

# Conifer Quarterly

Vol. 26 No. 1

Winter 2009



*Tsuga canadensis* 'New Gold' with spring growth

Photo by Dennis Groh



A scene from the Etzelstorfer garden in Austria taken during the ACS International Trip to Czech Republic, Austria and Germany Summer 2008. Prominent are two outstanding examples of cultivars that have been selected as ACS Collectors Conifer of the Year. In the center, stands *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Gold Rush' (2006 selection) flanked on the left by *Picea omorika* 'Pendula Bruns' (2007 selection).

Photo by Karen Kral

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# Conifer Quarterly

Winter 2009  
Volume 26, No 1

The Conifer Quarterly (ISSN 8755-0490) is published quarterly by the American Conifer Society. The Society is a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is tax exempt under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

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.

All editorial and advertising matters should be sent to: Evelyn Cox, 1621 N. Lake Dr., Canton, GA 30115, (770) 663-7576 or email [coniferquarterly@bellsouth.net](mailto:coniferquarterly@bellsouth.net).

Editor  
Evelyn Cox

Technical Editors  
Ethan Johnson  
Susan Martin  
R. William Thomas

Advisory Committee  
Ellen Kelley, Committee Chair  
Marvin Snyder  
ex officio: Tom Cox  
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This summer, the American Conifer Society held two important events. First, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the founding of the ACS. At the National Meeting in Dubuque, Iowa, 200 people learned more about the history of the organization and honored the past presidents who have led the ACS during the past 25 years. Ten of the 13 presidents were present.

This meeting also had a record 69 people who indicated that this was their first National Meeting. An orientation session was held for the “newbies” to introduce them to the auction procedures, and each received a small conifer. This session was well received, and I hope this sort of informational session will become a standard part of any meeting. I’ll be glad to supply a copy of the one-page handout we used.

Second, the ACS sponsored its second overseas tour with a destination of the Czech Republic. None of us on the tour knew what to expect, but we saw amazing gardens and were welcomed warmly and graciously by gardeners and nurserymen. They were delighted that we were interested in visiting their gardens. (The gardeners were all men, and all expressed surprise that the president of the ACS was a woman!) Among other treasures, we saw many exquisite trough gardens planted in ancient stone cattle troughs.

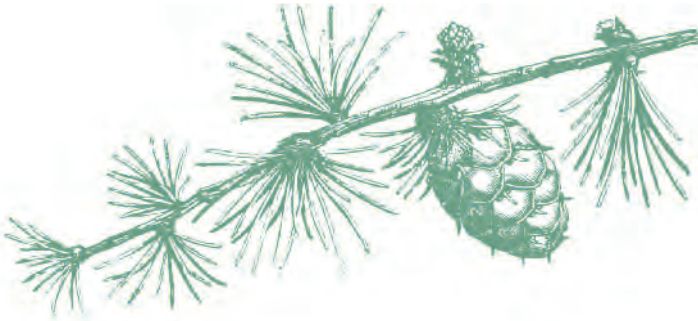
The gardeners we met were also propagating conifers, using seed, witches’-brooms, and cuttings. One young man, who had recently completed university studies and was working with his father, had published a book about

witches'-brooms and gave copies to several of us. Of course the book is in Czech, but we can enjoy some beautiful color photos, and the botanical names of the plants are understandable. He hopes to expand his first effort and also publish in English. We saw many cultivars not available in the United States, mainly due to the tough regulations of the Department of Agriculture regarding the importation of plant material.

Finally, I want to publicly express my profound thanks and appreciation to

Gary Whittenbaugh, my co-chair for the National Meeting, as well as to Tom Whittenbaugh and all of the others who helped to make it a success. I also greatly appreciate the dogged efforts of Tom Cox in planning and organizing the tour to the Czech Republic. This was a difficult tour to put together for a variety of reasons, but Tom made it happen. Those of us who went on the tour learned so much and had a great time.

*Ellen Kelley*



### Publication Dates

Issue	Calendar Quarter	Deadline to submit articles	Publication Date (approx. mailing)
Winter	Jan/Feb/Mar	Nov 12	Jan 15
Spring	Apr/May/Jun	Feb 15	Apr 16
Summer	Jul/Aug/Sept	May 13	July 16
Fall	Oct/Nov/Dec 31	Aug 13	Oct 15

**Submit articles/photos to:**  
 Evelyn Cox, *Conifer Quarterly* Editor  
 1621 N. Lake Dr., Canton, GA 30115  
 PH (770) 663-7576  
 E-mail: [ConiferQuarterly@bellsouth.net](mailto:ConiferQuarterly@bellsouth.net)

## EDITOR'S MEMO

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Tom and I recently went walking down our long, winding drive that is lined with plants, many of which (as you might expect) are conifers. The air was chilly but far warmer than we expected because winter was scheduled to arrive the next day. It was a perfect night for a romantic stroll, just Tom and I and a powerful flashlight, surveying our plants.

Tom pushed the light up and down and across the tops of trees and shrubs. The conifers stood out, some of them because they tower over us (even though most were brought here in less than 3-gallon containers). With all of them, our bright light intensified the beauty of form and foliage inherent in evergreen conifers, as well as the king or queenly branch structure of the deciduous ones, like *Taxodium* (both pond and bald

cypress), *Metasequoia* (dawn redwood), or *Pseudolarix* (golden larch). Many of the weeping forms, such as *Juniperus communis* 'Horstman', *J. rigida*, and *Pinus strobus* 'Angel Falls', take on appearances reminiscent of scenes from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

During our midnight stroll, it occurred to me that not only are conifers all-season standouts, they are also 24/7 standouts in the plant world – any hour, any day. Inside this issue, you will see some fetching examples of conifers during different seasons, courtesy of ACS members Maud Henne, Susan Eyre, Mary Garr, and Dennis Groh. Maud, in addition to her winter, spring, summer, and fall shots, captured some of her conifers shining in fog.

In February 2008, *American Nurseryman*, a venerable magazine covering commercial horticulture, published an article written by Susan and Rich Eyre. We have reprinted the article, which recommends captivating conifers of various sizes for use in garden spaces from small to large. You will find other conifer recommendations on a list that focuses on the Middle Atlantic Piedmont growing area, which was put together by Scott Burrell, an ACS director from Richmond, Virginia.

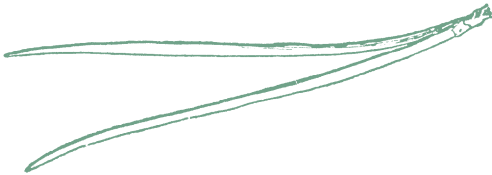
On the ACS International Tour of the Czech Republic, many unusual conifer cultivars and growing techniques were encountered. Among the tour group of ACS members were many pairs of eyes conditioned to spot the rare and unusual. One pair of eyes belongs to Gerald Kral, an ACS director from Rochester, New

York. Another pair belongs to his lovely wife, Karen. Between them, they have come up with quite an interesting recount of the trip. I think the division of labor must have gone something like this: Gerald spotted something unusual and Karen snapped an excellent photo of it. Then, they took the time to describe their discoveries for readers to enjoy.

Inside this issue, you will find articles on ACS award winners, Frank Good-

hart, Chub Harper, and Jordan Jack, as well as information on the upcoming 2009 ACS National Meeting in Long Island, New York. Mark your calendars.

Hope you enjoy this issue and that winter treats you well. Try a stroll some night in your garden. You will see how those conifers shine, even at midnight.



### **Next Issue: Spring 2009**

Our next issue will feature: *Picea*

Spring is a perfect time to learn about spruces. Tell us about yours and/or show us your photos. Include the zone where you garden and any growing tips.

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

*Juniperus*

**Cones**

**Lesser-known Conifers**

**Companion Plants**

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

# Captivating Conifers for the Landscape

Text and photos by Richard and Susan Eyre

*Reprinted with permission, American Nurseryman, Feb. 15, 2008. www.amerinnursery.com*

**L**andscaping and garden design is a fantastic career choice. Nurserymen, landscape architects, designers and contractors are people who express their art in the gardens and landscapes they create for their clients. Legacies of living art are created for future generations to admire when you choose a captivating conifer for the landscape or garden.

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## There are many sizes, shapes and colors of conifers available that fit various landscaping needs.

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Every modern landscape can be enhanced with the use of conifers as foundation plantings or as barriers to negative lines of sight. The diverse attributes of conifers enable them to provide four seasons of interest as the “bones” of every landscape in the American mixed perennial border.

Site plants on an inclined plane or irregular rolling slope. Slope adds interest to a flat surface and provides the opportunity to stage dwarf plants toward the foreground. The design should capture the positive viewing lines of the property. Large or intermediate conifers can be used to block unwanted sightlines. Dwarf garden conifers provide a wide range of forms to add to the landscape.

Once some of the larger design concepts are identified, it is important to look at each conifer individually since each one offers a unique form. Color, texture, seasonal changes and cones provide great

options. Whatever landscape situation exists, there is a superlative conifer available for that site. Basic knowledge of conifers and of the site is required to make wise plant choices. With the wide palette of conifers available, there are plenty of appropriate choices. Therefore, why keep using some of the older conifer cultivars that are prone to inherent disease problems?

Before planting conifers, you must be able to answer three critical questions:

- What is the drainage and percolation of the site?
- What amount of sun does the site receive in the summer?
- What is the rate of growth of the conifers or plants you are selecting for that site?

The American Conifer Society, Lewisville, NC, has adopted four size categories for conifers: miniature, dwarf, intermediate and large. The letters (M), (D), (I) and (L) are used in the following descriptions to best depict the mature size category for this particular cultivar (see chart). Note the size of the internode to determine the growth rate. The internode indicates the rate of growth for one year from the terminal bud to the first set of branchlets called a whorl. Size may vary due to cultural, climatic and regional factors.

### Conifer planting considerations

The first critical consideration is to determine the drainage and percolation of the site. Most conifers thrive in well-drained,



sandy, clay loam soil in full sun. Not all projects have ideal conditions, but good drainage is essential to guarantee the success of most plantings.

Many contractors are landscaping houses in new subdivisions, which is like trying to landscape a strip mine. All the good topsoil has been removed and replaced with only a few inches of topsoil. Hard clay soil and bad drainage remains.

Landscape plants need help where bad drainage is concerned. Test your soil percolation by digging a 2-foot-deep hole with a posthole digger. Fill the hole with water, let it drain, and fill it again. If the hole does not drain in two hours after the second filling, the soil is limited for conifers. In heavy clay, raise half the root ball out of the clay layer and surround the protruding half with good topsoil. Another solution is to remove narrow channels of clay leading away from the plant, like spokes of a wheel. Replace that soil with sand or pea gravel so water and rootlets have an easy path. Water must drain away easily, or the roots will rot due to lack of oxygen.

