

conifer

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CONIFER QUARTERLY

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Cover Photo

Looking West into a Michigan sunset, *Pinus nigra* 'Arnold Sentinel' and *Pinus ponderosa* stand guard at the front entrance of the home of **CONIFERQUARTERLY** Editor, Ron Elardo. Photo by the Editor

Infrared Photos

by Bill Blevins PlantsMap from the National Arboretum, DC, at the Northeast Region Meeting 2018

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4** **President's Message**
David Olszyk
- 5** **Confest 2019: The National Meeting Comes to The Oregon Garden**
Sara Malone
- 8** **People, Places and One Remote Conifer**
Tom Cox
- 12** **Start your bonsai**
Jack Christiansen
- 16** **Gone with the Wind**
Ronald J. Elardo
- 19** **UPDATE on Chilgoza (Afghan) Pine**
Sara Malone
- 20** **Gardens of the Northeast**
John Waskiewicz
- 23** **Solicitation of Nominations**
Dennis Groh
- 24** **Humboldt-Huggers**
Leah Alcyon
- 26** **Member Profile: Peter Kruger**
Peter Kruger
- 28** **Fishing for the Endangered Paiute Cypress**
Scott Antrim



ACS President David Olszyk
Photo by Anita Olszyk

Cooler temps, more natural irrigation, and the welcome bronzing of the cryptos, arbs, and hinokis means that our season of fun is behind us. In 2018, the American Conifer Society took great leaps forward in the areas of educating the public about all things coniferous. Our website, specifically the ConiferBase, is taking over the world with 10's of thousands of unique visitors every month. Considering that our charter is based on educating all people about these ancient and special woody plants we are very safe in our intent to maintain our charitable status. We have just introduced a vastly improved website. It is easier to navigate and even more enjoyable. I hope you're as excited as I am.

I had the pleasure last year of attending three Western Region events, as well as the Northeast Region's conference in D.C., and, of course, the big show in Raleigh. Our membership is strong and

Thanks for a great season!

motivated. I'm particularly proud of those of you who supported us by attending multiple events this year. My hope is that all of you can make it a resolution in the coming year to attend a regional or national event. You'll be instantly hooked. I guarantee it, and, once you've been to one, you'll want to make the ACS part of your vacation plans every year.

Our first important task for any new year is the Winter Board Meeting; this year Atlanta, Georgia, on February 9th, followed on Sunday, February 10th, by a rendezvous at Atlanta Botanical Garden with docent-led tours and lectures on conservancy and tropical conifers, and a presentation of the efforts to collect seed from Vietnam's rare and endangered *Pinus krempfii*. Your ACS Board voted to help fund that mission late last year. Both your Board's meetings and rendezvous are free to all current members. So, if you're ever in the area of a Board Meeting, be sure to stop by and see us. Always check our website and social media, too, for information on your Board and its activities.

In the spring, our Regions will hold elections for one of their two seats on our National Board of Directors. We've just witnessed the importance and power of elections, and our leadership is no less important. In the nearly 20 years since I've been an ACS member, only once have I ever seen a contested election in the organization. I firmly believe that the vibrancy of a successful, non-profit, all-volunteer organization is reflected by how enthusiastic its members are about competing for leadership roles. A prime candidate is someone who is either recently

retired, or semi-retired, empty-nested, somebody with a great deal of motivation and a basic understanding about how private organizations work. Extensive conifer knowledge is not required, just appreciated. If this sounds like you, let your regional leadership know, or answer the call when the call for nominations is announced in early spring.

Wishing all Coneheads the best for a fun and successful 2019!

David Olszyk
President, American Conifer Society

A message about the 2019 National Meeting and Post-Meeting Tour, Oregon

Make your reservations

2019 National Meeting

The Oregon Garden Resort (June 4th [or 5th] through June 9th)

1-800-966-6490

group code: CONIFER

nightly rate is \$119

Post-Meeting Tour

**Riverside Inn and Lodge, Grants Pass, Oregon
(June 9th through June 11th, 2 nights)**

1-541-476-6873

group code:

AMERICAN CONIFER SOCIETY

nightly rate is \$142



CONFEST 2019: THE NATIONAL MEETING COMES TO THE OREGON GARDEN

text Sara Malone *photography* Janice LeCocq

We love attending our national meetings and we know their format: establish a headquarters in a hotel, conveniently located near worthy conifer-viewing, be it private, public, or park. Board buses, visit conifers, repair to the hotel for dinner, rinse and repeat. It's a great way to enjoy coneheads and conifers. But—what if our hotel were located in one of the most comprehensive and beautiful conifer gardens in the country? What if we could view choice specimens simply by walking out the doors of our rooms and into a conifer wonderland? That's what you'll be doing in June 2019 when the Western Region hosts the ACS National Meeting at The Oregon Garden Resort.

The Oregon Garden: Your Saturday Resort!

The Oregon Garden (TOG), an ACS Reference Garden, was established in the 1990s by the Oregon Association of Nurserymen to showcase the products of Oregon's #1 industry, horticulture. In partnership with the ACS, largely through the efforts of our own Doug Wilson, TOG's conifer collection has grown into one of the best places in the country for viewing choice cultivars, meticulously labeled, in

beautiful combination with companion plants. Early June in Oregon is still very spring-like, with lingering blossoms, fresh new growth on conifers and the possibility of showers. The moist air, abundant rainfall and cool nights produce healthy, vigorous plants that often show themselves to be stellar specimens of their species.

Because TOG is so lovely (and because there is much, much more to see than the conifer collection), we are designing this meeting with ample time at the Resort. In fact, Saturday's agenda is entirely at the Resort! No buses, flexible scheduling and a wide variety of activities should make for a relaxing, informative and fun day. We will not only have space in the schedule for viewing the conifers, we will have aesthetic pruning demonstrations, workshops and lectures, and free time for strolling, loafing or spa treatments.

We will also provide suggestions for nearby attractions, such as Conifer Kingdom/Rare Tree Nursery (3 miles from TOG), Silver Falls State Park (11 miles from TOG) and Western Evergreen (14 miles from TOG). As there is no public transportation from the airport to the Garden, we expect that most of you will have rental cars. For those

who don't, we will have a group of volunteers who will happily provide transport. We also plan to use TOG's shuttle to get to and from Conifer Kingdom. We are still finalizing the schedule, but will release it with plenty of time for you to make any bookings you wish.

Our dinners, our breakfasts and one of our lunches will be onsite at the Resort or the Garden. Guests at the Resort can enter the Garden at any time, even when it is closed to the public. In June, the days are long and the weather mild. You can stroll the conifers with coffee or cocktail in hand, and your room is close by if you need a wrap or an umbrella.

But what about Friday?

Iseli Nursery

Nearby the Oregon Garden, in the village of Boring, Iseli Nursery sits as a conifer altar, inviting worship. With one of the most comprehensive and breathtaking display gardens of any nursery anywhere, Iseli, not open to the public, is rolling out the green carpet for the ACS. Their staff will be on hand to guide us and answer questions and point out the most unusual and noteworthy specimens. This garden



The Oregon Garden



Views of Iseli Nursery

has matured over the years, and Iseli has augmented the plantings with ceramics and other hardscape, so that, even if you have visited before on other ACS trips, you will marvel at how the garden has grown and changed. We have an entire morning planned here, with espresso (practically a Pacific Northwest requirement) and snacks to fortify us as we explore a true conifer paradise.

We will then head to Sebright Gardens, a large, beautifully landscaped nursery in Salem. While they are primarily known for hostas and other shade plants, they have extensive conifer plantings as well. It is a gorgeous spot to roam and relax in, and we'll make relaxing even easier by serving lunch and tasting some locally distilled spirits. Lunch will be provided by that Oregon specialty, food trucks! Portland foodies and ACS members Anton and Jill Klemens are already working on rounding up a delicious array of offerings. AND, there will be plants for sale, both by Sebright and Nathan Miller's Fresh Start Nursery. Sebright sits adjacent to Mid-America Garden, with its extensive iris fields, which will be in full bloom at the time of our visit.

More about Saturday: the Auction and Speaker

The plant auction is always a highlight of our meetings, and this one will be no exception. Given the proximity of the biggest conifer growers in the country and the availability of unusual cultivars, we plan to focus on quality rather than quantity, and will try to provide something for every zone and region. Silent auction, can raffle, live auction—you'll have lots of ways to score that special plant.

On Friday night, we'll hear from our keynote speaker, Sean Hogan of Cistus Nursery in Portland. Sean is a consummate plantsman who seeks to spread what he calls "the unlimited joys" of the plant world. He travels extensively in search of new species to introduce to the trade, and his talk will focus on design lessons from the wild. His bio states that he is "fun at parties and is a very nice person"—so, we can all look forward to enjoying the evening with him!

Logistics

TOG is located in Silverton, Oregon, roughly an hour south of the airport. There is no public transportation from the airport to the Garden; your choices are to rent a car or to arrange a ride through the Resort, which you can do by calling the front desk. You can also team up with other attendees and share a rental. We will provide lists of

attendees to anyone looking to share transport.

