nursery