If your soil is heavy, wet and can't be amended, there are some conifers that are naturally predisposed to such conditions. Choose a deciduous conifer, such as *Larix* (larch), *Taxodium* (bald cy-

press), *Metasequoia* (dawn redwood) or *Thuja* (arborvitae). *Taxodium distichum* (bald cypress) is one of the most versatile conifers because it can thrive in standing water or on a dry, rocky ridge and is the most adaptable to heavy clay soils in new subdivisions. *Taxus* (yew), *Pinus* (pine), *Picea* (spruce) and *Abies* (fir) demand good drainage and will die with too much water in the soil.



*Tsuga canadensis* 'Gentsch White' is a dwarf conifer that tolerates partial shade

The second critical consideration for conifers is the amount of sun your site receives in the summer. Most conifers want to live in full sun. There is a wide variation in conifers as to their shade tolerance. Only a few species will tolerate and thrive in partial shade. Some conifers that tolerate shade are *Thuja* (arborvitae),

The American Conifer Society's tree growth sizes

Category	Growth per year	Size at 10 years
Miniature (M)	Less than 1 inch per year	1 foot
Dwarf (D)	1 to 6 inches per year	1 to 6 feet
Intermediate (I)	6 to 12 inches per year	6 to 15 feet
Large (L)	More than 12 inches per year	More than 15 feet

*Editor's note: For more details on conifer growth rates, go to [www.conifersociety.org](http://www.conifersociety.org). Click on Conifer Introduction.*

*Tsuga* (hemlock) and *Taxus* (yew). There are many cultivars of hemlocks with a variety of forms, colors and textures to make a more interesting shade garden.

Dwarf forms of *Tsuga canadensis* (Canadian hemlock) include 'Bennett' (D), 'Jeddeloh' (D), 'Jervis' (D), 'Gentsch White' (D) and 'Albospica' (D). Intermediate forms of Canadian hemlock include 'Dawsoniana' (I), 'Geneva' (I) and 'Pendula' (I). *Tsuga diversifolia* (Japanese hemlock) and *Tsuga caroliniana* (Carolina hemlock) are great alternatives to Canadian hemlock.



*Tsuga diversifolia* is a worthy alternative to *Tsuga canadensis*

If your site receives some shade, but at least four to five hours of direct sun each day in the summer, then use *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas fir), *Abies balsamea* (balsam fir), *Pinus cem-*

*bra* (Swiss stone pine), *Pinus strobus* (eastern white pine) or *Picea abies* (Norway spruce). Sun-loving conifers planted in the shade may live, but do not thrive or grow properly.

Recommended dwarf cultivars are *Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Fletcheri' ('Fletcheri' Douglas fir; D), *Abies balsamea* 'Nana' ('Nana' dwarf balsam fir; D), *Pinus cembra* 'Glauca' ('Glauca' Swiss stone pine; D), *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis' ('Nana Gracilis' hinoki cypress; D) and Japanese hemlock (D). The thick needles of *Sciadopitys verticillata* (umbrella pine; D) add tremendous texture to landscape in a northern or eastern exposure.

The third consideration for selecting conifers is the rate of growth of the desired plant. The contractor must know about the growth rates to aid in proper selection and siting of the plants. It is disappointing to see fast-growing trees planted too close to buildings and each other. Over-planted landscapes look great for a few years, but then the nightmare begins. Like baby raccoons, conifers are cute when they are small, but can quickly grow into nuisances. By using slower-growing dwarf conifers, the growth rate is cut in half and doubles the life of the planting before the plants outgrow the available space. Spacing plants properly is essential. Using slower-growing plants can extend the life of a landscape by 10 to 12 years.

Many landscapers are daunted by the sheer number and diversity of conifers and are unsure how to use them. Many tend to use the same common evergreens in every landscape situation. Professionals are encouraged to do more than plant a straight row of one conifer

species as a hedge or fence line. Large-scale conifers are the most useful plant for screening or windbreaks, and they are far more interesting when planted in irregular triangles using more ornamental or slower-growing forms in the foreground.



*Sciadopitys verticillata* has thick needles that add wonderful texture to landscapes with a northern or eastern exposure.

### Conifer forms

Dwarf conifers provide a wide range of forms to add to the landscape. Fastigate or columnar trees add height to a garden, but leave a narrow footprint in the landscape. *Picea pungens* ‘Fastigiata’ (‘Fastigiata’ Colorado spruce; L), *Picea abies* ‘Cupressina’ (‘Cupressina’ Norway spruce; L), *P. abies* ‘Hillside Upright’ (‘Hillside Upright’ Norway spruce; I) and *Pinus strobus* ‘Fastigiata’ (‘Fastigiata’

eastern white pine; L) are selections hardy to Zone 3, and they like full sun.

Other upright, narrow forms of conifers include *Pinus sylvestris* ‘Fastigiata’ (‘Fastigiata’ Scots pine; I), *P. sylvestris* ‘Spaan’s Fastigate’ (‘Spaan’s Fastigate’ Scots pine; I), *P. sylvestris* ‘Sentinel’ (‘Sentinel’ Scots pine; L), *Thuja occidentalis* ‘DeGroot’s Spire’ (‘DeGroot’s Spire’ arborvitae; D), *T. occidentalis* ‘Emerald’ (‘Emerald’ arborvitae; I), *T. occidentalis* ‘Malonyana’ (‘Malonyana’ arborvitae; I), *Juniperus communis* ‘Gold Cone’ (‘Gold Cone’ common juniper; D), *J. communis* ‘Suecia Nana’ (‘Suecia Nana’ common juniper; M), *J. communis* ‘Compressa’ (‘Compressa’ common juniper; M), *Picea glauca* ‘Pendula’ (‘Pendula’ white spruce; I) and *Pinus cembra* ‘Glauca’ (‘Glauca’ Swiss stone pine; I).

*Picea omorika* ‘Pendula’ (‘Pendula’ Serbian spruce; L) remains narrow in form, with branch tips that have blue undersides pointing up. *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* ‘Green Arrow’ (‘Green Arrow’ false cypress; L) and *C. nootkatensis* ‘Van den Akker’ (‘Van den Akker’ false cypress; L) add drama to any landscape. *Taxus x media* ‘Stovepipe’ (D) or *Taxus x media* ‘Pilaris’ (D) are great for small spaces in the shade. *Pinus leucodermis* ‘Emerald Arrow’ (‘Emerald Arrow’ Bosnian pine; I) is salt-tolerant with stiff, green needles.

### Dwarf conifers

Dwarf and miniature conifers are ideal as foundation plants because they require low maintenance and are highly ornamental. Once established, these forms do not need pruning or fertilizing. Good pyramidal forms are blue *Picea pungens* ‘Montgomery’ (‘Montgomery’ Colorado



*Picea glauca* 'Pendula' is an intermediate-sized conifer with an upright, narrow form.

spruce; D) or green *Picea abies* 'Clanbrassiliana Stricta' ('Clanbrassiliana Stricta' Norway spruce; D), *P. abies* 'Asselyn Compacta' ('Asselyn Compacta' Norway spruce; D) or *P. abies* 'Mucronata' ('Mucronata' Norway spruce; I). Recommended, low, green spreaders are *P. abies* 'Pumila' ('Pumila' Norway spruce; D), *P. abies* 'Repens' ('Repens' Norway spruce; D) or *P. abies* 'Elegans' ('Elegans' Norway spruce; D).

Slow-growing, globose conifers include *Pinus strobus* 'Blue Shag' ('Blue Shag' eastern white pine; D), *P. strobus* 'Horsford' ('Horsford' eastern white pine; D), *P. strobus* 'Nana' ('Nana' eastern white pine; D), *Picea pungens* 'Thuem' ('Thuem' Colorado spruce; D) or *P. pungens* 'Glauca Globosa' ('Glauca Globosa' Colorado spruce; D). *Picea omorika* 'Nana' ('Nana' Serbian spruce; D) offers a globose shape with an attractive bicolor needle (green on top with a blue underside).

### Mounding and spreading conifers

Dramatic, mounding, conifer forms include *Pinus* x 'Jane Kluis' (*Pinus densiflora* and *Pinus nigra* hybrid; D), *Pinus densiflora* 'Low Glow' ('Low Glow' Japanese red pine; D) and *Pinus nigra* 'Hornibrookiana' ('Hornibrookiana' Austrian pine; D) with outstanding white buds. Dwarf *Pinus mugo* 'Valley Cushion' ('Valley Cushion' mountain pine; D) or *P. mugo* 'Slowmound' ('Slowmound' mountain pine; D) may grow 1 to 3 inches or less per year during the first 10 years of their lives.

Spreading conifers make great groundcovers, such as yellow *Juniperus horizontalis* 'Mother Lode' ('Mother Lode' creeping juniper; D), yellow and green *Juniperus x pfitzeriana* 'Daub's Frosted' ('Daub's Frosted' spreading



*Picea pungens* 'Montgomery' (front)  
*Picea pungens* 'Hoopsii' (back)

juniper; D), green *Juniperus sabina* Calgary Carpet™ (Calgary Carpet™ savin juniper; D), green *Juniperus communis* ‘Green Carpet’ (‘Green Carpet’ common juniper; D), green *Pinus sylvestris* ‘Albyn’ (‘Albyn’ Scots pine; D), *P. sylvestris* ‘Hillside Creeper’ (‘Hillside Creeper’ Scots pine; D) and bicolor *Pinus pumila* ‘Blue Dwarf’ (‘Blue Dwarf’ dwarf Siberian pine; D).

### Dramatic-looking conifers

Large pyramidal forms, pendulous forms, pruned or poodled conifers add high drama to larger spaces. Any weeping tree will attain the height you want by staking. After the desired height is reached, all growth is usually downward. A pendulous tree that is never staked becomes a groundcover, such as *Picea abies* ‘Pendula’ (‘Pendula’ Norway spruce; I).

Other dramatic specimen trees are *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* ‘Glauca Pendula’ (‘Glauca Pendula’ Alaskan false cypress; L), *Larix decidua* ‘Varied Directions’ (‘Varied Directions’ European larch; I), *Pinus strobus* ‘Pendula’ (‘Pendula’ eastern white pine; I), *Picea pungens* ‘Glauca Prostrata’ (‘Glauca Prostrata’ Colorado spruce; D) and *P. pungens* ‘Glauca Pendula’ (‘Glauca Pendula’ Colorado spruce; I). For shadier sites, *Pseudotsuga menziesii* ‘Graceful Grace’ (‘Graceful Grace’ Douglas fir; I) and *Tsuga canadensis* ‘Pendula’ (‘Pendula’ eastern hemlock; I) are outstanding.