The meeting will run from Thursday late afternoon through Saturday night, so book your flights (or arrange your drive) accordingly. If you wish to come early, the Resort will honor our rate for Tuesday and Wednesday nights. We have booked the entire Resort for our meeting, which means that when the last room is reserved, we will cut off registration, which will be at roughly 200 attendees. It also means that we will truly have our own, private conehead retreat!

We have posted a link online on our website under "Events" to book your hotel room, as well as a link to book your meeting registration. NOTE: those attendees who have rented cars and are joining us on the post-meeting tour will be able to leave their vehicles at TOG.

The Post-Meeting Tour

The Post-Meeting Tour begins on Sunday morning, when we depart TOG and head south to the charming and extensive garden of Ken and Elena Jordan, high on a bluff over the Umpqua River in Roseburg. Ken and Elena, longtime ACS members, have carved out a magnificent garden on a wooded slope, adding the results of their woodworking, sculpture and

metalwork. We'll wander the garden and take in the magnificent views. From the Jordans' garden, we'll head a mile down the road to Melrose Vineyards, where we'll have lunch, and then to our night's lodging, Riverside Inn Resort in Grants Pass.

Grants Pass is a delightful, old timber-town nestled at the foot of the Siskiyou mountain range and along the banks of the Rogue River. The unique, ultramafic (serpentine) minerals present in the soil have forced plants to evolve in interesting ways in response to the curious chemistry. Much of the local flora is found nowhere else on Earth!

On Monday, we'll drive through the Siskiyou to visit Rough and Ready Creek State Park and Page Mountain Sno-park, stopping along the way to interpret trees and nature. Monday night's dinner is something special. We'll board a jet boat for a cruise upriver to our dinner spot. Fun and adventure will be had by all!

On Tuesday, we'll have an extensive visit to Forestfarm Nursery, one of the oldest and largest mail-order nurseries in the country. We'll head back to Silverton, stopping for lunch along the way, arriving at approximately 5 pm. At that point, you can pick up your rental car or your scheduled ride to the airport, or book yourself another night at TOG, where our conference rate will be honored. NOTE: Do not forget to reserve a room at TOG for Tuesday night, June 11, if you are not planning to depart Silverton until Wednesday.

Ways to familiarize yourself with our venues and visits:

All of the places on our itinerary have



Ken and Elena Jordan's Garden

websites, and most have Facebook pages, which generally have lots of photographs. If you go to our website, you will find a hotlink for each site, which will save you the trouble of looking up each spot individually.

Questions or comments:

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People, Places and One Remote Conifer

text and photography Tom Cox

I have long had a fascination with conifer trivia. Some examples are:

Country with most pine species, Mexico

Conifer most common in the Southern Hemisphere, *Podocarpus*

Conifer with widest circumference -- *Taxodium mucronatum* (*T. distichum* var. *mexicanum*)

El Árbol del Tule, Mexico.

Only pine occurring in the Southern Hemisphere, *Pinus merkusii*, Sumatra

It was in this vein that I began my search for the most remote, naturally occurring (*in situ*) conifer on earth. Surprisingly, I could find no mention in any reference material. After some research, I reached the conclusion that it might be the Azores juniper (*Juniperus brevifolia*). Native only to the Azores archipelago, *J. brevifolia* lies 800 nautical miles from the nearest non-island landmass (Portugal). Like other island endemics such as *Juniperus*

bermudiana (Bermuda) and *Juniperus cedrus* (Canary Islands and Madeira Island), *J. brevifolia* occurs nowhere else. While certainly there are conifers growing in more remote locations, none would be naturally occurring.

In March 2018, Evelyn and I embarked on a journey that would take us to two of the nine islands in the Azores. Our first stop was supposed to be Faial Island and the Faial Botanical Garden, where we had arranged a meeting

with the director of the Natural Park of Faial, Mr. João Melo. Unfortunately, due to bad weather, our plans had to be altered, and we were rerouted to Terceira Island and the main port of Praia da Vitoria. Mr. Melo had kindly arranged for us to be met by two individuals from their Environmental Forestry Department, who then drove us up into the mountains to see and photograph wild populations of *Juniperus brevifolia*.



Juniperus brevifolia as seen in the wild



Cryptomeria japonica along the roads

A portion of the drive was on restricted roads that led us into a cloud forest. Along the drive, it was interesting to observe the various plant communities at different elevations (altitudinal zonation), where we had the opportunity to see much of the native flora such as heather (*Erica azorica*), laurel (*Laurus azorica*) and holly (*Ilex perado* ssp. *azorica*). It was exhilarating to realize that we were traversing areas possibly never disturbed by man—22% of the island is protected, and they take that seriously.

We also saw glaring examples of how non-natives can outcompete the endemic flora. A prime example is ginger (*Hedychium gardeneranum*), which originates from the Himalayas. Another invasive is *Hydrangea macrophylla*, which at one time was used as a border in pastures, as cattle do not graze it. By far the most invasive here is *Pittosporum undulatum*, which originates on the east coast of Australia. It is slowly taking over much of the forestland. What really caught my eye was the heavily planted Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*). First planted in the 1960s, it was being used all over the island as a windbreak, timber, erosion-control, as an ornamental, and as a road marker. We were told that it had adapted well and does reproduce. From my vantage point, it was overused.

After an approximate 45-minute drive, we arrived at our first stand of *J. brevifolia*, situated on the slope of a steep mountain. The species is prettier than I had anticipated and obviously happy in its habitat. We were at approximately 2,600 feet (800 meters) in ¾-day sunlight. These specimens were around 6 feet (1.8 meters) with short, glaucous-green needles. As observed, the fruit was green, turning orange-red with a variable pink coating. The bark is a pleasing reddish color that peels in vertical strips on more mature trees. Given its provenance, I

would anticipate this species surviving a USDA Zone 8b. There are plants being successfully cultivated in Gainesville, Florida, at Dr. Jason Smith's University of Florida facility. While the species is listed as being vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), traveling with the Forestry staff, I got the sense that it is in no imminent danger, and the Forestry Service staff is serious about protecting it, as well as other island endemics.

On the return down the mountain, we visited the Serra de Santa Bárbara Interpretation Centre, where we were given a tour and briefing about the geology, ecology, flora and fauna of the island, provided by highly trained staff who spoke perfect English.

Our next stop was São Miguel Island and the capital city of Ponta Delgada. It is locally referred to as the *green island*. We were greeted by a most interesting individual, Mr. Joaquim Bensaude. Mr. Bensaude is a shareholder of a luxury line of hotels (Bensaude Hotels), including the Terra Nostra Garden Hotel, an Art Deco inspired boutique hotel, set alongside a thermal pool. Here, we would have the opportunity to enjoy an in-depth tour of two very fine gardens.

Our first garden was Jardim António Borges, which is located about a mile from the city center of Ponta Delgada. Upon arrival, we were joined by agronomist and *Camellia* expert, Mr. João Sampaio. He would accompany us throughout the remainder of the day, and his botanical knowledge and warm personality only added to our enjoyment. The garden was created between 1858 and 1861 by António Borges Medeiros, a wealthy businessman and prominent landowner, who was very interested in botany.

Entering the garden, I got a sense of the garden's history, as I noted huge specimens of many exotic conifers.



Evelyn Cox and massive trunk of *Araucaria heterophylla* at the Jardim António Borges garden.



Huge *Arocarpus falcatus* in Jardim António Borges



Massive trunk of *Afrocarpus falcatus*

Conifers such as *Agathis australis*, *Araucaria heterophylla*, *A. columnaris*, and *Afrocarpus falcatus* are as large as I've ever seen. Another of the garden's noble trees is the Indian rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*) with its wide-spreading, fluted trunk. This is a well laid out and easy to walk, free, public garden, now owned by the city. Reminiscent of the Buenos Aires Botanical Garden in Argentina, it's a great place to relax.

It was then on to the main event of the day. After an approximate 45-minute drive to the city of Furnas, we arrived at Terra Nostra Gardens. Upon our arrival at Terra Nostra, we were greeted by the head gardener's daughter and agricultural engineer, Carina Costa, who chauffeured us around in a golf cart. This was a rainy and cool day, but Carina's warm personality and knowledge of each plant made the visit even more special. These gardens, containing numerous ancient trees, date back to 1775. In the 1930's, Mr.

Bensaude's grandfather acquired the property and continued to add to the collection. Containing over 3,000 trees and shrubs, Terra Nostra Gardens (www.parqueterranostra.com) is, without doubt, one of the finest gardens we have ever visited in the world. It succeeds in merging the best in garden design with a plethora of horticulturally interesting plants. Significant among these is a world-class collection of camellias, cycads, azaleas, rhododendrons, a fern garden, and the Ginkgo Avenue, where numerous mature specimens line both sides of an avenue. The Ginkgo Avenue is flanked by 47 majestic ginkgo trees and extends 886 feet (270 meters). What a sight this must be in autumn.

