

# Conifer Quarterly

Vol. 29 No. 4

Fall 2012



Here are Rocky Mountain Bristlecone Pines (*Pinus aristata*) on Windy Ridge. The pines above Alma, Colorado are famous for their windswept pictureseque qualities. The location is known as the Windy Ridge Bristlecone Pine Scenic Area in the Pike National Forest. This image was taken before sunrise on the Summer Solstice 2011. The area is accessible from a Forest Service Road with a high clearance vehicle. *Photo by David Rasch*

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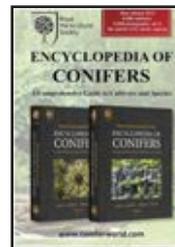
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*The purposes of the American Conifer Society are the development, conservation, and propagation of conifers, with an emphasis on those that are dwarf or unusual, standardization of nomenclature, and education of the public.*



# Conifer Quarterly

Fall 2012  
Volume 29, No 4

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

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Greetings to the ACS membership from the State of New York! My name is Larry Nau, and I am your new President for the next 2 years. I have been a member of the ACS since 1994 and have served as the Northeastern President from 2006 to 2010. It has been my pleasure to work with ACS members not only from the Northeast, but all across the USA and even around the globe.

Everyone will agree that the 2012 ACS National Meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan was one of the finest and best run meetings in ACS history. I personally want to thank Dennis Groh and Don Wild and the rest of their committee for their outstanding efforts in providing such an exceptional meeting. The attendance of 301 smashed the previous meeting by over 70 people. In addition to our meeting, the ACS experienced its first Conifer College thanks to the vision of Dennis and Don. Participants were able to join classes on various aspects of conifer care, identification and conifers in the garden. Hopefully the ACS will host another Conifer College in the future to expand on this educational experience.

I want to thank my predecessor, Ethan Johnson, for all of his hard work and efforts. I first met Ethan back in 1994, and he has consistently been a vital force within the ACS all these years. From serving as a technical editor for *Conifer Quarterly*, to chairing the Iseli Awards Committee, planning National meetings and local rendezvous, to serving as your National President, Ethan has given countless hours to the ACS. I also want to express my gratitude to Frank Goodhart, our outgoing NE President and Chris Daegar past Central Region President and our own "Answer Guy" for their time and contributions to the ACS. Without our volunteers on the National and Regional level, the ACS would not exist, and our wonderful events and meetings would not happen.

As I check the ACS history I am

the ACS's 16<sup>th</sup> President and I am humbled to be counted among my distinguished predecessors. Each President has encountered his or her own specific problems and challenges to grow the ACS and help it fulfill its mission. As I start my term, I must first announce a dues increase for the ACS membership approved by the Board of Directors at our February 2012 meeting. This increase is the result of the basic reality that costs have gone up and our income has stagnated or declined. Your BOD has looked at our budget and reduced costs where possible. John Martin has looked for ways to reduce our administrative costs. Our *CQ* editor, Ron Elardo has made great strides in reducing our layout and printing costs for this publication. Despite all of these efforts, there is still a gap which remains to be closed, and a dues increase is necessary. The resulting cost of \$38 is comparable to, if not lower than, most national plant societies' dues. No President wants to increase the cost of membership, but we need to be able to pay our monthly bills without tapping into other ACS accounts. Let me assure you that the ACS is a strong and viable organization which is focused on educating its members and the public about the wonders of conifers.

The Board will also embark on new initiatives to attract new members. New efforts are underway to improve our website which is quickly becoming "the face" of the ACS to the world. Soon you will receive a survey asking for your feedback on *Conifer Quarterly* and other aspects of the ACS to insure we are meeting the needs of the ACS membership. The ACS has created its first conifer videos to reach out in a new media to teach the public at large about conifers. I want to thank Jerry Kral for assisting us in this project. I am asking our membership committee to look at additional membership options such as an "E-membership" and additional ways to attract new members. Barbie Colvin has agreed to serve as our Reference Garden Coordinator as we unify our program and reach out to additional gardens across the USA to partner in this venture. Dozens of ACS members just experienced the superb gardens in Belgium and the Netherlands. Thank you to Tom Cox for leading ACS members on a third International Trip! I want to congratulate the Western region for joining the Facebook community with the formation of its new page. If you are a member of Facebook, look for your region's page or group and join the fun.