Many garden conifers display a rainbow of colors in shades of green, yellow, blue, orange and purple. Yellow cultivars can add color to a garden or landscape, but they generally need full sun to maintain great color. The thread leaf *Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘Golden Mop’ (‘Golden Mop’ sawara false cypress; D), *C.*

*pisifera* ‘Filifera Aurea Nana’ (‘Filifera Aurea Nana’ sawara false cypress; D), or *C. pisifera* ‘Lemon Thread’ (‘Lemon Thread’ sawara false cypress; D) add a gold or yellow accent, plus interesting texture. *Thuja occidentalis* ‘Sunkist’ (‘Sunkist’ arborvitae; I) and *T. occidentalis* ‘Yellow Ribbon’ (‘Yellow Ribbon’ arborvitae; I) have outstanding pyramidal forms.

### Conifers for specific needs

Try *Juniperus x pfitzeriana* ‘Saybrook Gold’ (‘Saybrook Gold’ spreading juniper; D) for a low, compact spreader, or use mounding *Pinus mugo* ‘Aurea’ (‘Aurea’ mountain pine; I) for showy foundation plants. For a site protected from winter sun, *Picea orientalis* ‘Skylands’ (‘Skylands’ Oriental spruce; I) has great color and form. *Picea pungens* ‘Aurea’



The highly ornamental *Picea abies* ‘Clanbrassiliana Stricta’ is ideal for foundation plantings.



Spreading conifers, such as *Pinus sylvestris* 'Hillside Creeper' make for excellent groundcovers.

('Aurea' Colorado spruce; I) and *Pinus sylvestris* 'Aurea' ('Aurea' Scots pine; D) change color from green to brilliant yellow in the winter months. For an eastern exposure, *Abies koreana* 'Aurea' ('Aurea' Korean fir; I) is outstanding. In general, Korean firs like cool morning sun. Never plant them in the hot afternoon sun, and keep the roots cool with coarse mulch.



*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera Aurea Nana' adds a yellow accent to the landscape, but generally needs full sun to maintain great color.

Favorite, large-growing, blue cultivars include steel blue *Picea pungens* 'Hoopsii' ('Hoopsii' Colorado spruce; L), *P. pungens* 'Thomsen' ('Thomsen' Colorado spruce; L) and *Abies concolor* 'Candicans' ('Candicans' white fir; L).

Intermediate forms *Abies lasiocarpa* var. *arizonica* (corkbark fir; I), *Picea glauca* 'Coerulea' ('Coerulea' white spruce; I), *Picea abies* 'Weeping Blue' ('Weeping Blue' Norway spruce; I) showcase great color. *Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri' ('Watereri' Scots pine; I) and *P. sylvestris* 'Glauca Nana' ('Glauca Nana' Scots pine; I) sport blue-green needles, and they develop superior orange bark as an added feature.

Outstanding dwarf varieties consist of *Picea pungens* 'St. Mary's Broom' ('St. Mary's Broom' Colorado spruce; D), *Abies lasiocarpa* 'Glauca Compacta' (compact Rocky Mountain fir; D), *Abies concolor* 'Compacta' ('Compacta' white fir; D), *Picea glauca* 'Yukon' ('Yukon' white spruce; D) and *Picea mariana* 'Blue Tier Drop' ('Blue Tier Drop' black spruce; D).

### Bicolor-needled conifers

Some conifers display bicolor needles of stripes, spots or patches. Bicolor-needled trees offer high interest and often tie various colors together. For example, *Picea omorika* 'Nana' ('Nana' Serbian spruce; D), *P. omorika* 'Pendula' ('Pendula' Serbian spruce; I), *P. omorika* 'Expansa' ('Expansa' Serbian spruce; I) and *Picea bicolor* 'Howell's Dwarf' ('Howell's Dwarf' alcocks spruce; D) highlight needles with green topsides and blue undersides.

Green and yellow variegation is found on *Pinus densiflora* 'Oculus-draconis' (dragon's eye Japanese red pine;

D). A variegated thread leaf false cypress with green and creamy yellow foliage is *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera Aureovariegata' ('Filifera Aureovariegata' sawara false cypress; D). *Abies koreana* 'Silberlocke' ('Silberlocke' Korean fir; D) displays recurved needles showing the white underside on curled foliage.



*Picea pungens* 'Montgomery' (left and right)  
*Picea abies* 'Pendula' (below right)

Challenge yourself to learn more about captivating conifers for the landscape because limited exposure makes for limited designs. Educate yourself by visiting gardens and displays. Meet the professionals passionate about the newer cultivars. Join the American Conifer Society, [www.conifersociety.org](http://www.conifersociety.org), for the latest information on garden conifers and good photographs of the trees. Purchase new books on garden conifers that provide excellent photos and information you can pass on to your clients. Design landscapes with great plant material and plant with knowledge in an artistic manner. Learn the value of dwarf plant material so plant size will remain in scale with its surroundings.

Promise to make the plants and your customers happy, and you will be rewarded for your efforts. Make your

nursery, garden center or garden design unique with extraordinary plant material and people will notice and remember you. Happy customers will expand your client base with many referrals.

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*Richard and Susan Eyre are owners of Rich's Foxwillow Pines Nursery Inc., Woodstock, IL. They can be reached at [coniflora@richsfoxwillowpines.com](mailto:coniflora@richsfoxwillowpines.com)*

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### Conifer collections and gardens

Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta, GA

Bickelhaupt Arboretum (Heartland Collection), Clinton, IA

The Bressingham Gardens (Foggy Bottom), Bressingham, England

Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, IL

The Dawes Arboretum, Newark, OH

Hidden Lake Gardens (Harper Collection), Tipton, MI

JC Raulston Arboretum, Raleigh, NC

Lincoln Park Conservatory, Chicago, IL

Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis

The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL

Oregon Garden, Silverton

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland

Royal Horticulture Society Garden, Wisley, England

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

Trompenburg Arboretum, Rotterdam, Holland

University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum (Longenecker Gardens), Madison

US National Arboretum (Gotelli Collection), Washington, DC

# 2009 ACS Scholarship Now \$2,500

by Gerald Kral

The success of the ACS Scholarship, both in the number of applicants and their quality, has encouraged the ACS Board to revisit the scholarship's importance to our organization. The Board felt that encouraging the younger generation and getting them on-board with our passion for conifers was a priority not only for our organization's future membership and participation but also a critical part of our mission. In June 2008, at the National Meeting in Dubuque, Iowa, the ACS Board unanimously approved raising the scholarship award to \$2,500.

The following brief synopsis of what the ACS Scholarship has accomplished in the five years of its existence will illustrate why the board felt that this action was merited:

2005: A \$1,000 ACS Scholarship was established. No applications were received.

2006: We had four applicants from across the United States. Kevin Stevens was awarded \$1,000 to help meet his travel expenses and enrollment fees to attend an intensive gardening seminar in Kyoto, Japan. His story appeared in the 2008 spring issue of the *CQ* (Vol. 25 No. 2).

2007: Again, we had four applicants. Andrew Pulte was awarded the scholarship to help him attend our National Meeting in Seattle. The scholarship covered his registration and travel expenses from the University of Tennessee, where he is pursuing a master's degree in horticulture. His story will appear elsewhere in this issue of the *CQ*.

2008: We received five applications. Two were outstanding, and both were awarded a scholarship:

Ryan N. Contreras: A PhD student at the University of Georgia, Ryan is pursuing a doctoral thesis on *Developing Non-winter Browning Forms of Cryptomeria*. Ryan used the money to cover his expenses and purchase Farjon's, *A Monograph of Cupressaceae and Sciadopitys*. Ryan has promised a synopsis of his research for the *CQ* and wishes to present a synopsis of his research at a National Meeting.

Matthew S. Wilson: A graduate student and master thesis candidate in the Horticultural Department at Auburn University, Alabama. Matthew is completing his master's thesis on *Conifer Heat Tolerance in Tsuga*. His scholarship will help cover his tuition and course fees. Matthew has promised a synopsis of his research for the *CQ*.

2009: The ACS Scholarship has been increased to \$2,500. New applications will be accepted between March 1, 2009, and April 30, 2009.

The ACS Scholarship Committee is currently chaired by Gerald P. Kral, with the able assistance of Elmer E. Dustman. The Committee has been delighted to work with these students and honored to help with their endeavors. A great feature of our scholarship is that recipients have an opportunity to be published in the highly regarded *Conifer Quarterly*. This not only furthers their education and gives them great credentials, but our membership benefits from their academic pursuits. Look for both Ryan's and Matthew's research summaries in future issues of the *CQ*.



## ACS 2009 SCHOLARSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION

The 2009 Application Form and Eligibility Form may be downloaded from the Conifer Society Website after January 1st, 2009. It may also be obtained by mail and e-mail using the contact information below. Please use "ACS Application and Eligibility" as the subject if you choose email.

ACS Scholarship Committee  
Gerald Kral  
900 Winton Rd., N  
Rochester, NY 14609  
Email: gkral1@rochester.rr.com

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John Martin  
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"A Leap Above The Rest"

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# Let's Get Down to Specifics (Cultivars, that is)

by Scott Burrell

Here are some dwarf conifer selections suitable for the middle Atlantic Piedmont:

## *Chamaecyparis obtusa*

*Chamaecyparis obtusa* (Hinoki cypress) from Taiwan and Japan is considered sacred by the Shinto faithful. These plants are excellent for containers and tolerate drought better than any other *Chamaecyparis* species. Most of the selections of this species have worked well for me. Even siting rarely seems to be a problem. In other words, they are flexible and, except in cases of extreme drought, are tolerant of half-day shade and a variety of soil types (but no waterlogged soils). In full sun, there will be some sun scorch; for example, bleaching is common in yellow selections such as *C. obtusa* 'Nana Lutea' (grows slowly to 8 feet), 'Golden Whorls' (to 8 feet in 10 years), 'Verdon', 'Sunspray' (broadly oval to 10 feet in 15 years), and 'Crippsii' (to 25 feet in as many years).

With the former four, bleaching and even browning can seriously mar the look, so some shade is in order, preferably afternoon shade or late morning/early afternoon. With *C. obtusa* 'Crippsii', the bleaching is less noticeable, and I'd venture to say acceptable. Then there is *C. obtusa* 'Meroke'. This extremely graceful narrowly columnar Hinoki cypress, with wonderful lithe twists and turns of vertically reaching fans and strongly upright branches,

shows little to no bleaching in full sun. Some green tonation to the otherwise soft yellow foliage may account for the fact that it does so well in full sun conditions. As another example, a cousin, the x *Cupressocyparis leylandii* selection 'Gold Ryder', presents a more pronounced gold blending to interior green that similarly allows for full sun placement with no bleaching. It is definitely one of my favorites and growing a bit slower (1½ feet per year for me) than the green forms. A close cousin, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Vintage Gold', has a similar ability to not bleach in full sun. 'Vintage Gold' is much more broadly pyramidal and open in habit and grows faster than 'Meroke' (1½ feet per year versus 6 inches per year). Both are fascinating subjects for the low maintenance garden and would serve well as specimen plants of the highest order.