Mature conifers are seen throughout the garden, including *Sequoia*, *Cunninghamia*, *Cryptomeria*, *Metasequoia*, *Araucaria*, *Taxodium*, and two rare 6-foot (1.8-meter) Wollemi pines (*Wollemia nobilis*). Accenting all of this are several thermal streams that meander throughout the property, terminating in a thermal pool where hotel guests were luxuriating. At the conclusion, Mr. Bensaude and Mr. Sampaio hosted us for a splendid lunch in the hotel, where more talk of plants and travels too quickly filled the time. We committed to sending seed of the Mexican species of bald cypress (*Taxodium mucronatum*, a.k.a. *T. distichum* var. *mexicanum*), as it is not in their collection. These trees should flourish in this zone.

Before saying goodbye, we toured the island and stopped to photograph Europe's only working tea plantation. Given my interest in *J. brevifolia*, they drove us to see a specimen that is over 150 years old, planted at the entrance to a golf course. This was as good as it gets for a perfect day – great food, gracious hosts, and spectacular gardens. If your travels ever take you to the Azores, Terra Nostra and Jardim

António Borges are must-sees.

Our last horticultural stop was to the southern coast of Spain and the beautiful city of Malaga. Our hosts for the day were Mr. and Mrs. José Alba and their son Alejandro. Offering the same warm hospitality received from our previous hosts in the Azores, these were extremely gracious people who shared our passion for plants. It also reminded me of our second visit to Spain, when we were hosted by (at that time) the only two ACS members in Spain, Mr. and Mrs. Luis Basté and Mr. and Mrs. Josep Vilaseca. Thanks to our common love of conifers, we are now good friends with these two ACS member families and are looking for them to visit us this year.

After a drive of about an hour, we arrived at the Albas's summer estate in the mountains. Along the way, we learned that they are civil engineers and are working on a proposal to build the fourth longest tunnel in the world, in Colombia. It was fascinating to learn that a portion of the road and tunnels that we were traversing were designed by the family business. Upon arrival, we were invited inside and treated to an array of Spanish cheeses, ham, fruit and wine.

Covering 21 acres (8.5 hectares), Jardín Del Rosario (www.jardindelrosario.com) appears to be out of a movie set. The gently rolling hills are flanked by large, tree-covered mountains. As one enters through the large iron gate, there are numerous olive and cherry orchards. Nestled among them is a spectacular garden of over 5,000 taxon and some 22,000 different plants. From a conifer perspective, their most noteworthy collection is filled with many species of pines from around the world, such as the Chinese red pine (*Pinus tabulaeformis*). Other conifers of note include *Cupressus*, *Thuja*, *Cryptomeria*, *Juniperus*, and numerous others. Comparatively speaking, this is still a



Estate of Mr. Jose Alba. Note the large *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian cypress)

young garden that will only get better as time goes on, and one could not ask for a better setting. It was clear to see that Mr. Alba is a connoisseur of rare plants, as well as a keen gardener.

At the conclusion, the entire family drove us to the white hillside village of Mijas, where they escorted Evelyn on a walking tour of the small village. This was followed by lunch at a chic restaurant along the Costa del Sol. If you are planning to be in the region, you may email jdr@jardindelrosario.com to coordinate a visit to the garden.

We wish to thank each of the individuals referenced in this article for their hospitality and assistance in making this visit possible.

Footnote: In preparation for this trip I had several personal communications

with the director of the botanical garden on Faial Island, Azores. In our correspondence, he had informed me of a relic population of *Taxus baccata*, which had been declared extinct. Apparently, there are five plants remaining on Pico Island, from what was once widespread. Since we did not have the opportunity to visit Pico Island to see an *in situ* specimen, I am only including a brief mention. Quoting from *Biodiversity and Conservation*, June 2010, Volume 19, Issue 6:

“The leaves of the Azorean provenance were smaller than those of all other *Taxus baccata* described in literature; moreover, they have a higher stomata density and more numerous stomata rows. These features are all *primitive*, according to suggested morphological, evolutionary trends. We assume that

sequence analysis of the Azorean population represents a different evolutionary line within *Taxus*. This suggests a more direct derivation from ancestors than provenances from Mediterranean and European regions. These individuals may be the last survivors of an ancient lineage, preserved in the Azores as part of the Macaronesian flora.”

Tom Cox is past president of the American Conifer Society and the founder and owner of Cox Arboretum and Gardens in Canton, Georgia, where he focuses on evaluating, selecting, and displaying plants from around the world that are hardy in USDA Zone 7b. He is also concerned with preserving critically endangered plants.

Ladies and Gentleman, Start Your Bonsai

text and photography Jack Christiansen

I've been asked many times by newcomers to bonsai, "how does one start shaping or styling one's first tree?" Putting wire on a tree and bending it to try and make it interesting can be rather intimidating for beginners. It is best to have a set of clear ideas going into the tree's development.

With professional bonsai, styling a tree can get very complicated. The Japanese, over time, have developed many rules, or standards, that they felt were important. Everything has been judged according to those principles. Today, those rules are no longer the only standard, and bonsai is certainly more flexible for the hobbyist.

Many trees in nature give us great ideas for how we would like to style our bonsai. You chose a tree because it speaks to you in some fashion, or maybe you saw a tree in nature and would like to duplicate it in miniature. That's why I recommend that once you have your tree, study its structure, determine its strengths and weaknesses. Often, it is best to do this over a period of time, going back and forth to it, to gain new perspectives. Once you have a basic idea, sketch a few drawings to help you form ideas for how you would like to proceed.

Not all bonsai are stylized after trees in nature. In fact, many professional bonsai trees today take on bizarre forms, in which the artist expresses a unique style. Then there are trees that already have a shape or structure, crying out to be styled in just a certain way. You need to be attuned to all of these opportunities.

Your first tree: observe and envision

Long smooth curves and movements on trees can be very appealing to the viewer's eye. Strong structural movements can reflect extreme weather conditions that a tree might endure in its natural environment.

Observing nature provides many clues. For instance, a maple (*Acer palmatum*) will never have deadwood features like a juniper or a pine would have.

Keep in mind that your own self-expression and vision will guide what your tree eventually becomes. You don't need to start with a bristlecone pine with all its strong features and dead wood. So long as it satisfies your own expectations, you have succeeded.

Your first tools: where to get started

There are many companies that offer bonsai supplies online. Local nurseries may offer bonsai starter kits. There may be bonsai clubs in your area that can refer you to preferred suppliers. Bonsai tools come in various prices, but can be more expensive than hardware tools. An inexpensive set of three tools is all one really needs to get started. Wire cutters, pruning scissors, and a concave branch cutter will handle most of your bonsai requirements.

Once you have a plan for styling and the basic materials for your tree's development, it's time to cut back lengthy branches and begin the wiring process.

First, cut away unwanted branches around the trunk and any dead or weak branches that clutter your pathway. Keep in mind that, in order to apply the wire to the branches and trunk, there must be a clear path so that you can systematically wrap the wire.

Using wire allows us to train, shape, style, and, ultimately, affords us the artistic ability to depict movement and stability.

Bonsai wire comes in two types, copper and aluminum. Annealed copper wire is used for most conifers, and aluminum wire is used for deciduous trees. If you can get only one type, either will work.

Wire comes in rolls of various diameters.



A great example of a nice little pine that has never been wired. *Pinus parviflora* 'Regenhold Broom'



Juniperus chinensis 'Shimpaku kishu' never wired and right out of a 4-inch pot

Make sure that you choose wire large enough in diameter to have the strength to hold the bends you want in the branches to be wired. Having three rolls of various diameters will take care of most of your needs.

It is necessary to cut the wire at least one-third longer than the length of the surface to be wired. Start by sticking one end of the wire down into the soil



Bonsai tools and wire

next to the trunk line, pushing it into the soil at the angle you'll be spiraling the trunk. Two inches is usually enough to secure the wire into the soil. Then start wrapping the wire around the trunk at about a 45° angle, bypassing the branches and spacing the wire evenly all the way up the trunk.

Remember, care is needed when applying wire to the surface of your tree. Don't strangle the branch with the wire, but also don't loop the wire too loosely either. Simply wrap it carefully onto the tree's surface, looping it around side branches at about a 45° angle.

When wiring your branches, always connect two branches at a time; one

branch will be a support for the other branch after coming off the trunk line. It is helpful to practice this on a dead branch before you tackle your bonsai. I highly recommend YouTube videos such as *How To Bonsai - Basic Wiring Technique*, or for a more advanced demonstration, *Bonsai Detail Wiring* by Ryan Neil, in order to understand the proper way to wire a tree. Learning to wire the entire tree properly is an art in itself. The more you practice, the more comfortable you'll be with the procedure, and your tree will be happier for it.

Once you have wired the needed parts of the tree, it is time to start bending and positioning the branches into the desired locations. Take care as tree branches can be brittle, especially at certain times of the year. Conifers can be more forgiving and flexible than hardwoods, but you'll need to hold the trunk with one hand and gently apply pressure to the branch with the other. If you hear any cracking, release the pressure, gently and gradually flexing the branch back and forth to increase flexibility. Start bending again, but go slowly and carefully. If the cambium layer of the branch is exposed due to cracking, it will have to be sealed.