The American Conifer Society is a plant society by definition. I learned from my very first meeting, back in 1994 in Mentor, Ohio, that the ACS is really about people who happen to garden passionately with this group of plants called conifers. Each is willing to share the insights, their successes and, yes, even their mistakes with a newcomer such as me. My position charges me with not only keeping this distinguished organization sound and stable, but also with growing and expanding its reach and message. I am excited to work on our Board of Directors, which represents each of you from the various Regions of the ACS. I also want to reach out to each ACS member and let them know they too can contribute, just by calling their Regional President for ideas. I have always maintained an open door policy and have made myself available to any membership I lead. My cell number is 585-202-1815, and you are welcome to call me about ideas or concerns you may have regarding the ACS. You can also contact me via email at [lnau@frontiernet.net](mailto:lnau@frontiernet.net). Look for me on Facebook, Yahoo, Skype and Google+. Each of these provides an opportunity to video chat with me if you so desire. Together we will grow the American Conifer Society and along the way plant a few more conifers in the gardens of the people we meet!

Larry Nau  
ACS President

## Editor's Corner: The Autumnal Equinox



F all is upon us. Cumulus nimbus clouds have been rumbling across the sky, signaling colder times. Can winter be far behind? Temperatures have finally modified after hitting highs this summer not seen in many parts of the country for a long time. The drought caused agricultural losses and hurt local and state economies. But all things are cyclical, and nature renews itself like the legendary Phoenix through autumn and the sleep of winter. As we prepare for winter and the hearth and home of inside activities, this is also the beginning of the time to plan our plantings for the spring.

The potted conifers at my home will soon be moved to a more protected place on my property to avoid the cold, drying sun and winds inevitably coming. Some conifers will need to be buttressed against desiccation. Still others will have to be protected against marauding pests. Fall brings rabbit fences, electric fences and chemical barriers to the fore.

When I reminisce about autumn, my thoughts turn to memories of cold, wind-swept skies. Rains which not only water, but also beat down the vegetation trees and plants are shedding. Then there are pies baking in the oven, turkeys roasting, soups and canning. *Hosta* have disappeared.

You notice the waning of sunlight and those fabulous sunsets where solar rays sweep along treetops and illuminate them in a new and glorious way. Then there are the smells of open fires and burning leaves. It's the way the air carries and merges with the smoke which reminds me of fall. I smelled those signs already in August. So, I knew nature's sleep was at hand. For as long as I can remember, that smell always marked the time of school, the advent of pre-snow clouds and the quieting of the season.

What is to come?

Trellises to hold vegetables, vegetables planted for ground cover, thoughts of pruning and shaping conifers so that more conifers can be planted beneath them, an architectural gift from John Vrablic of Rossford, Ohio. How beautifully so many trees can be planted on such a small plot! Potted perennial flowers and shrubs, potted annuals and grasses, more arid plants to nestle in among the conifers when winter's

last gasps, those spring frosts, no longer pose a danger.

Memories of those heady days of our largest National Meeting ever. Garden photos and mental photos of spectacular, inspiring gardens; members in the spring of their days and members in their summers came together for education and the renewal of old acquaintances and the making of new ones.

Fall is the time for facing realities, processing them and looking to the future to arrange end-games.

*Conifer Quarterly* is for me still a joy to envision and to shape. You enliven my days with your observations and your writing. It is fun, and I encourage you to send in your photos and stories. I encourage you to profile gardens and people for the *Quarterly*. It is, after all, always you who make this magazine what it is, your voice to the world, your mission to educate.