## *Cedrus deodara*

The deodar cedar from Afghanistan to the western Himalayas is hardy to Zone 7 and, with protection, possibly to Zone 6a. Like *Cupressus arizonica* (Arizona cypress) and its progeny, its narrow zonal range of 6A to 9 limits its northerly use. The variety of forms, foliage colors, and plant habits, when explored, takes one far beyond the large, tip weeping, usually green to blue, open pyramidal form of this tree, which can reach 80 feet here in Virginia. From prostrate forms never really leaving the ground to the soft cream-

colored *Cedrus deodara* 'Creampuff', which tolerates full sun without bleaching, the deodar cedar has given rise to some incredible cultivars and brooms. Like the *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, deodar cedar is easy to grow and tolerates a wide range of soils (but not overly wet soils), though it is happiest with a well-drained sandy loam. I am partial to *Cedrus deodara* 'Pygmaea Nana' for a number of reasons. Foremost among them is its slow growth rate and the good, stable, silver blue color on tightly congested needles from stem to stern. It maintains this rich color through each season of the year. Unlike many of the *Thuja* (arborvitae) and *Juniperus* (junipers), winter discoloration is a no-show for this enduring little plant that should never grow more than 4 feet tall. With multiple branches arching out from a center stem, it has a soft appearance that, for me, far out-classes the blue junipers of similar habit.

To round out my recent cedar experiences, I mention a virtual unknown, *Cedrus deodara* 'Well's Select B', an extremely slow growing (1 to 2 inches a year), semi-prostrate deodar with cream merging to blue tones. The foliage never burns in a full-sun situation, and it seems to relish the hot, dry slope to which it has been relegated. Like my other deodar cedar selections, it maintains good, clean, consistent color year round. Its densely packed, tight branches grow in a weeping, nearly prostrate manner. I have had to move it twice, and though its root system seemed rather weak and lax, it has always recovered nicely. I do not expect it to ever reach 2 feet tall. Slow-growing but beautiful, it is very nice.

### *Juniperus*

The junipers are one of the most wide ranging genera of worldwide distribution within the conifer class. Given this, one would expect them to be adaptable to many different climates and soil types; such is the case, though the majority favors full sun and well drained soils. *Juniperus communis* (the common juniper) is the only species of this genus that I have heard will tolerate wet soils, though I have never tried them under such conditions.

*Juniperus chinensis* 'Spartan', introduced in 1961 by Monrovia Nurseries, should do well in cold to hot climates, reflected in its zone rating of 4-9. Indeed, it exceeds *Chamaecyparis* (false cypresses) and *Cupressus* (true cypresses) in hardiness range. *Juniperus chinensis* 'Spartan' makes a striking columnar to narrowly pyramidal form. Its habit is strongly vertical with rich green foliage and, in later years, produces abundant crops of deep blue fruits. It takes well to pruning, though that is rarely necessary unless one wants to control its height (which ultimately may reach more than 30 feet) by summer pruning of leader shoots. I am appreciative of conifers that present a naturally narrow column with tight, uniform branching and foliage patterns. 'Spartan' does so and is useful for formal presentation. Unlike a number of junipers, the winter off-coloring in 'Spartan', as well as many of its species relatives such as *Juniperus communis* 'Suecica Aurea' (golden Irish juniper), is minimal in the Virginia Piedmont.

### *Picea abies* 'Pusch'

The old fashioned Norway spruce, seen from the mountains to the sea in Virginia,

is not one of my favorites, but daughters and sons are not their parents and may excel where their parents did not. Such is the case with some of the cultivars and witches'-brooms of Norway spruce, chief among them being *Picea abies* 'Pusch', a miniature witches'-broom that was found on a witches'-broom (*Picea abies* 'Acrocona'). Adrian Bloom mentions it as one of his favorites, and I can see why. Even at the ripe young age of two years, it produced a few nice purple cones at the tips of its short, stiff, spiky branches. And cone numbers will only increase with age. The cones fade to a pleasing buff color. I am always looking for dwarf conifers that begin coning early because they add another dimension of interest. (*Pinus koraiensis* 'Silveray' and *Pinus parviflora* are just two of a number of conifer cultivars/species that begin coning when quite young.) *Picea abies* 'Pusch' presents itself as a small, rounded bush (it will probably never exceed 3 feet) with medium-green, short needles on irregular, stiff branches. Doing well through our hot summers, I would bet that growing this plant a little further north or west in the mountains would produce a specimen of even richer colors and vigor.

### *Chamaecyparis thyoides*

*Chamaecyparis thyoides* 'Yankee Blue' has been very easy to get along with. I cannot say the same for its more popular and well-known juvenile (foliated, that is) cousins, *Chamaecyparis thyoides* 'Rubicon' (syn. 'Red Star') and 'Heatherbun'. Although our native white false cypress/Atlantic white-cedar is touted as enjoying boggy and wet conditions, my experiments with using it in the bog/wet

meadow complex at the Virginia House have borne only bitter fruit. I have consistently lost the plant when growing it under boggy conditions; and no matter where I have used it, 'Rubicon' has proved short-lived (although, I have seen it do well elsewhere). On the other hand, 'Yankee Blue' has been an enduring winner for me when used in full sun on the well-drained, upland slope in the conifer garden at Virginia House. With strikingly blue threadlike adult foliage (the color is similar to *Juniperus virginiana* 'Grey Owl') that remains a consistent color through all four seasons and with a weeping habit to its branch tips (more pronounced than in the junipers), it is a real beauty. Its tendency to form a strong, terminal leader (growth is approximately 1 foot each year) makes me believe that, like a cousin *C. thyoides* 'Andeleyensis', it may reach 16 feet in a pyramid 8 feet wide. Cuttings root very easily in summer or winter. It is one conifer cultivar I may try again in a wetland situation, but maybe I will raise a hummock or two (dirt/sand islands rising above the surrounding high water table), so it can stretch down for water instead of being inundated. Full sun and a normal garden situation should suit it just fine.

### *Cupressus arizonica* var. *glabra*

I well remember seeing my first Arizona cypress at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum (prior to J.C. Raulston's untimely death, it was known as the North Carolina State University Arboretum). It was *Cupressus arizonica* var. *glabra* 'Blue Ice'. The frosty, blue-gray color was eye catching and mesmerizing on this slow growing Arizona cypress. And beyond somewhat similar though faster growing cultivars

like *C. arizonica* var. *glabra* 'Carolina Sapphire', another blue-gray, broadly pyramidal cypress, *C. arizonica* 'Golden Pyramid', stands in counterpoint. Fantastic clean gold foliage deepens to a rich interior green in this rather open pyramidal (grows to 15 feet in 10 years in a deep sandy loam).

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*About the author:* Scott Burrell is an ACS director from the Southeastern Region. He is Director of Horticulture for the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. In this capacity, he includes some beautiful conifer specimens in the gardens there and is currently establishing a larger dwarf collection on the grounds, expanding choices he thinks may work in his area.

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# Nominations Sought for 2010 American Conifer Society Awards of Merit

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.

Also taken into consideration are published articles, books, or texts as well as new or improved propagation techniques and designs for the use of conifers.

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.

*Please send your nominations to:*

*Don Howse*

*41370 SE Thomas Road*

*Sandy, OR 97055*

*Phone/FAX: 503 668-5834*

*Email: don@porterhowse.com*

# 2008 ACS Merit Award Winners

## Frank Goodhart Receives the Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award of Merit Award for Dedicated Support of the American Conifer Society

Frank Goodhart started attending the ACS Regional and National Meetings in 1984, soon after becoming interested in conifers for his and Joan's home gardens. He has attended every regional (Eastern and Northeastern) and national ACS meeting since.

Frank has a history of leadership within the ACS. He has helped to organize and plan Eastern and Northeastern planning meetings, and has attended all Advisory meetings. In 1995 he served as the ACS National Vice President, and then served as the ACS National President from 1996 to 1997 and as Past President and ACS Board Member until 1999. As the Northeastern Region developed its new Reference Garden Program in 2006, Frank has played a critical role in its vision and development. Recently, he has been the co-chair of the 2008 NE Regional Meeting held in Saddlebrook, New Jersey.

Frank is an active participant at ACS functions. He often participates in the check in and registration of plants for the auctions, verifying the correctness of names for the hundreds of trees which are donated. Meanwhile his wife Joan is also active in the registration and check in of the meeting participants, and also often participating at the auction check out ta-

bles. As a team, they make our meetings successful. They both are always generous with their time and talents at our meetings. Also, Frank is a generous donor of plants from his personally propagated and grown plant materials.

Frank is eager to share his knowledge and talents. He frequently brings slides or PowerPoint presentations to the various ACS events. He has written numerous articles for the ACS *Conifer Quarterly*. He is willing to discuss and share his skill as a plant propagator, and collector of conifers with all who listen, whether a professional horticulturist or a new amateur gardener. He has a keen interest in conifers and also plants for the rock garden. He is dedicated to the maintenance of the collection of plants at the Freylinghusen Arboretum in Morristown, New Jersey.

We are fortunate to have Frank and Joan Goodhart in our midst. It is folks like them who have made the ACS a vibrant organization.

## Justin "Chub" Harper Receives the ACS Award of Merit for Development in the Field of Conifers

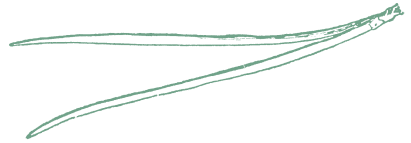
Justin "Chub" Harper has been an active collector, propagator, and grower of unusual conifers for many years. He has a special interest in collecting "Brooms". He has discovered and named several very good garden selections, most of which still have provisional names, as

they are under evaluation. He has willingly shared plants with many other collectors and growers. He has also willingly shared his plant collections with arboreta in the Midwest. Donations of his private collections to Hidden Lakes Arboretum in Michigan, and the Bicklehaupt Arboretum in Iowa, have helped to popularize conifers in the these regions.

He cheerfully shares his knowledge and love of conifers with anyone who will listen, and have discourses with him. He is active in discussions about conifers via e-mail. Chub has donated his plants to the ACS auctions, sharing his enthusiasm. We are all richly rewarded by knowing Chub and by his dedication to sharing

his conifer collections, his brilliant knowledge, and his cheerful nature.

It should be noted that Justin "Chub" Harper is the first person to have been awarded *both* Merit Awards presented by the ACS. We again acknowledge his dedicated support of the ACS.