A common beginner mistake is to bend wired branches over and over again until the vascular system is impaired. This leaves the branch lifeless, and removal of the dead branch will create an open space in that area of the tree. This is a good reason to have a firm plan for positioning and styling before bending.

It is important to check periodically that the wire isn't cutting into the branches, as spring and summer growth causes branch expansion. If necessary, cut off the old wire and rewire to prevent unwanted marks.

Your first bonsai: keep it simple

When I started looking for my first bonsai plant, I had no idea of the various strengths or weaknesses of the many trees. Going to a nursery and choosing just any plant was my demise. I now know some conifers are



Wiring of the trunk at 45° angle



Wire inserted 2" into the soil

temperamental and others are more forgiving.

For your first bonsai, choose a juniper, pine or cedar which are all good selections and which will withstand the type of treatment your plant will undergo. If your climate zone permits, you may want to try a spruce or a larch, as they make wonderful bonsai also.



This is an example of a shape that can be achieved over years



Close up of twists and contortions achieved by wiring

The key criterion for a plant that is bonsai-adaptable is the leaf or needle size. The larger the leaf or needle size of a plant, the larger a bonsai tree must be, in order to achieve a good size relationship.

Once you are satisfied with the wiring and positioning of the trunk and branches, you should water your tree and set it aside in a protected and shaded area of your yard. Your plant has undergone unusual treatment and needs to be left alone to recover its vigor. Gradually bring it back into full sun when the weather is not overly hot. You can then begin fertilizing the tree, making sure the plant is now putting on new growth. It usually requires two to three months after being wired and cut back until you can start making adjustments to the initial styling. Usually, I won't put a tree in a small bonsai-type pot until it has been styled over a period of several years. A large container will allow your plant to attain better growth and trunk size more rapidly. Once you are satisfied with the

size, it is then ready for a nice bonsai container. Repotting should be done only when the plant has gone into a dormant state, in late fall, winter, or early spring.

All bonsai trees are wired into position within the container. This anchors the tree in place and protects the small feeding roots of the plant when you are working on the tree and manipulating it. A good training pot has ample drainage holes that allow water to flow freely through the soil and out the bottom. Again, I suggest using YouTube for good examples of how to wire a tree into place within your pot.

If developing bonsai trees becomes your passion, and you truly enjoy it, you will find that, in time, you'll have many trees in your collection. With an outdoor conifer garden, there is a lot of down time, with nothing to do but watch it grow. With a bonsai collection to care for, you'll have a constant program of tending your trees that will keep you busy throughout the year.



Thuja occidentalis 'IslPrim' Primo® wired for five years

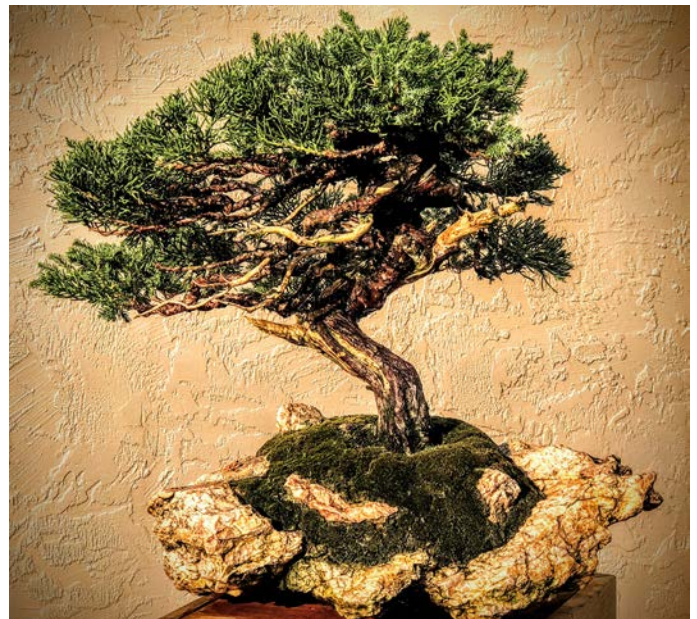


A rock-planted juniper that is wind-influenced with dead wood features. *Juniperus chinensis* 'San Jose'

Every morning, I spend a couple of relaxing hours outside, working on my bonsai trees. This is the most cherished time of day for me, working on my trees and taking care of their needs. I'm also the president of our bonsai club here in San Jose, California. Many of my closest friends are club members. Weekly, we attend workshops together and exchange information about our various experiences doing bonsai. My time outside in the environment of my conifer garden, along with having a large collection of bonsai trees, has brought me closer to nature and the joys of life. I hope that you will experience this same joy with bonsai.

I plan to share more articles that will take you even further with this wonderful art form.

Jack is an ACS member, an avid bonsai-enthusiast and bonsai-creator. His garden is an excellent example of creative design and the integration of bonsai into the garden. His knowledge and photographic skills are well-known and widely appreciated. He lives in San Jose, California. Over the years, Jack has been a valued contributor to the CQ.



Multi-trunk juniper styled as a wind-swept tree. *Juniperus chinensis* 'Shimpaku kishu'

Gone With The Wind....

text and photography Dr. Ronald J. Elardo

...the winter West Wind that is, and the Sun

In the winter issue of **CONIFERQUARTERLY** (Volume 35 Number 1), I described to you my interest in conifers that push the zonal envelope. As we are all well aware, nurseries and Big-box stores sell conifers that may not make it in our specific USDA Zones. I'm here to report that I'm 2 wins of 6 attempts in the box score of failure; maybe even as low as 1 ½ for 6 ½. The USDA Zone for Southeast Michigan, where my garden grows, is 6a.

So—much *Went with the Wind*.

Over the past 4 years, I have installed the following conifers:

- Cupressus x leylandii* 'Irish Eyes'
- Pinus thunbergii* 'Thunderhead' (two)
- Cedrus deodara* 'Bush's Electra'
- Cedrus libani* var. *stenacoma*
- Cupressus glabra* 'Blue Ice'
- Sciadopitys verticillata* sp.
- Sciadopitys verticillata* 'Sternschnuppe'

— and potted up one *Dacrydium cupressinum*

Between Christmas and New Year's 2017-2018, a series of polar vortexes swept down upon Michigan from the plains of Canada and the North Central US. Temperatures dropped into the negative teens during the day, to even colder temps during the nighttime hours. I became a thermometer and weather junkie, watching the weather on my iPhone and TV, hoping for the best.

Ethan Johnson (ACS past president) warned me about rescuing 'Irish Eyes' from the local Big-box store four years ago and told me about its incompatibility with my Zone. Sara Malone (ACS Website Editor and Western Region President) said about



Post-winter 'Irish Eyes'



'Sternschnuppe' burned



Semi-recovered 'Irish Eyes'



Partially burned umbrella pine

another conifer: "I didn't know you could raise *Cedrus deodara* in Michigan." Well, she was right. I couldn't. Two prophetic warnings that came true.

I checked on all my zone-tender conifers daily as the vortexes pumped

frigid air and blistering sunlight down onto my garden. All of the zone-tender conifers remained vibrant green, though. I thought they were out of the woods. Pardon the pun! Then came the spring. Boom! In April, 'Irish Eyes' began to brown severely.



'Bush's Electra' moribund



Dacrydium cupressinum in happier times



'Blue Ice' before its final execution

This past, fourth winter would prove to be a death-knell for 'Irish Eyes', or so I thought. I really believed I would have to remove the tree. However, as warmer days grew in number, it started to green up again (something it never had to do in the previous three years). The



Burned and dying *Cedrus libani* var. *stenacoma*

tree had gained a reprieve. I pruned out the brown, mostly on dead, young tips, although I also had to prune interior, brown branches. It sprouted new growth. That was one home run!

I'm counting my two Japanese umbrella

pinus in this report as damaged because they were not looking well. They were a vibrant green throughout the winter. I worried about them as they are small and close to the ground, where, as we all know, the coldest of the cold air settles. I didn't know if the winter cold would weaken them, but the severe drought we experienced all of this past July 2018 in Michigan finished one of them off. Batting average .500!

I thought *protective planting*, a theory I concocted by planting zone-stretching conifers *among* other, larger conifers, would shelter the more tender conifers. **Forget it!** The theory doesn't hold water. All of the so-called *protected conifers* could not withstand the blistering sun and wind. They crashed in the cold of the vortexes. 0 for 2! 'Bush's Electra' was the first to die. Remember that Sara Malone questioned my planting this species in my neck of the woods! Spring did not even bring a glimmer of green. Every single branch and branchlet were fried to a crisp by the cold and desiccation. In a vain hope to find life amid the dried-out branches, all I discovered was that the tree was burned to its core. "To the burn pile with you too!" Another strike out! Batting average negative!

The fate of *Cedrus libani* was no different, a second victim of *gone with the wind*. The local nurseryman, who insisted it would grow in my garden and who sold me the tree, had one in his inventory. It suffered the same fate as mine. It was pathetic in appearance and became garbage.