Consider writing an article on technical subjects you have researched and used with your conifers, or which you have simply come across in your reading. Consider reporting also on new cultivars, on your plans for the winter, your plans for the spring. Please consider sending me a travel log of a journey or a visit you have made. Who has touched you and sent you conifer-collecting? How do you cope with your addicted conifer syndrome?

Many times we come through the eye of the needle, scathed but yet surviving, just like our conifers do when they face illness or a harsh environment. I am certain our members would enjoy hearing from you.

We coniferites have so much in common. Our bonds and our connections sustain us all the year through.

Ron

Dave and Sharon Helmlinger had their article, entitled "Our Dream", published in the Summer *CQ*. Their correct contact phone numbers are: 937-935-0841 and 937-843-4127.



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# The 300 + 1 The 2012 ACS National Meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan

Text by Ron Elardo

No, this was not the Battle of Thermopylae + 1, nor was it a metaphorical victory. It was, however, the largest single gathering of coniferites ever in the history of the American Conifer Society. From far and wide they came to renew acquaintances and make new ones. They came to be educated in the first-ever Conifer College, 197 of them. They arrived in the Land of the Maize and Blue and then ventured out to see gardening visions beyond belief.

The planning for this Meeting began two years before the actual moment occurred. There were easel presentations and flow charts at Hidden Lake Gardens as Dennis Groh led the way. Carole Groh was there, as were Andy Duval and his wife Carol too. Kaye and Gary Gee came down from Stockbridge to contribute and to offer input and direction. Steve Courtney was there as the future host at Hidden Lake Gardens as was Gerry Donaldson, Head Grounds Keeper at HLG. I had the privilege to be there from the ground up. Jack Wikle was tasked to collect materials for and to co-author *Plants & People: The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers*. I was to oversee the editing and design layout of the Harper Book. Steve Courtney and I edited the work together.



The Big Top at Hidden Lake Gardens *Photo by Ron Elardo*



The Elardo  
Garden at  
the Visitors  
Center  
*Photo by  
Ron Elardo*

Out of a swirl of ideas and opinions, a national meeting began to emerge: speakers, instructors for a “Conifer College”, venues, gardens, a hotel, then menus, transportation needs, and high expectations that this would be a colossal event. It is one thing to attend a national meeting, quite another to follow its path from inception to fruition. We should thank all those before us who have planned a national meeting.

It is an enormous undertaking. As the registrations began to roll in, expectations of the steering committee became fulfilled.

The Visitor Center of Hidden Lake Gardens was even completely re-landscaped for the occasion. My family’s funding and my plant selection and in part my labor also went into the new



Adrian and Rosemary Bloom *Photo by Ron Elardo*

look of the building. Steve Courtney planned the landscaping. The new plantings were chosen to reflect the major conifer collection at the Gardens. It was all part of the detailed preparations which went into the Meeting.

The day before the formal opening of the Meeting, Conifer College convened. There were classes on conifer registration and climate-sensitive conifers. The adage that “conifers don’t read books” was presented as well as breeding Woolly Adelgid-resistant hemlocks. Spruce decline and conifer botany continued the technical slant of much of the curriculum. Conifers made for the shade provided valuable and unique information. Designing and gardening with conifers, and dwarf and slow-growing plants for the garden presented important angles on using conifers in landscaping. There was even a section on “conifer clipping”. Conifer College received high marks from its *students* and showcased the breadth of expertise of the faculty. What a challenge Conifer College made to subsequent National Meeting organizers!

The 2012 National Meeting had as its main foci The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers at Hidden Lake Gardens and Gee Farms. In between we visited the gardens of Michael and Remy Young in Dexter, Michigan, and Sandi and Jim Wilkins’ in Napoleon, Michigan. The weather may have been hot, but, wow!

The private gardens were even more intense than the weather. They tantalized and excited the attendees and called us all to sojourn. Cameras were *shuttering*, and compliments flowing. There definitely was a festive air.