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## Letter to the Editor:

To: Evelyn Cox, Editor

Dear Evelyn,

Swamp cypresses are tough. On September 14th, Ohio had a taste of Texas when Hurricane Ike came through Indiana and collided with a Canadian cold front, producing the highest winds (75 mph) ever recorded in Columbus, Ohio. Trees were whipping and swaying, pruning and stripping, littering and leaving a mess for others to clean up.

In the middle of our quarter-acre, wooded, side yard, Ike blew down an 80-foot hollow cherry tree that knocked down a 70-foot cottonwood tree that, in turn, hit a 40-foot swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum*). The cypress bent down sharply

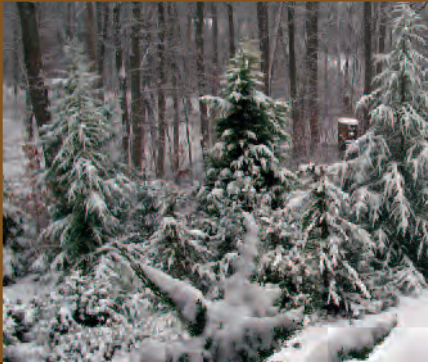
to sprawl on the ground without a crack or a break, nor damage to the roots. The 7-inch trunk was horizontal only 4.5 feet above the ground at 4.5 feet from the base. Over the next two weeks, we pulled it upright and tied it off. I think it will survive. Of course the cottonwood broke some cypress branches and stripped some of its bark, but the cypress kept all its green leaves until normal leaf-fall a month or so later.

I am amazed at the resilience of that cypress.

Russell S. Fling  
477 E. Dominion Blvd.  
Columbus Ohio 43214  
Ph. 614-261-6652



# Conifers - Plants for All Seasons



Winter Scene taken by Maud Henne, in her garden in Charlottesville, Virginia.



Spring by Maud Henne



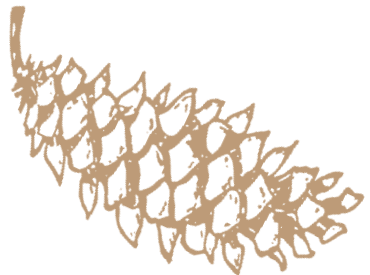
Summer by Maud Henne



Fall by Maud Henne



Foggy scene by Maud Henne





*Picea abies* 'Froburg' winter in Fruit Heights, Utah by Mary Garr



*Picea abies* 'Froburg' in summer by Mary Garr



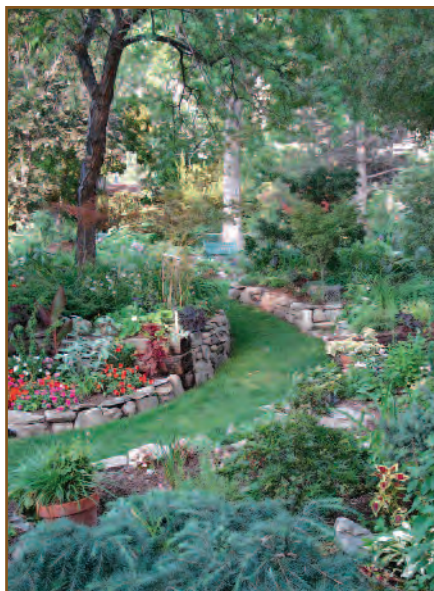
*Picea abies* 'Froburg' in fall by Mary Garr



*Cedrus deodara* 'Mountain Beauty' by Mary Garr



*Cedrus deodara* 'Mountain Beauty' late spring by Mary Garr



*Cedrus deodara* 'Feeling Blue' summer by Mary Garr



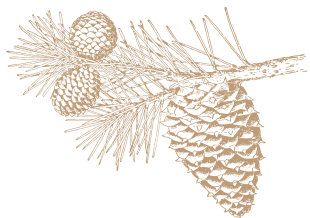
*Cedrus deodara* 'Feeling Blue' fall by Mary Garr



*Pinus sylvestris* 'Little Ann' fall by Mary Garr



*Tsuga canadensis* 'Pendula' by Mary Garr





A winter scene from Susan and Rich Eyre  
Woodstock, Illinois



A summer scene from  
Susan and Rich Eyre



Snow on *Tsuga canadensis* 'Sargentii' by  
Dennis Groh-Dearborn Heights, Michigan



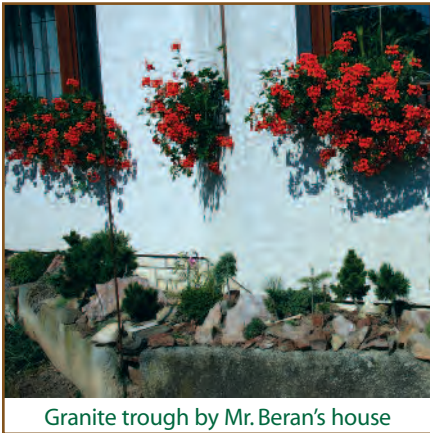
*Tsuga canadensis* and *Abies concolor* in the  
winter snow by Dennis Groh

# ACS International Trip 2008

Text by Gerald Kral with Photos by Karen Kral

Hills checkered with 500-acre wheat fields and lush woodlands rolling to the horizon. Villages with fairytale houses complete with flowered window boxes and red tile roofs. Ponds and lakes filled with farmed carp. Castles complete with turrets, moats, and gardens. Gothic cathedrals with spires reaching 100 feet. The scenery alone enthralled all 21 of us. And when we visited the conifer gardens, even the most jaded coneheads were awestruck.

Twelve days, 1,600 miles, and thousands of witches'-brooms were convincing evidence that we were in the company of Eastern Europe's "Broom Kings." Our translator, Dr. Jaroslav Kazbal, was a happy, contented man in his 80s, who delighted us with his humor and knowledge of English and plants in general. Peter, our witty tour guide with knowledge of the Czech Republic (CR), made the cultural parts of our tour exciting and interesting.



Granite trough by Mr. Beran's house

## Day One

A working iron foundry producing artistic gates, fencing, and sculpture complemented the conifer gardens of Jan Beran. We saw our first of many granite troughs, some as large as 8 feet long, 2 feet wide and deep, with sides 3 to 4 inches thick. They were intricately planted with conifers, alpine flora, and miniature rock-scaping.

Beran has been collecting conifers for 40 years and wants at least one of everything. We had our first *Pinus heldreichii* 'Smidtii' sighting, a 40-year-old specimen approximately 4 feet by 4 feet. We were surprised to see plants from Ed Reznek, Rich Eyre, Larry Stanley, and Bob Fincham. American growers have truly invaded the CR. There was even a *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Chairman' with a good 2-inch caliper. I did not even know the plant existed until five years ago when I lost one after bidding \$300 at an auction.

Beran had a second garden where we saw *Picea uncinata* 'Eva', a very tight, miniature broom named after his wife. A second *P. uncinata* called 'Iseli #5', which was ten years old, was allegedly smuggled into the CR from the United States. Beran did not elaborate. We were all surprised at the health and vigor of the hundreds of specimen brooms. Beran's secret: "Leave the under-stock on for four years or longer." We had a perfect day strolling through Beran's conifer gardens and enjoying his gracious hospitality. We returned to

Prague with the feeling we were in for something truly special on this tour.

## Day Two

We spent morning and lunch in the historic center of Tabor with a pleasant, relaxing stroll through cobblestone streets and ancient buildings of this medieval village. After lunch, we left to see the garden of Mr. Krecji. We entered his extensive garden by walking down a quaint country lane. Red, white, and black currants and fruit-laden gooseberries kept us entertained. We encountered our first conifer “brood” tree. To obtain this effect, Krecji used a 12-foot *Abies alba* to nurture at least 25 different witches’-brooms. All the brooms were thriving. Krecji described it as “efficient use of under-stock.”



Two headed *Picea orientalis* 'Tom Thumb' in the Krecji garden

The gardens were beautifully laid out and completely surrounded his house. Notable specimens included several 30-foot *Abies alba* 'Fastigiata', a dozen *Picea orientalis* 'Tom Thumb' on 2-foot standards, and a 25-year-old grove of *Tsuga canadensis* 'Minuta', each approximately 18 inches by 18 inches. His 1-acre production area of brooms, all

different and numbering in the hundreds, was epic. The best plant in the production area was the witches’-broom *Abies alba* 'Kral'. I admit to being biased.

Krecji's grafting skills were phenomenal. I found a little broom grafted onto the base of a mature tree, and he even managed to graft a *Pinus mugo* scion onto *Picea abies* under-stock. He credits that feat to being under the influence of rum, as subsequent sober attempts have all failed. It was also here that we saw our first upside-down graft, *Larix* on *Larix* with the scion reversed. This produced an oddly attractive and congested growth habit. We left a bit sad. We had to wait for Gary Gee and Tom Cox. They were lost in broom heaven. Jaroslav said they were “negotiating.”

## Day Three

We spent the morning in the Dendrological Garden of Pruhonice. Duke Silva Tarouca landscaped the gardens in the 19th century. Majestic specimen conifers surrounding a lake and castle are displayed in an alpine manner. It was here that we went on a quest to find the original *Pinus heldreichii* 'Smidtii'. According to Jaroslav, an amateur plant archeologist, the original century-old plant, discovered by Eugene Smidt in 1926, yielded 2,000 scions and then died. Of the 2,000 grafts, only one survived. That survivor was somewhere in the Pruhonice garden. After an hour of hiking around the lake on a 90-degree day, with only a vague idea of its exact location, a 'Smidtii' sighting occurred. It was a tight, dark green pine, only 4 feet by 3 feet and approximately 30 feet up the side of a rock garden cliff. We still were not positive. Elmer Dustman, Richard



Tom Cox with *Pinus Heldreichii* 'Smidtii'

Bomar, and Tom Cox scaled the cliff and pronounced it a legitimate trophy. Bomar took a picture, and Jaroslav later verified our sighting.

From there, we went on to the 35-year-old conifer gardens and collection owned by Mr. Balatka. Joan Sabol echoed the thoughts of all as we entered a garden not more than 40 feet by 100 feet (including the house) as she remarked, "Never again will I complain that you need lots of room to have a spec-

tacular garden." Balatka specializes in miniature witches'-brooms. Some *Picea abies* brooms were 20 years old and 6 inches in diameter. One was so tiny (about the size of my thumb) that it was hard to imagine it was real. (Eat your heart out, Larry Stanley!) Dozens of granite troughs were sculpted into works of art using conifer miniatures and sub-alpine plants. *Picea orientalis* 'Tom Thumb' was found growing in tufa!