Note: The cedar of Lebanon in The Harper Collection at Hidden Lake Gardens has survived, winter after winter.

You may recall that I received a *Dacrydium cupressinum* from a western grower. I intended to raise it as an



Pinus thunbergii, tenuous at best

indoor plant in my sunroom. I read all I could about the tree. I fawned over that tree. I monitored its soil water level. I misted it to maintain optimal humidity. By February 2018, it was turning gray, piece by piece. Its branches became brittle, its needles mean. I didn't take a picture of it. I was depressed and didn't want a memento of any kind. I suffered through destroying it while getting needles like cactus barbs stuck in my fingers. Not being able to take it anymore, I just dumped the whole remaining thing into a garbage bag. Done! Good riddance to bad tidings! \$160 for the tree and \$100 for shipping, plus pain and suffering. All down the drain!

Cupressus glabra 'Blue Ice' met a similar fate, too. Every branch had turned brown except for the top few of the tree. I'm not into Q-tip-conifers. I chain-sawed it and dragged it to the burn pile. Not counting my batting average anymore.

My last two experiments are 'Thunderhead'. I didn't consider them to be in danger. Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! The two black pines had endured three years in the ground. Winter 2018-2019 was the fourth for them, and their Waterloo. From the photos of them you can see the result of the vortices and my failed theory of *protective planting*.

I have cleaned out the brown needles and am banking on the candles to signal nice-looking trees once again. I am not a patient man. They may too taste my chain saw if they fail to look good after the winter of 2018-2019.

It may be enticing to answer the call of the *Addicted Conifer Syndrome*, but try to resist because the moral of the story is: Don't listen! It's just your Shadow calling you to make a huge, expensive and a heart-breaking *mistake*. Like hearing the serpent in the Garden of Eden, resist the urge to sin. You'll hate yourself if you don't and you'll have to call your local fire department for a

burn permit.

Or, if you have to give into temptation, at least try and resist for the time being, or as long as you can. After all, "tomorrow is another day."

>>>***Nota bene***—when submitting photography for the CQ, please make the photos larger than 300 dpi or 1 MB in resolution.<<<

The Conifer ID Contest winner for the tree in the Fall CQ is Alex Ruchelman, Cream Ridge, New Jersey. The correct ID was: *Abies nordmanniana* 'Golden Spreader'. Congratulations Alex.

Remember the chilgoza (Afghan) pine, *Pinus gerardiana* (story in the Fall 2018 CQ, Vol. 35, No. 4, p. 15), which Sara Malone won in the live auction in Raleigh, NC, last summer?



Sara and her tree. Photo by Tracy Blevins

Well — here it is arriving at the Circle Oak Ranch in Petaluma, CA. Photos by Sara Malone



At last arrived



Being offloaded



Resting in its crate



In line for planting

Gardens of the Northeast Region 2019 Meeting

text John Waskiewicz photography John O'Brien

The ACS Northeast Region 2019 Meeting will take place next September 20-22 and will feature visits to three unique gardens in Connecticut's beautiful Farmington River Valley. Our group will board buses and travel through both suburban and rural settings on the way to the gardens. There will be local champion trees pointed out along the way! Here are descriptions of each venue.

Although Chrissie and John D'Esopo bought their house in Avon, CT, 34 years ago, they discovered the joys of conifers only over the last seven to ten years. The 3-acre property, of which 2 ½ acres are cultivated, was originally covered with mixed woodland. Upon contracting *Addicted Conifer Syndrome*, the couple found it necessary to clear away very large numbers of trees, resulting in a blank slate. One ancient *Acer saccharum* (sugar maple) remains next to the pristine 1780's residence, however. The flat, lower garden wraps around the house, driveway, and carriage house. Beyond this, the upper garden occupies a steep slope, crisscrossed with stepping stones and grassy paths.

At first glance, it is immediately evident that this Zone 6a garden is a labor of love. Chrissie's guiding light is the intersection of nature and art. She meticulously shapes and prunes many of the specimens; everything is in its proper place, and there isn't a weed to be seen. The lower part of the garden has rather fertile soil, while the rear slope contains clay. Chrissie neither amends the soil when planting, nor fertilizes. Either a plant is strong enough to make it (and most do), or else it is not worth growing.

The art of topiary is in full force here in the D'Esopo Garden. Examples include: spiral-form *Picea glauca* var. *albertiana* 'Conica' (dwarf Alberta spruce), cones of *Thuja occidentalis* 'Jantar' (golden

emerald arborvitae), multiple pom-pom *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots pine), a weeping *Larix decidua* 'Pendula' (weeping larch), trained into an elephant, and a whole circular garden of octopi, sculpted from *Juniperus procumbens* on standards (Japanese garden juniper). Chrissie takes special pride and devotes countless hours into ensuring that these specimens look neat and crisp.

In pleasing contrast to the many sculpted and pyramidal conifers in this garden are weeping conifers, the greatest assortment of which are multiple cultivars of *Cupressus nootkatensis* (Alaska cypress). A monster-sized *C. n.* 'Glauc Pendula' dominates the lower garden, while a specimen of *C. n.* 'Sparkling Arrow' glistens on the slope. Elsewhere on the slope garden, a wooden trellis/moongate (a great vantage point, from which to gaze at the wonders below) is flanked by twin *Picea omorika* 'Berliner's Weeper' (weeping cultivar of Serbian spruce). Several weeping cultivars of *Picea abies* (Norway spruce) are peppered throughout the garden, and a rather tall, solitary *Picea glauca* 'Pendula' (weeping white spruce), stands like a sentinel in the lower garden.

Chrissie enjoys container-gardening, as well. Conifers in large tubs surround the house, and lush windowboxes grace the front gable-end of the house. During warmer parts of the year, many dozens of planters, full to overflowing with petunias and other vibrant annuals, expand the color palette of the garden beyond its coniferous range of blues, greens, and golds. Our September visit will find the entire garden in its colorful, sculptural, and artistic glory. There is something here to please anyone!

Sandy Magyar and her late husband purchased the 3+ acre property in 1975, and the gardens were begun

in earnest about two years later. While someone comes in nowadays to mow lawns, edge planting beds, or fell trees, as necessary, Sandy does the rest of the work on her own. She meticulously labels plants, showing not only the name, but also the year of acquisition and the plant's source. She has a particular eye for placement and arrangement, and edits a mixed planting if something becomes overgrown, carefully pondering where a specimen should be relocated. When it comes to conifers, Sandy practices rather discreet pruning, when and if needed, preferring instead the forms that nature intends. Weeds cannot escape her gaze and, consequently, are nowhere to be seen. A hands-on gardener, she even spreads mulch.

It is safe to say that Sandy qualifies as a collector. Many of her prized specimens have been acquired from tailgate sales, for which ACS meetings are famous. She has a close, working relationship with Connecticut nurserymen, including our own John O'Brien. They and she search far and wide for the exact cultivars she needs. Each conifer



Chrissie and John D'Esopo Garden, Avon, CT

in her collection has a particular provenance, a story behind it, a special meaning. Her garden is a garden of memories.

Located in a rural neighborhood, Sandy's property is separated from the sparsely traveled country road by a classic New England fieldstone wall, the weathered stones mellowed by lichen and moss, and punctuated here and there by aged examples of *Acer saccharum* (sugar maple). A rather husky *Acer griseum* (paperbark maple), dating from 1994, guards the driveway's entrance. Occupying a sloping site below the stone wall is Sandy's largest concentration of conifers, a mass-planting extending along a great arc. A towering specimen of *Sciadopitys verticillata* (Japanese umbrella pine) from 1985, easily 35-foot tall, dominates this bed. The next largest behemoth is a 23-year old *Picea abies* 'Acrocona' (red cone Norway spruce), full, lush, and dripping with cones. Weeping conifers are quite at home in this section of the garden.

Because of the slope, specimens are viewed somewhat from below, exaggerating their pendulous nature. *Cupressus nootkatensis* 'Green Arrow' and *C.n.* 'Sparkling Arrow' (cultivars of Nootka cypress), both have a home here. The winning combination of texture, color, and form is demonstrated to its fullest extent. One trio on display is the sculptural *Juniperus chinensis* 'Shimpaku' (shimpaku juniper), the frosted, curled needles of *Abies koreana* 'Horstmann's Silberlocke' (cultivar of Korean fir), and the tufted, short-needled *Pinus parviflora* 'Adcock's Dwarf' (cultivar of Japanese white pine). Going with the theme that every plant has a story, Sandy has left in place a crushed specimen of *Abies concolor* 'Piggelmee' (piggelmee white fir). If one wonders why the plant appears flattened, it's because a bear sat on it!

The driveway slopes down to the residence. Acting as a buffer between the pavement and the pathway to the door is a layered planting of

Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Filicoides' (threadleaf hinoki cypress), a billowy *Tsuga canadensis* 'Sargentii' (Sargent's weeping Canadian hemlock), and the gracefully drooping *Pinus strobus* 'Pendula' (weeping white pine). Sandy collects alpinines, as well; further evidence of her meticulous mindset. A series of raised beds and troughs occupy a level stretch of ground just beyond the house and driveway.