The luck-of-the-Irish-day at Hidden Lake Gardens on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> was an awesome beginning. As home to The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers, undoubtedly a premier conifer collection, the Gardens put on quite a show. The staff worked very hard to get everything in order. I watched as the busses (6 in number!) rolled in toward the big top, erected just for the occasion. Members exited the busses and were welcomed by Michigan State University’s



The ACS Auction Photo by Susan Eyre



The garden of Remy and Michael Young. *Photo by Ron Elardo*

Dr. Ian Gray, Vice President for research and graduate studies. Then after lunch, throngs spread out and into the Harper Collection.

A contest ensued to mark the favorite conifers in the Collection. Renowned landscaper and the Meeting's keynote speaker, Adrian Bloom, found his way through the Harper and then onto Benedict Hosta Hillside. What a treat it was to follow along and watch the things he found interesting to photograph. His sense of humor was simultaneously entertaining and educative. He had great praise for the Gardens.

At Friday night's dinner, Flo Chafin was awarded the Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award for Support of the American Conifer Society. Gary Gee received the Justin C. "Chub" Harper Award for Development in the Field of Conifers. The auctions that night netted the Society \$16,000 total, \$2,000 in the can auction alone. Bill Barger conducted the live and silent auctions, Andy and Carol Duvall the can auction. The bidding that night in the live auction reached unexpected proportions at times with Gerry Kral being the highest bidder for any one plant.

Saturday came and the attendees headed off to the private gardens of the Young's and the Wilkins'. It would be a cliché to say that these two gardens were unique. But it was their individual charms which captivated ACS members. The Young's garden highlights landscaping around their home and swimming pool. Grand conifers anchor the grounds as well as the planting beds, which appear to stretch out their arms to welcome visitors.



At the Wilkins' garden there was once again great hospitality shown to attendees. Here, meandering paths invited visitors to walk under the canopy above and visit among hundreds

Scenes from the Wilkins' garden.  
Photos by Ron Elardo



of *Hosta* and the plentiful conifers under shade. The conifers' co-existence with the shade-loving plants makes for an intriguing mix of landscaping and art.

When the busses departed the private gardens, they headed for Gee Farms, the largest retail nursery in Michigan. Gary, Kaye, Kary and the Gee family most graciously hosted us for lunch *and* dinner. In between, attendees meandered off into the nursery, and conifer-fever took over. I glanced back at the busses as their bays began to swell with conifers of all shapes and sizes. There was also time to visit Gary's tree farm and the "Projects". The busses departed Gee farms at 7:30 p.m., but the Meeting was hardly over.

Sunday morning brought the post tours of other area gardens and also the unofficial tailgate sale. Were it not enough that cars, trucks and vans were full with conifers already, several more trees got packed in for the drive home as attendees spent another three hours purchasing almost every last conifer to be had in the parking lot of the Ann Arbor Sheraton Hotel.

The dust had barely settled in Ann Arbor, when we began to look ahead to the Northeast Region hosting the 2013 National Meeting.

Ronald J. Elardo,  
Ph.D.



Gee Farms  
Photo by Ron Elardo

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# Record Attendance at National ACS Meeting

Text and photos by Susan Eyre

The July 2012 National Meeting of the American Conifer Society broke attendance records in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the Central Region. Three hundred and one people attended the meeting and garden tours; plus one hundred ninety-seven people attended the Conifer College. So what was the big attraction? The trees? The people? The location? Adrian Bloom? The education? It appears that it was the gathering of the Support Group offered to those phytoholics with a unique weakness for the search and research of mutant conifers.

Many people ask: “Can you get hooked on these trees the first time?” Absolutely! When analyzed, there are several levels of addiction for those who are powerless about these plants. Conifer addicts had nine gardens to tour before and after the Meeting.