Balatka's "overflow" garden was a small lot next door. Two plants really stood out. One was a *Picea pungens* 'Herman Nave'. It was a perfect mimic of *Picea abies* 'Pusch', being a dwarf *Picea pungens* with terminal cones. The second was a *Picea procera* in full cone. Those of you unaware of this plant in full cone have a treat coming. Evelyn Cox experienced instant rapture (a future CQ issue will feature cones). Karen Kral took a great shot, but Richard Bomar's zoom was bigger, so he got the better picture.

#### Day Four

No gardens today. This was nice because



Most of our group in the Balatka garden





A view of Prague

we needed time to digest all the coniferous eye-candy of the previous three days. We spent a lovely day touring the City Centre of Prague, with its medieval splendor blending perfectly with pricey shops (such as Tiffany's). Peter kept us well-informed and made sure we hit all the must-see destination spots. We also indulged in some of Prague's evening theater.

### Day Five

We traveled to Ledec n. Sasavou to visit the gardens and nursery of Mr. Holata. This garden was more mature, with many miniatures and dwarfs achieving specimen status. At 8 feet, a *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Weissel's Sugaro' was impressive and well named. I need to rethink my opinion of *Thuja occidentalis* 'Golden Tuffet'—at 3 feet by 3 feet, it was nice with outstanding color. Another *Picea abies* 'Kral' was found. A ten-year-old *Picea abies* 'Humulis' was the size of a golf ball (annual growth of 1/8 inch) and was strangely charming perched on an 18-inch standard. A novel way of

growing *Pinus ponderosa* was very well done. At 20 feet, with all side branches removed and 10-inch needles, it looked like a giant pipe cleaner. Although not a conifer, a *Leucothea axillaris* 'Curly Red' was a knockout. We all hope this plant is in the United States.



*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Hope' w/b in the Holata garden named for Mr. Holata's wife

The Holata gardens were above a production nursery, and many of the

gardens had this theme. Customers could see what a plant would look like in ten years and then buy a gallon plant a short walk away.

After lunch, we left to tour the medieval city of Kutna Hora. Linda Ayala continued her photos of our dining spots and food plates. Is she writing a book?

### Day Six

We traveled to Wohla, Germany, where we visited the gardens and nursery of Jorg Kohout. Three thousand different witches'-brooms were on display! Another 2,000 were in production. Highlight conifers were everywhere. A 12-foot *Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum* 'Pevé Minaret' was the largest specimen most of us had ever seen. A *Pinus contorta* 'Golden Striker' was like a pot of gold at rainbow's end. A 25-foot *Picea omorika* 'Pendula Bruns', 10-foot *Taxus baccata* 'Ivory Tower', and a very yellow *Picea pungens* 'Walnut Glen' only begin to symbolize the conifer treasures in the Kohout garden.



*Pinus contorta* 'Golden Striker' in Kohout garden

*Abies koreana* 'Icebreaker' was discovered by Kohout when he tripped walking along a row of *A. koreana* 'Silberlocke' and came face-to-face with the 'Icebreaker' broom hidden in the grass.



Kohout with his 'Icebreaker'

This started a whole series of broom stories. When you see Gary Gee at one of our national or regional meetings, ask him how his miniature *Taxodium distichum* broom got its name. Once again, we had some trouble getting some of our people to leave the gardens.

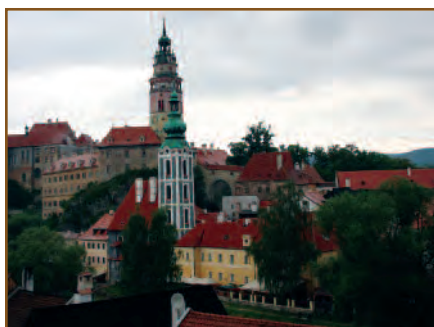
We stayed overnight in Germany, enjoying a great dinner and strolling around. The gardens around the hotel featured several 100-year-old specimens, including some *Taxus baccata* with multiple 18-inch caliper trunks reaching 60 feet.

### Day Seven

Next, our travels took us to Ceske Budjovice to visit the gardens and nursery of Mr. Malik. We paid homage to the original *Abies concolor* witches'-broom from which 'Blue Sapphire' originated. Malik's garden was quite mature. Many of the dwarfs and miniatures had come of age. A *Pinus strobus* 'Sea Urchin' was especially nice at 3 feet by 6 feet. Roses randomly peeked out of the conifer foliage, adding startling bursts of bright color. The garden was peaceful and

tranquil. Thousands of grafts were under production. Almost all the grafts were on 18-inch standards. *Picea orientalis* ‘Tom Thumb’ was found in several locations, and all were thriving. A well-grown *Pinus parviflora* ‘Ogon Janome’ was breathtaking. A *Pseudotsuga menziesii* ‘Kral’ was also discovered.

As we sat on the Maliks’ porch enjoying fresh juice and home-baked pastries and surveying the beauty around us, we unanimously agreed we were in conifer heaven.



Ceske Krumlov

### Day Eight

In the morning, we visited the city of Cesky Krumlov, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. After lunch, we traveled to Austria to visit the garden of Mr. Etzelstorfer. This is a world-class garden with much thought put into combining texture, form, and color.

The conifer vignettes were awe-inspiring. Imagine a 25-foot *Picea orientalis* ‘Skylands’ with a *Taxodium distichum* var. *distichum* ‘Pevé Minaret’ to its left and a *Pinus parviflora* ‘Ogon Janome’ to its right, all fronted by a *Picea pungens* ‘St. Mary’s Broom’ with an orange rose for a highlight. Picture a *Cedrus atlantica* ‘Pendula’ supported with a

stainless steel trellis, forming a 10-foot wall of foliage draped in a curvilinear fashion through dozens of colorful conifers. Imagine the sounds of a brook babbling its way through hundreds of different conifer cultivars and Japanese maples. This garden made me wax poetic.

I found a *Thuja plicata* ‘Golden Pygmy’ that lived up to its name, being bright yellow with an orange overcast. Several *P. omorikas*, *P. abies*, *Thuja plicatas*, and *Pinus strobus* cultivars were thriving under the shade of a sugar maple.

### Day Nine

The morning began with a tour of Telc, which is also on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Then, we traveled to the gardens of Miruslav Kostelnicek. What stood out in this private garden and nursery was the use of conifers in unusual and exciting ways. A crabapple tree, loaded with red thumbnail-size fruit, was nestled between two *Thuja filiformis*, a ‘Viridis’ on the left and an ‘Aurea’ on the right. A 10-square-foot area was filled with ground cover of *Juniperus horizontalis* with mounds of the juniper rising 3 feet above the ground cover. At first, I thought



*Juniperus horizontalis*, cultivar on standard & ground cover in the Kostelnicek garden



*Pinus mugo* 'Sunshine'

that the mounds had been trained upright from the ground cover. They were actually junipers of the same variety on 3-foot standards. I plan to try this with *Juniperus horizontalis* 'Mother Lode'.

A 4-foot *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Chairman' filled me with envy. After seeing Kostelnicek's *Picea orientalis* 'Tijn', I felt a need to move mine into full sun. 'Tijn' simply glowed, intensely char- treuse with hints of orange. If a *Pinus mugo* 'Sunshine' is not in the United States, many of us will be disappointed.

The plant was still a screaming yellow in August. *Ephedra*, classified as a conifer but rarely featured as a conifer, was well-used and included miniatures along with full-size plants. All were loaded with red juniper-like fruits.

Our stay at the Hotel International Brno was a trip highlight. Modern and filled with natural light, the lobby and dining areas seemed almost ethereal.

### Day Ten

We were given a guided tour of the Brno Arboretum, which is a teaching arboretum for university students taking courses in horticulture. We were treated to the visual impact of a unique rock garden. Twenty-foot sloping troughs were engineered to duplicate the talus slopes that many alpine plants need. Filled with crushed granite to a depth of 12 inches, water constantly trickled from the top of the slope to the bottom. With plant crowns sitting on dry stone and roots able to reach water, the rarest of



*Microbiota decussata* standards in Kostelnicek garden

alpines thrived.



Vertical tufa garden  
in Brno Arboretum

A rock wall approximately 18 inches thick, 10 feet high, and 25 feet long was filled with pieces of tufa. Mugos and other alpine conifers were planted into the vertical walls. Water constantly trickled from the top of the wall to the bottom. This was a vertical alpine garden!

Some of us spotted a huge vine with 8-inch caliper stems disappearing into the tree canopy. It looked like fox grape but not quite. Curious, I walked over and stood in awe as I realized it was a *Hedera helix* that had outlived its support tree. The arboretum was filled with dozens of these unique botanical surprises.

## Day Eleven

This was our last day. We toured Prague. Some of us went off on our own to enjoy the sidewalk cafes and shopping ambience of a cosmopolitan city, while others went with Peter, our tour guide, to visit some of his favorite spots. Our last dinner together was especially nice and a bit sad.

We all realized we would miss each other: Jo-Evelyn Morris asking each of us what makes each conifer special; Jim Morris assuming a judicial pose as he admired a conifer vignette; Karen Kral, Kaye Gee, Joyce Dustman, Joan Good-

hart, and Kim Downs always found in a shady nook enjoying the homemade treats provided by our garden hosts; Dennis Lee rating the quality of all the local beers; Frank Goodhart spotting that one special conifer from a mile away; Ellen Kelley proudly awarding each garden host an official ACS hat, while Jim Kelley dutifully photographed the event; and Harry Oefinger who was totally unflappable, whether lost, late, or building his home by long distance cell phone calls. There were many special moments with many special people.

Our garden hosts in the Czech Republic, Austria, and Germany gave us a welcome that we will cherish and remember.

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*About the author:* Gerald Kral is a director of the ACS. He and his wife Karen live and garden in Rochester, New York. Their garden has been featured in numerous magazines and newspapers. Gerald is considered a subject matter expert on gardening, often contacted by the press for horticultural advice.

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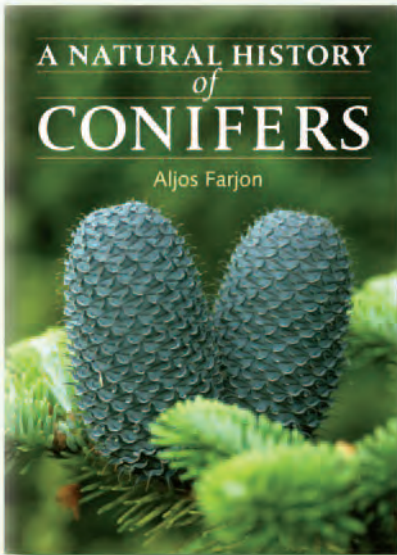
Prague, St. Vitus Cathedral.

## Book Review

### *A Natural History of Conifers*

Aljos Farjon. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2008. 304 pages.

ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-869-3



A veritable treasure trove of information, insights, and infectious enthusiasm about “the most diverse, interesting, beautiful trees in the world” is what readers of this marvelous book written by Aljos Farjon, recently retired from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, have and will be treated to. The book is well illustrated with gorgeous photographs and fine illustrations mostly created by the author, who is widely recognized and respected as an authority on conifer taxonomy.

In the interest of full disclosure, I must admit that I once met Aljos Farjon in Kunming, while volunteering on a botanical expedition (for conifers) with

my friends Zsolt Debreczy and Istvan Racz with whom I became acquainted while working at the Arnold Arboretum. Tomasz Anisko of Longwood Gardens was also with our team, who were heading out into the field while Aljos, returning from his jaunt through the wilds of Yunnan, regaled us with stories of conifers he had encountered (Sept. 2000).

While Aljos is a highly accomplished field botanist, he is not a gardener, so please do not expect much information on conifer cultivars in this book. He does not mention the term “cultivar” until page 220, and only one chapter, entitled *Conifers In and Out of Fashion* (nine pages), is devoted to the horticulture of conifers that does include an adequate discussion of witches’-brooms.

Where the author has relied on other experts, such as Derek Spicer, the chairman of the British Conifer Society, as he did in the aforementioned chapter, Aljos gives them credit. The book is fully equipped with a glossary, references, and index—not to mention a foreword by William Chaloner, Professor of Botany, University of London, and a preface where the author gives an overview of the body of the book, while thanking the people and institutions that helped with or added to its content.

*A Natural History of Conifers* is comprised of seven sections and 34 chapters, starting with an explanation of what conifers are – don’t laugh, the answer is fairly complicated. Could you easily explain why a yew is a conifer and an alder is not? The second section is devoted to

the systematics of conifers that is based in part on the next section, conifers of the past, of which relatively little is known. This makes for a somewhat arbitrary classification that, although it has advanced by leaps and bounds since the days of Linnaeus, is still a work in progress.

The book perks up with an excellent overview of the ecology of conifers that culminates with a chapter entitled Climbing the Giants. In this chapter, readers are treated to the findings of a researcher at the University of Washington in Seattle named Bob Van Pelt who has mapped the crowns of giant Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, and coast redwood, making note of the complex branch structure, the numerous epiphytes, volume of canopy soil, and extensive fauna found therein, including the adorable California clouded salamander.

The next fascinating section, Conifer Geography, starts with a trip to New Caledonia that is "something like Mecca for conifer enthusiasts" and discusses conifer relicts to be discovered, while detailing that more than half the species of conifers are found in proximity to the Pacific Ocean. The conifers and people section gets into the woods of the world and their uses, conifers as ornamental landscape specimens and other uses of conifers.

The book concludes with conifers and conservation; one of the highlights is a chapter on *Wollemia nobilis*, another good story told by the author, who serves as chairman of the Conifer Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Aljos explains why conifers are important to nature: "Biodiversity is our most valuable but least appreciated resource." One need not

visit all the native conifer forests that Aljos has to agree with this assessment.

Ethan Johnson



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# 2007 ACS Scholarship Recipient Wowed in Seattle

by Andrew Pulte

As the recipient of the 2007 ACS Educational Scholarship, I would like to thank the Society for their generous support. This support made it possible for me to attend the 2007 National Meeting in Seattle, Washington. I was awarded \$1,000, which deferred the costs of the meeting's registration and helped with transportation costs to and from Seattle. I thank the Society for their commitment to the education of their student members.

As a graduate student at The University of Tennessee, I teach undergraduate students about woody plant material of the mid-south. This gives me the opportunity not only to teach taxonomy and nomenclature, but also a chance to convey my experiences with each plant we discuss. I am not unique in being able to recall the first encounter I had with many great plants, as I am sure many ACS members do. This list of plant experiences contains a growing number of conifers.

Among these great experiences is the first time I saw a *Cedrus libani* loaded with fresh cones at the Arnold Arboretum, as well as taking my first trip to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in California, where I walked among the giants. I also vividly recall my first encounter at Sarah P. Duke Gardens with *Pseudolarix amabilis* in full fall color on the lake in the Asiatic Arboretum.

My first trip to the Northwest was monumental and brought me face-to-face

with some of the most outstanding conifer specimens I have seen. Furthermore, I will not soon forget the grouping of *Thuja plicata* 'Zebrina' at Kubota Gardens, visible from several vistas around the garden, or the beautiful *Pinus sylvestris* 'Gold Coin' in the Coenosium rock garden on the campus of South Seattle Community College. Around every corner on each of our tours laid a "wow" experience that fueled my enthusiasm for conifers.

One of the most important aspects of ACS National Meetings is the opportunity to network with those who know and love conifers. I met many great ACS members while attending my first National Meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the 2007 gathering in Seattle was an opportunity to continue friendships I made at that first meeting. People who know me know that I am truly passionate about people interacting with plants. The 2007 ACS National Meeting was a great example of just this. Those of us who appreciate conifers on a higher level gathered to share wisdom, insight, and camaraderie.

Following the National Meeting, I traveled south to the Portland area with a group from the University of Tennessee (UT) Gardens. We visited every nursery we could in search of new and interesting conifers. One of our first, and certainly one of our most memorable, stops was Porterhowse Farms in Sandy, Oregon. Nursery owner Don Howse led us on a



truly unforgettable adventure through his collection. On our post-conference tour of nurseries, we were able to collect more than 100 new conifers to add to the UT Gardens and several other gardens throughout the state of Tennessee. Many of these new selections will be tested on their performance in both ends of the state.

I became a member of the ACS approximately two years ago and continue to be pleasantly surprised at the multitude of opportunities offered by the Society. Thank you to each and every member of the ACS for your dedication to the development, conservation, and propagation of conifers. The impact you make has far-reaching effects, and I look forward to continued involvement in the Society.



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## ACS Past President and Southeastern Region Founder Jordan Jack Wins the 2008 Southeastern Region Merit Award

Celebrating its tenth anniversary, the Southeastern Region presented its 2008 Award of Merit to its founder, Jordan Jack of Leicester, North Carolina, at the region's meeting at Clemson University in South Carolina this past October. In her honoring address, the Southeastern Region Past President, Maud Henne, reminded the assembled ACS members of Jordan's achievements and dedication to the ACS cause and the region in particular.

Jordan, a member of ACS almost from the beginning, has been actively promoting ACS and garden conifers for many years. He put the state of North Carolina on the conifer map, where his nursery in Leicester was an early base for propagation workshops and conifer sales. He spread the word and is known for tirelessly giving advice. For more than 20 years, Jordan has written many articles for the *Conifer Quarterly* about his travels visiting arboreta, his propagation of conifers, and about specific conifers. He created the series, "It's a Nice Plant." Additionally, Jordan has donated many plants for ACS auctions.

Jordan served on the ACS Board of Directors, and from 1997–1999, he served as ACS President. It was then that he created the basis for this year's award. Thanks to Jordan, we have a Southeastern Region. Jordan realized that the climate conditions in the southeast were very different compared with the conditions in states north of Washington, DC. Furthermore, he felt that the southeast did not get the attention it deserved. While

serving as ACS president in 1997, Jordan suggested to the Board of Directors that the Eastern Region be divided into two regions—Northeastern and Southeastern. The Board reluctantly agreed. Jordan recruited the first Southeastern Region officers and organized its first meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, in May 1998.

At that time there were voices saying, "You can't grow conifers in the southeast." It may be noted that the southeast, spreading from the Atlantic Coast to mountaintops rising 6,600 feet in the Smoky Mountains at the southern end of the Appalachians, stretches from Washington, DC to Florida and west to Texas. With cold-hardiness zones ranging from 5 to 10, it is hospitable to many species of conifers—from cold-loving firs to heat-loving true cedars, cryptomerias, araucarias, cunninghamias, and even some subtropical species.

Today, thanks to Jordan's foresight and insistence, the Southeastern Region has many new, younger, and active members that carry forth his dream. Congratulations, Jordan, and thank you for putting the southeast on the conifer map; for creating awareness that, yes, one can grow many conifers in the southeast; for starting the trend that conifers find more and more friends within public arboreta and in botanical, as well as in private gardens; and for having been one of the movers and shakers, as ACS historian Jim Morris pointed out in the spring 2008 issue of *CQ*.

# The Jean Iseli Memorial Award

APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED AND MUST BE RECEIVED BY  
JUNE 1, 2009

The American Conifer Society, which supports the development, conservation and propagation of conifers with an emphasis on dwarf or unusual varieties, awards a \$3,000 grant to a public garden, arboretum or horticultural institution.

The award was established in 1986 in honor of the memory of plantsman, Jean Iseli of Boring, Oregon. Jean Iseli was an ACS founder and conifer propagator.

*Proposals must contain the following:*

- a. Name, full address, and phone number of the applicant/institution
- b. Brief description of how ACS funds will be used
- c. List of plant materials (if the request involves conifer purchases)
- d. Budget
- e. Short overview of mission statement or horticultural background of your institution

*Send Applications to:*

Ethan Johnson

ethjohnson@yahoo.com (Microsoft Word documents)

*or by regular mail*

c/o The Holden Arboretum

9500 Sperry Road

Kirtland, OH 044094

Ethan Johnson chairs a three-person committee that reviews applications and makes its recommendation to the ACS Board of Directors at the annual summer meeting.

Announcements of the award recipient will be made by  
August 1, 2009.

# ACS 2009 National Meeting

**The 2009 ACS National Meeting will be held August 6 – 8, 2009, in Hauppauge, New York. Our host hotel will be the Hyatt Regency in Hauppauge.**

The focus of the 2009 ACS National Meeting in Long Island, New York, will be several of the Great Gatsby-era estates and their corresponding pine-tums. On Friday, we will venture to Hofstra University, which also has a rich horticultural tradition. Hofstra was a Dutchman's college that served Dutch descendents who were the early settlers in the New York and New Jersey area in the 1600s. Although Brooklyn was a major Dutch settlement, as the area grew, it experienced massive immigration by waves of people from all over the world; this probably resulted in the Dutch relocating to the suburbs on Long Island, which is where the college is currently located.

The Dutch have a great horticultural tradition, and the Hofstra Board of Trustees appointed a president, Dr. James M. Shuar, in the 1960s who had an abiding interest in plants. During his extraordinarily long 25-year tenure, he funded an ambitious planting program that turned an urban campus of approximately 400 acres into an arboretum for the dual purpose of beautification and the aesthetic and horticultural stimulation of students. At one time, more than 100,000 tulips were planted annually on the campus. Due to new leadership and changed priorities, the number has been reduced to 20,000, but it still must be

quite a show!