North of her residence in mixed woodland, Sandy indulges in shade perennials, rhododendrons, and even more cultivars of *Tsuga canadensis* (Canadian hemlock). Fellow

connoisseurs will notice a particularly fine *Stewartia pseudocamellia* (Japanese *Stewartia*) with its heart-achingly, beautiful, exfoliating bark. Skirting the property line on its north and west sides is a babbling brook, partway along which is a spring-fed catch-pond.

At the bottom of Sandy's garden is a beautiful *Cupressus nootkatensis* 'Pendula' (weeping Alaska cypress), inadvertently limbed up by marauding deer, but otherwise rather dense. In the center of everything is a broad expanse of verdant lawn, where ACS attendees will relax under a tent and savor a catered lunch. A mixed deciduous/



Magyar Garden, New Hartford, CT



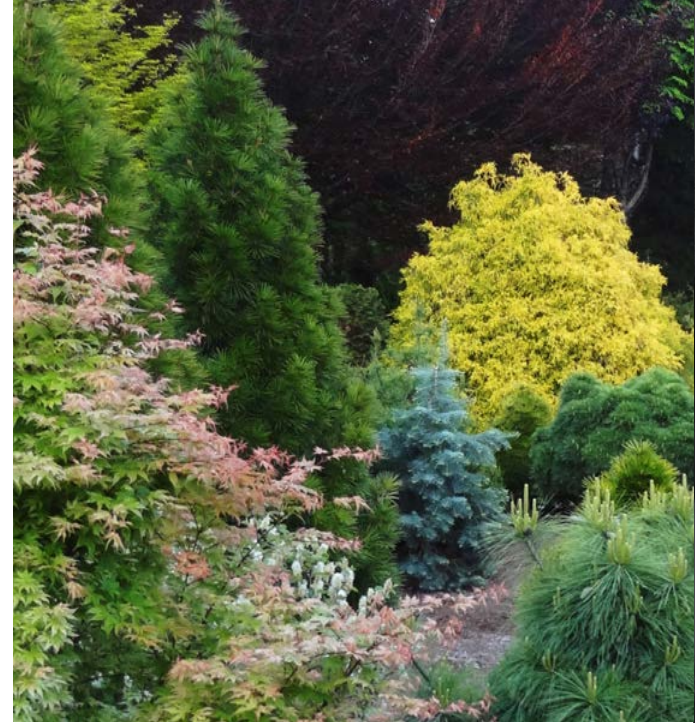
D'Esopo Garden, Avon, CT



Magyar Garden, New Hartford, CT



D'Esopo Garden, Avon, CT



A blast of color in John O'Brien's display beds, featuring *Abies concolor* 'Blue Cloak' (a cultivar of white fir), *Pinus strobus* 'Niagara Falls' and 'Horsford' (cultivars of white pine), and a monstrous 40-year-old *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera Aurea Nana' (dwarf, golden threadleaf Sawara cypress)

A tapestry of texture, form, and color at O'Brien Nursery

coniferous woodland provides a naturalistic backdrop, and the gentle sounds of flowing water ensure that tranquility reigns supreme!

Our third and final destination will be the nursery and garden of charismatic plantsman extraordinaire, John D. O'Brien. He has been an active ACS member for about 25 years, is well-known and respected in the nursery trade, and can easily count many hundreds of friends in this Society (and others) from all over the country. John bought the 11-acre property in 1998, and it contained nothing more than the house and barn. He immediately began moving plants over from his previous property, where he had spent 14 years. Currently 6 to 7 acres are under cultivation.

This Zone 6a garden serves a triple purpose. Not only is the garden a way to house and display an important collection, and to provide scionwood and cuttings for propagation, but it also serves to inspire and educate customers of the nursery. While selecting a young containerized *Sciadopitys verticillata* (Japanese umbrella pine) for instance, one may walk to the nearby display beds and see what that particular cultivar looks like as an older specimen. One special

corner of the garden features two such cultivars side by side, *S. v.* 'Golden Parasol' and 'Jeddeloh Compact', both pleasantly overwhelming through their sheer size. They are frequent subjects for photography by garden visitors.

As a longtime ACS member, John has brought home goodies from silent and live auctions and tailgate sales, from ACS meetings. In addition, unique and irreplaceable portions of his conifer collection originate from the late, great Dennis Dodge of Bethlehem Nursery. Acquisitions from legendary names such as Vermeulen, Okken, Waxman, Williams, Jaynes, Gulden, Verkade, Perran, and Stupka are also represented.

The display beds covering the entire front of the property slope down gently from street level to the residence and dwarf the grassy paths surrounding them. Chock-full of choice cultivars of *Abies*, *Chamaecyparis*, *Picea*, *Pinus*, *Sciadopitys*, *Taxus*, and *Tsuga*, the beds are interspersed with complimentary genera such as *Acer*, *Daphne*, *Ginkgo*, *Franklinia*, and *Stewartia*. Behind the residence and barn, high shade from light woodland provides display areas for John's many cultivars of *Hosta* on offer, for which he is well-known. A great selection of woodland perennials

and spring ephemerals are available, as well. From here, the property slopes down significantly. The shade is somewhat denser, and fine specimens of rhododendrons enliven the display beds. At the bottom of the slope, a long, picturesque pond (over which one may cross by wooden footbridge) acts as a mirror for the plant collection along its perimeter. Passing waterfowl are known to stop here, adding to the magic of the place. Beyond the treeline, a grassy field opens out, scattered through which are lengthy holding beds. Somewhat larger conifers are growing here and can be custom-dug for sale.

On the day of our visit, ACS members will enjoy following serpentine footpaths through sunny borders and cool woodland. Around every turn, we will discover an exciting new vista and plenty of inspiration. In addition to the gardens, O'Brien Nursery is a shopper's paradise, a chance to indulge in the rare and the beautiful. Who can resist such temptations?

John Waskiewicz has been an ACS member for several years and is a manager and propagator at Wanczyk Nursery in Hadley, MA.

Solicitation of Nominations for the ACS Merit Awards

text Dennis Groh

For the last two decades, Don Howse or Kathleen Pottratz served as Chairs of the ACS Merit Awards Committee. They both did a great job managing the important responsibility of recognizing those individuals who had made significant contributions to either the Society or the development of conifers. All of us thank both of you for your service!

I was asked to serve as the Chair of the Committee until the summer Board of Directors meeting in 2020, and I have accepted the position. One of my key responsibilities during the next year and a half will be to seek an ACS member to take my place.

In our nonprofit organization, our appreciation of members who make significant contributions to our efforts is a thank you or a special recognition, both of which are embodied in the Merit Awards. I believe it is important to take the time and make the effort to recognize those individuals who have done something worthy in the furthering of our mission. This means submitting a written (preferably e-mail) nomination for the person you believe we should recognize.

I encourage each of you to review the ACS website, which lists the requirements for the two ACS Merit Awards and also the list of the past winners.

Next, please reflect on those members you know, who have not already been recognized, but who meet the Merit Award requirements. I ask that you take the time to write and send your nominations to me.

I recently reviewed the list of past award winners. I was

saddened to see just how many of them are no longer with us. I then wondered how many other deserving individuals had passed away without even being nominated? Let's all try to minimize any such missed opportunities in the future by recognizing those members today!

Also, remember that the nomination process is cumulative. If an individual is nominated and is not selected in the annual vote by prior Merit Award Winners, their nomination remains in the pool. They will be included for consideration in future votes, along with any new nominations. Therefore, you only have to submit a formal nomination once per person, not every year.

I was an active Merit Award nominator in the past, but as the current ACS Merit Awards Chair, I can no longer submit any nominations. That responsibility now falls to every ACS member (in other words, YOU!).

Nominations for the annual Merit Awards will close this coming March 31st. Voting by past Award winners, on all the nominations, will close April 30th. Winners will be announced at the ACS National Meeting and published in *CONIFERQUARTERLY* and on the ACS website.

Thank you, and I look forward to accepting your nominations at dgroh8380mi@wowway.com.

Interested in helping to recognize members who make a difference? Talk to me about succeeding me as Awards Chair in 2020.

The Humboldt-Huggers Redwood Pruning Aesthetic

text and photography Leah Alcyon

Coneheads love to use aesthetic pruning techniques to showcase their conifers to maximum effect and beauty. Certified aesthetic pruners may be employed to visit a garden and bring out the best in any woody plant that is not up to snuff. The ACS works closely with the Aesthetic Pruners Association, and, for those of you who are not familiar with this wonderful approach to conifer maintenance and enhancement, we encourage you to attend the ACS National Meeting in Silverton, Oregon, in June 2019, where we will have demonstrations by highly skilled professionals.

As with any art form, aesthetic pruning has a range of styles, and these styles run the gamut from delighting the masses to tickling merely the fancy of a few. I have recently relocated to my childhood home of Humboldt County, California, where the locals practice their own, highly distinctive interpretation of aesthetic pruning that I call *Humboldt-Huggers*, or HH. HH is so named due to the narrow geographic range of the art: Humboldt County, CA. Even more specifically, the HH aesthetic is centered in the city of Arcata, the epicenter of tree-hugging in America. HH is only practiced on the *Sequoia sempervirens*, or coast redwood tree, large, native stands of which are found in abundance in this area.

One might wonder why a redwood tree would need to be pruned at all. These trees are hearty pillars of nature's engineering and, together, create magical forests. The second growth in the Arcata Community Forest, last logged extensively in the 1950s, is filled with robust trees towering 80+ feet. The redwood tree's *raison d'être* is to be the tallest it can be, to send roots horizontally as far as possible (preferably into water and sewer systems) and to sprout copiously from its stump.



People, who struggle to observe nature closely, miss the 15-foot diameter stumps, which dot the forest floor. Gazing upwards, observers are also astounded by the ascending new trunks as they disappear into the fog. The fog is one of the marvels of this area; impenetrable, persistent, and depressing, yet vital to the natural ecology of the redwood. Most people love the redwood forests, but the trees become a problem for those who decide to build houses in the forest and then wonder why their gardens don't grow. Herein lies the birth of the *HH-aesthetic*; the need to resolve the conflict between loving redwoods and wanting to have sun. Follow the descriptions below to see the pruning styles that are used to marry these seemingly opposing desires.

The Klub Kut

Another name for this style is the *Titus Andronicus* cut: essentially the gruesome and brutal removal of



everything that makes a tree a tree, until the tragedy ends because you are sick to your stomach. (Refer to Shakespeare's play of the same name if you want more gory detail.) Mission accomplished, and, like Shakespeare, it's art! But this cut is just as perfectly named *Klub Kut*. It makes no sense when the perpetrators are tree-huggers, but as one Klub Member stated: "I love redwoods, and this *Kut* looks so *Kute!*"

What is left behind grows into a delightful pipe cleaner with a fluffy top, according to the aficionados of this cut. Personally, I would rather see the tree removed completely, as Demetrius and Chiron removed Lavinia's body parts, but, apparently, I am in the minority. Let us continue.

Above on the left is a recently butchered tree, topped and stripped of all the branches. On the right is the tree a year after pruning, with the lateral sprouts turning the pole into a tight,



The Cat O'Nine

bushy shrub.

The Cat O'Nine Cut

Redwoods have a base that can support several trunks. When there are more than three trunks in a group which are cut to the same height, this is *The Cat O'Nine Cut*. The lower branches can be removed, or they can be left behind, depending on the budget of the homeowner. Perhaps the branches are weapons that supply the neighborhood arsenal?

The Greek Column Cut

Those landowners, whose community restrictions prohibit the removal or dismemberment of redwoods, can always select *The Greek Column Cut*. This cut simply strips all lower branches of the tree up as high as the pruner is brave enough to climb, or, as his pole saw will reach. The cut's name nods to the grandiose trunks left behind that

remind us of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, and other classical buildings. Or, maybe, they just remind us that they live in a dark forest.

I have learned a lot about aesthetic pruning from watching demos, talking with pruners, and reviewing before-and-after-photos. I think, though, that I already know as much as I want to know about the HH-aesthetic. What it makes me want to do is what good tree-huggers do: go out and hug those poor mutilated trees!

Leah Alcyon is a retired industrial hygienist, recently moved back to Humboldt County, California, land of the redwoods. She enjoys conifers with her mother, Carol, and will plant one *Sequoia sempervirens* 'Loma Prieta Spike'.



Greek Column Cut



Pinus monticola 'Crawford' at the home of Sara Malone (Website Editor). Aesthetic pruning done the right way by Maryann Lewis, a certified aesthetic pruner.

Peter Kruger and Emily Hunnicutt

Author: Peter Kruger

Interviewer: Ron Elardo



Peter Kruger, Emily Hunnicutt and Aldo at Mt. Saint Helens. Photo by Alex Hunnicutt, Brother of Emily and Brother-in-law of Peter.

Where are you from?

My wife Emily Hunnicutt and I live in Seattle, in the great Pacific Northwest, which means we're spoiled with incredible conifers everywhere. We both grew up in a Connecticut suburb of NYC, but I also lived in Brooklyn, London, New Hampshire and St. Louis over the years.

Your education?

I have an MBA from The Tuck School at Dartmouth and an AB in psychology from Washington University in St. Louis.

Where are you employed and what are your duties?

I'm the Director of Product Marketing for an education software company called DreamBox Learning. We have an incredible K-8 Math program that deeply analyzes students' knowledge, how they think about math, and the tactics they use to solve problems, in order to tailor individually the education experience for each

student and, thereby, to maximize their learning and success in the subject.

How did your interest in conifers begin?

Right when we moved into our home, our neighbors offered to pay for the removal of a poorly topped *Thuja plicata* (western redcedar), and it was a bit of a traumatic experience since we were totally unprepared for such a massive change with the loss of privacy and sanctuary that it had created. We wanted to get a woody feeling

back and went to Big Trees Nursery in Snohomish, WA, which is where we saw our first *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan' trees. They looked electric in the summer and immediately stood out compared to everything else; so we bought four, 12-foot ones. Driven by the excitement of our new discovery, we went to other local nurseries to see other kinds of conifers and suddenly noticed the incredible variety of pines, spruces, firs, and everything else that we somehow never noticed before. After getting a few fancy dwarf conifers, we discovered the ACS and joined it. From that point on we were (and still are) completely hooked. For example, a *Pinus contorta* 'Chief Joseph' took part in our wedding ceremony in May, and, immediately after the wedding, we even drove down to Oregon to load up our car with rare conifers to celebrate. Yep, we're that hooked.

Do you have a (conifer) garden? Where is it located?

We do! Our house is in the city. Our lot is about 4,400 square feet, but we've taken full advantage of it and have about 75 dwarf conifer cultivars planted since we started the garden about a

year ago. Emily started a database so that we can track each tree's growth and write notes over the years, and she's in the process of creating nice labels for our trees. With so many trees and relatively little space, I'll have my work cut out for me each year with pruning. I hope to use that situation as a forcing function to learn some *niwaki* techniques. If any fellow ACS members find themselves in Seattle and would like to see the garden, we'd be happy to show it.

Why did you join the ACS?

Initially, we joined for two reasons: the Nursery Discount Program and because joining would be fun to tell people I joined a conifer society since not everyone knows about Earth's coolest plant society. Since joining though, we've gone to multiple events, met great people, learned a ton from the web resources and other members, and also saved a lot of money at partner nurseries. It's an incredible organization, and we're so excited to get more involved and help contribute to it. For anyone on reddit.com, I started <http://reddit.com/r/conifers> in hopes of bringing more people into the community and the ACS. It's still small though, but about 400 people have subscribed so far.

Do you have a favorite conifer? What is it?

It's tough to pick a favorite conifer because they're so varied and all have some unique and interesting characteristics, but in the group at the top is the *Tsuga mertensiana*. The form of the tree is so elegant, but also so wild at the same time; it's striking when we see it on hikes in the Cascades landscape. I'm hoping that I'll have the opportunity to introduce a new *Tsuga mertensiana* cultivar at some point in my life. Planted in our garden, it might have to be an electric-neon cultivar

like *Pinus radiata*. I think it's an 'Aurea', but it was initially mislabeled as a pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) at the nursery; so, who knows. I guess we'll wait and see as it grows. Potted, my favorite has to be the *Thuja plicata* 'Haley Bop' because it's just so darn cute.

Do you/did you have a mentor/ inspiration for your interest in conifers? Who? Why?

We've been lucky to have gotten to know Dave Olszyk this year. We first met him at the Stanley and Sons Nursery event back in September and had great conversations with him there. He's been so helpful getting us acclimated in the ACS and has imparted so much knowledge to us already. What's been really inspiring too is seeing what a vibrant and deep community the ACS is. For example, after reading some of Bob Fincham's books (and getting to meet him at the Pinecones and Potluck event), it's been fascinating to learn about the origin of the ACS, and all the people who helped contribute and make it happen. Everyone is so



Thuja plicata 'Haley Bop' Photo by Peter Kruger

dedicated, so welcoming, and so passionate. Finally, there is the family connection. My mother-in-law, Regina Hunnicutt (ACS member), has been a lifelong gardener, and we just got her into conifers (she might have fallen into it even more deeply than we have). Regina's mom, Katherine Monick, has been doing bonsai for 30 years too. My dad, Chip Kruger (ACS member), has a passion for trees, nurseries, and gardening too, as did my late grandfather, Tata Kruger; so, I am happy to continue and expand the family tradition.

How did you acquire 'Haley Bop'?

We feel extremely lucky to be able to come across such a rare tree and to have the opportunity to purchase it. At Larry Stanley's sale event at his nursery this past September, I was looking at the incredible variety and I

saw a group of the tiniest and strangest looking trees that immediately caught my attention. I wasn't sure what they were and wondered if they were some kind of *Cryptomeria* because of their cockscomb's

growth. Larry and Dave Olszyk then told the stories of how it was discovered and that it's actually a *Thuja plicata*. When Larry offered to sell it to me, I was elated. It's now potted and living on our back porch. It definitely causes me more stress than any other tree though, because it's so rare, and there is so little info on its care. I'm constantly monitoring it to make sure it's happy. I just bought a cold frame to keep it safe over the winter.