Many rare trees have been planted over the years, as well as many interesting conifers. Some of these were donated by past ACS members, such as Joe Reis, Ed Rezek, and Jim Cross. Rezek was a good friend of Hofstra and was responsible for Hofstra acquiring many conifer donations, both dwarf and full-sized. Many of the more than 100 varieties of gymnosperms in the Pinetum were purchased through Marty Brooks Nursery. Because of the coastal location bordering on Zone 7, Hofstra can grow many borderline hardy trees, both evergreen and deciduous. In total, more than 12,000 evergreen and deciduous trees represent more than 625 species and varieties. The Hofstra Arboretum includes native American and rare exotic trees.

Also on the Hofstra campus, there are other collections of special interest, such as a bird sanctuary created from a recharge basin that recirculates storm water and a hummingbird garden. There is also a Sensory Garden for the blind and physically challenged, a Tulip Sampler Garden representing more than 150 taxa, and a New American Garden designed by Oeheme van Sweden Associates. The Outdoor Sculpture Garden contains over 75 works created by artists such as Henry Moore, Paul Manship, and Paul Jenkins. The Hofstra Labyrinth was adapted from the world-renowned labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral, France, circa 1200 of the Common Era.

In addition to estates, gardens, and conifers, we will have several informative lectures. Fred Soviario, director of the Hofstra University Arboretum, will provide an overview of the Hofstra Arboretum and its conifers. Gilbert Bergen, the current director of Connetquot River State Park, which adjoins the Bayard Cutting Arboretum, will recount what it was like “downstairs” in service to a family that probably employed 50 people full-time to run the affairs of a grand estate. Vinny Simeone, the director of the Planting Fields, will give us advance information on the background of the Coe family, who also left their magnificent property to the State of New York.

We are pleased to have a presentation by Ryan Contreras, one of the 2008 ACS Scholarship winners. Ryan will give a brief synopsis of his research on the causes and possible solution to winter browning of *Cryptomeria*.

In addition to all of this, the ACS may be host to some very special guests at this National Meeting. Join us in Hauppauge, New York, for an exciting conifer adventure and some great conifer friends!

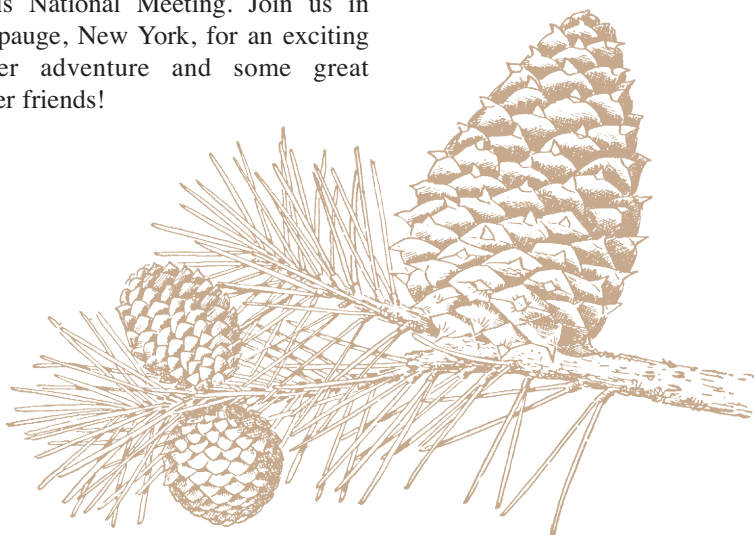
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# ACS Southeastern Region 2008 Fall Conference

text by Connie Cottingham, photos by Flo Chaffin

“I feel like the only non-expert in the place,” I told one of the 50 other participants gathered in Clemson, South Carolina at the start of the Southeastern Region’s Fall Conference held October 24–26. “Are you kidding?” he replied. “We all have a lot to learn – that’s why we’re here, and the experts are so happy to help the rest of us learn about conifers.”



A celebration of our four new Conifer Reference Gardens – a program started this year in the Southeastern Region to provide display specimens, education, and information for home gardeners – kicked off the meeting that first evening. The State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens, the University of Tennessee Gardens in Knoxville, the Atlanta Botanical Garden, and the East Ten-

nessee State Arboretum in Johnson City each described their conifer collections and gardens. Participants were asked to expand this program by encouraging other public gardens to become Conifer Reference Gardens. These reference gardens encourage gardeners to plant conifers in their landscapes, while providing feedback to all of us on hardiness, mature size, growing rates, and more in a region that ranges from upland temperate rainforests to subtropical coastal plains.



Saturday included informative lectures explaining issues such as why we look to understocks from similar climates to ensure that conifers thrive in the Southeast; the effects and control of various insects on conifers; and design ideas incorporating conifers into home landscapes. A walking tour and hands-on

seminars on grafting and pruning at the South Carolina Botanical Garden were available during the beautiful fall afternoon.

Friendly competition flowed freely during dinner as participants vied for silent auction conifer specimens. Competition and laughter hit a crescendo during the live auction as rare conifers, trough gardens, and an original oil painting helped raise funds to expand the Conifer Reference Garden program in the South-eastern Region.



By the end of the weekend, I felt energized and informed as several of us chatted over breakfast about all that we learned. We were all looking forward to the conifer sale that morning, hosted by the South Carolina State Botanical Garden, which featured numerous vendors. After listening to descriptions of many plants that can thrive in the Southeast, everyone was eager to take several new conifers home to our gardens.

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Niagara Falls, NY 14304-0525 USA

ARS Website:  
<http://www.rhododendron.org>

# Conifers In Unlikely Places

by Bob McCartney

When one conjures up images of the deep South, they typically think of azaleas, magnolias, live oaks, and yes, that noxious vine from China, kudzu. Aside from the ubiquitous pines, scant attention is afforded conifers. After all, when one thinks of conifers, the vast forests of spruce and fir that dominate boreal regions often come to mind. Although conifers are found in a variety of climates throughout the world, people with a passion for growing conifers and widespread landscape use of conifers is still largely a northern and Pacific Northwest phenomenon. In what is now the southern United States, an immense coniferous forest dominated by longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) once covered more than 90 million acres from Virginia to Texas. This and several other southern pines are still mainstays of the forest products industry.

I live and garden in Aiken, South Carolina, which sits squarely in this pine forest region. Today, the 11 pine species native to the southern United States are all represented in Aiken. Other native conifers including *Taxodium*, *Juniperus*, and *Chamaecyparis* are also found here. Soils, climate, and cultural history combine in Aiken to provide a rich horticultural history. Today, there are few communities that can match Aiken's diversity of trees and other plants. The International Oak Society has credited Aiken with having the most comprehensive collection of oaks in the United States, but Aiken likewise has a wealth of cultivated conifers. Many genera and

species not hardy in colder regions, and/or generally uncommon in cultivation, are represented. Last year, when past ACS president Tom Cox visited me, I could sense that he was surprised at the species diversity found within such a concentrated area.

The city of Aiken was laid out in the 1830s by the railroad being built to provide a link from Hamburg (across the Savannah River from Augusta, Georgia) to Charleston, South Carolina. At the time of completion, the railroad was the longest in the world. In the antebellum period, Aiken was a popular summer retreat for coastal planters. In the late 19th century, it became a popular health resort and, later, a winter home for wealthy northerners who pursued hunting and equestrian sports. It now is a small, vibrant city, retaining an equestrian focus and attracting a growing population of retirees.

Today in Aiken's 2,000-acre Hitchcock Woods Preserve, one can see ancient longleaf pines and other native conifers, including disjunct occurrences of *Juniperus communis* and *Pinus virginiana*. In the beautiful Hopelands Gardens, enormous deodar cedars (*Cedrus deodara*), pines, and rare conifers such as *Fokienia hodginsii* and *Cupressus funebris* can be seen. Throughout Aiken's historic district, broad tree-filled parkways display a remarkably varied tree collection that includes many noteworthy conifers. Quite a few private estates and home landscapes have notable conifers.



One private estate has an especially varied collection with many rare species from around the world; included are many Southern Hemisphere rarities such as *Araucaria angustifolia*, *A. araucana*, *Afrocarpus falcatus*, *Podocarpus parlatorei*, and *Wollemia nobilis*.

Everything within a 4-mile radius of downtown Aiken is included within the Aiken Citywide Arboretum project area. Efforts to locate, identify, and GPS a typical, outstanding, or sole example of every tree species within the project area is underway. The conifers have been largely completed, enabling one to pinpoint an example of many species. While various horticultural varieties of conifers are included, there has not been any spe-

cial effort to pursue the endless variety of named selections and mutant forms popular with conifer collectors. Aiken's collection, therefore, is species focused.

We are proud of our tree program and pleased to have this opportunity to introduce a diverse collection of conifers growing in a region of the United States where most visitors may not expect to find them.

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*About the author:* Bob McCartney and George Mitchell, with the help of a dedicated staff of employees, operate Woodlanders, Inc., an internationally known source for more than 1,000 kinds of rare and hard-to-find plants, located in Aiken, South Carolina.

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## Directors

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<i>Term expires 2010</i>	Scott Burrell, 428 North Boulevard, Richmond, VA 23221 PH (804) 339-0873, FAX (804) 354-8247, E-mail <a href="mailto:scott@vahistorical.org">scott@vahistorical.org</a>
	Christopher Daeger, Stanley M. Rowe Arboretum, 4600 Muchmore Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45243 PH (513)-561-5151, E-mail: <a href="mailto:cdaeger@ihill.org">cdaeger@ihill.org</a>
	Joe Harris, III P. O. Box 518 Boring OR 97009-0518 PH (503)-663-3822, E-mail <a href="mailto:jharris@iselinursery.com">jharris@iselinursery.com</a>
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<i>Northeastern Region</i>	Larry Nau, 25 Knollwood Dr., Churchville, NY, 14428 PH (585) 202-1815, E-mail: <a href="mailto:lnau@frontiernet.net">lnau@frontiernet.net</a>
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## Conifer Society Staff

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<i>National Office</i>	John Martin, 175 Charisma Lane, Lewisville, NC 27023-9611 PH (336) 945-0483, FAX (336) 945-0484, E-mail: <a href="mailto:conifersociety@aol.com">conifersociety@aol.com</a>
<i>Editor, Conifer Quarterly</i>	Evelyn Cox, 1621 N. Lake Drive, Canton, GA 30004 PH (770) 663-7576 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ConiferQuarterly@bellsouth.net">ConiferQuarterly@bellsouth.net</a>
<i>Graphic Design &amp; Printing</i>	Monya Barnes, 2255 Barrett Drive, Cumming, GA 30040 PH (770) 888-0434, E-mail: <a href="mailto:monya@mindspring.com">monya@mindspring.com</a>



*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca Pendula' in summer

Photo by Mary Garr



Conifers in a mixed border

Photo by Susan Eyre