If anyone wants to help me propagate it when it's big enough, I'd love to learn.

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Note: Brandon Johnson (Fall CQ 2018 member profile) suggested that Peter be interviewed by Ron Elardo and that Peter had received a *Thuja plicata* 'Haley Bop' at a Western Region event.

Fishing for the Endangered Paiute Cypress

text and photography Scott Antrim

Ever since a trip back in 2012 to see the rare bristlecone fir (*Abies bracteata*) with good friend and mentor, Tom Cox, I have had a keen interest in seeing conifers *in situ*. While information found in books or online can offer reasonably good details on providing suitable growing conditions for a particular tree, actually seeing conifers growing in their native habitat, first hand, will certainly add to one's depth of knowledge.

Personally, I have seen more than 100 conifer species *in situ*,



Lake Isabella



Mixed Forest of *Cupressus nevadensis* and *Pinus monophylla*

both in this country and around the world. However, I am always looking to add to my list of new discoveries. While I have to admit that there are a good number of conifers native to my home area of the Southeast, most have already been checked off my list. So, I had to cast my net farther, and, in this instance, several thousand miles farther away.

Since 52 conifer species grow within the borders of California, it is ground zero for conifer diversity in the United States and a great one-stop shop for conifer-hunting. Over the years, I have narrowed that list of 52 down to 8 remaining to be found. On that list is *Cupressus*, of which 10 species call California home. Of these ten species, three have eluded me: Santa Cruz cypress (*Cupressus abramsiana*), Gowen cypress (*Cupressus goveniana*), and lastly, Paiute cypress (*Cupressus nevadensis*), to which I was hoping to pay a visit.

With two free days in my pocket and flights to the West Coast, with open seats (I work for an airline with flight benefits – and no, don't ask for buddy passes!), my plan was to set off after work on July 10th for Bakersfield, California, since that is the closet airport to my eventual destination of Bodfish, CA, and the Bodfish Paiute Cypress Botanical Area, located about an hour's drive east of Bakersfield.

Prior to my leaving, I learned that *Cupressus nevadensis* is native to only a dozen or so scattered groves surrounding Lake Isabella in Kern County, in the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains. Of these scattered groves, I could only find detailed information on the largest, the Bodfish Paiute Cypress Botanical Area, located on the north side of Bald Eagle Peak between 4,000- and 6,000-foot elevation and home to several thousand trees. Access was stated to be via a washboard, dirt road, recommended for high-clearance vehicles, but with a note that most passenger cars could make it with careful maneuvering around larger rocks and ruts.

Time to go Fishing

After an evening arrival into Bakersfield, I woke up early the next day, allowing myself plenty of botanizing time, with a hope of avoiding the worst of the scorching heat that was forecast. Departing the hotel, my journey took me east from Bakersfield, into the rugged, narrow canyon, through which the Kern River flows before opening up to the valley, where Lake Isabella is situated. Below the southern end of Lake Isabella lies the town, if you can even call it that, of Bodfish, which is little more than two bars, a few houses, and not much else. From there, at 2,674-foot elevation, the road began to climb in a series of switchbacks to a draw, where I would leave pavement behind, starting my 3-mile, off-road adventure.

At this elevation, the dominant tree species are gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*), California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), and single-leaf, pinyon pine (*Pinus monophylla*), accompanied by sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), which covers much of the ground. As described in the literature, the road was not in bad condition. It proved to be passable, as long as one steered carefully around the larger rocks that occasionally presented themselves, and one kept an eye out for the resident deer that might unexpectedly bolt out in front of the car.

Climbing higher and higher in elevation, great views of Lake Isabella and the surrounding mountains were to be had off in the distance, while around me the vegetation was starting to change, as well. Gone were the *Pinus sabiniana* and sagebrush, replaced now with such things as manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* sp.), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), and our Lord's candle (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*), a few of which were still in bloom with their tall flower stalks, laden with hundreds of white flowers. At some point, as if some unseen boundary had been crossed, the bushier green juniper trees, that had been still present, seemed to vanish and were replaced by what I had come all this way to see, *Cupressus nevadensis*. Out of the blue, they were seemingly everywhere on the slopes above and below the road, conical in form and Army green to

glaucous in color.

I continued driving up the road, hoping to find a sign officially designating the Bodfish Paiute Cypress Botanical Area, but none was to be found. Only a marker for the Sequoia National Forest was present. Feeling I had gone far enough, I found a wide spot in the road and parked. Not another soul was to be seen, and I had the whole place to myself for my brief *in situ* encounter. Walking back down the road, I found a random tree to examine more closely, noting such things as the aromatic and resinous foliage, the size of the cones, the vertically fissured bark, and anything that could possibly help me in the future to distinguish this particular species from others in the family.



Cupressus nevadensis cones and foliage



Cupressus nevadensis

Stepping back to take in the bigger picture, I noted that the younger trees were certainly fuller and more symmetrical than their older, more open and time-worn counterparts. The soil appeared to be a combination of a well-draining, decomposed granite, with bigger rocks mixed in. Overall, the health of the trees looked good, even with years of punishing drought that had plagued the state. While there were trees in almost all sizes, from mature, 30-foot (10-meter) high, old-timers to a few 1-foot (3-meter) or less juveniles, I found no evidence of seedlings. This might very well have been because *Cupressus nevadensis* needs fire to open its tightly closed cones, and, where I was, there was no evidence of recent fire. I continued walking farther up the road, rounding a few bends. I did come to an area that had been burned within the past few years. Here, regeneration was quite evident, with younger trees rising up around blackened stumps.

Since I felt I had accomplished what I had set out to see, I set my sights on a point up ahead where I would turn around to head back to the car. Unbeknownst to me, the grand finale was about to happen in the final steps of my trek. Growing on a slope just above the road and, as if floating among the upper branches of a most pathetic excuse for a *nevadensis*, was a beautiful, teardrop-shaped witch's broom. As an avid broom hunter myself, I stood in awe, admiring this stunning specimen. With the proper tools, it would easily have been within reach, but now was not going to be that time.

With several hundred photos and about 20 cones, which I hoped were filled with viable seed, I said goodbye to *Cupressus nevadensis* and started my trip back to Bakersfield and home. Yes, it was a long distance to travel just to see a tree, but, since this is in California, and *C. nevadensis* is of limited distribution, it might be here today and gone tomorrow.

Southeast Adaptability

Cupressus nevadensis is closely related to *Cupressus arizonica*. Thus, it might be expected that performance of this species in gardens of the Southeast would not be good. To my knowledge, however, the only Southeast-garden trialing of this plant is in the Cox Arboretum, just north of Atlanta, Georgia. Both of Tom's two, small specimens have exhibited vigorous steely-blue growth and have shown no ill effects from excessive moisture and humidity. Provided with a site having good drainage that generally stays on the dry side and receives full sun, *Cupressus nevadensis* may offer an uncommon addition to any collector's garden. The biggest challenge, of course, might be locating and purchasing a specimen. If you are hoping to stumble across this plant at your favorite nursery, forget about it. After extensive internet



Cupressus nevadensis witch's broom

searches, the only source I have found was Las Pilitas Nursery in Santa Margarita, CA, which intermittently has this plant available. They may or may not ship to East Coast addresses, depending on how much you plead.

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http://fs.fed.us/Pacific_Southwest

Scott Antrim is a resident of Lake Wylie, SC. Most days, Scott can be found working in his modest one acre collection of conifers, woodland perennials, xeric plants, and whatever else captures his fancy. When time allows, Scott enjoys the thrill of the chase, seeing new species of conifers in the wild and constantly keeping an eye out for witch's brooms.

Maud Henne House for Sale, Charlottesville, Virginia

The house was built in 1976 and purchased by Maud and her late husband in 1977. The house has 2,800 square feet, with 4 bedrooms and 3 baths. The property consists of 3 wooded acres of mostly oaks, including a conifer garden. It was Maud's husband's idea to plant conifers. He set up the planting beds and then added young trees. 200 conifers exist in the beds and around the house. This affords the property yellows, blues and greens in winter. The property is worth \$450,000.

Persons interested in purchasing the property with its house and beautiful garden may contact Maud at

hamburg1936@gmail.com
434-296-6051



Interior view of the Henne home



View from the deck



View into the conifer garden



Pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) adding color to a juniper on my property. Photo by Jim LaLuzerne, De Pere, Wisconsin

The pileated woodpecker is mostly a sedentary inhabitant of deciduous forests in eastern North America, the Great Lakes, the boreal forests of Canada, and parts of the Pacific Coast.



B
Conifer cone
Morrison Formation
Late Jurassic Period
149 million years ago
Original fossil
DNM Collections

Oldest conifer cone ever to be shown in the CQ, provided by Tom Cox



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