**Level 1: Awareness.** Everyone who attended this meeting knew something about dwarf conifers.

**Level 2: Research.** Education is a key in building a knowledge base. Conifer College was a huge success with educational and informative speakers providing fifteen different classes. There were classes from beginner to advanced, with all the members sharing knowledge of and interest for the trees they love! The keynote speaker, Janet Macunovich, scared the pants off those attending her class with the



The Wild Garden

syndrome, advising us to start thinking about pruning when we plant our beloved conifers. She is aggressive with her Felco #2 pruners! A panel of experts gave a wide range of answers to questions provided by the participants of the Conifer College. Answers varied from region to region. Those afflicted with the syndrome had plenty of books to buy and get them autographed by the authors.

**Level 3: Acquisition.** Reading about conifers is simply not enough. You must have them! You find yourself driving longer distances to get to nurseries to purchase unusual plants. Beautiful gardens, nurseries and arboretums were prepared as destinations, and purchasing began before the meeting began. The ultimate realization occurs before the ACS Auction. On your way to the auction you say: "I'm not going to spend much at the auction this year." On the way home you mention: "The money went for a good cause." After years of buying auction plants, Paula and Ray Rollet were thrilled finally to host ACS members at their home to admire 3.5 rolling acres where every window in their house looks out over their conifer, maple, beech and *Ginkgo* collections. John Vrablic is an expert on how to wedge in thousands of conifers into his small yard. Dennis and Carole Groh definitely infected their neighbor Marty Toth and now they have two combined acres to roam and explore for plants. Don and Harriet Wild's garden was a gem. As you got closer to their address, unusual conifers started appearing in the neighborhood landscape. Once you reach their home, it is hard to discern where the property lines are since neighbors on both sides are part of the Wild's landscape. Their yard is a treasure nestled up to a golf course. The garden is designed so that even the golfers have wonderful plants to admire (Just in case they want to give up golf and start gardening!). What a feast for the eyes to admire the conifers, troughs, perennials alpine, and maples!

The auction plants really tempted the members as they not only bid on their favorite plants, but also tried to outbid their competition. The up-close and personal examination of the conifers always gets everyone excited. This group insisted on writing bids before bidding was allowed. They just couldn't wait! The auction garnered \$16,000 and the raffle of Michigan trees set a record of \$2,000. I observed people touching the specimens they admired and getting turned on by the tactile experience. Did

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The Wilkins Garden



The Young Garden

The Rollet Garden



you see the bays of those busses at Gee's so full with trees? If that isn't the sign of conifer addiction, I don't know what is. The wallets and credit cards really got a workout! Now if that was not enough, on Sunday morning as everyone checked out, there was one last plant sale in the parking lot of the hotel. More plants and conifers to squeeze into the vehicles before heading home!



The Young Garden Photo by Ron Elardo

**Level 4: Networking.** Now you have a small collection started, but you are still not satisfied. The ACS leads you to other people who have the same affliction you do. Beware of those who have lifetime memberships. Three hundred and one people arrived in Ann Arbor to hear Adrian Bloom as the keynote speaker at the main conference, the 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the American Conifer Society. Adrian and his wife Rosemary attended the entire meeting and tours, and he was available to talk to and share his knowledge with everyone. Nurserymen, university types, collectors, beginners, all share in acquiring knowledge. Education is the key to success! What a wonderful gift to tour the collections of the Young's and Wilkins' gardens with great examples of how to enjoy plant and art collections in an estate-like setting. Hats off to them for creating such significant gardens! Ideas are always taken home to incorporate into your own garden and dream.

**Level 5: Reading the Landscape.** Now that you are into the conifer network, you start reading the landscape and looking for witch's brooms in nature. Observation skills are developed. Talk about excitement when the concolor fir 'Hosta La Vista' and *Taxodium distichum* 'GeeWizz' witch's brooms were found at Hidden Lake Gardens.

**Level 6: Propagation.** You finally find a great witch's broom. You can't continue to just admire it. You want to know if this could be a new cultivar for the future. You start rooting or grafting conifers, or you send the scion wood to someone who grafts.

**Level 7. Going into Business.** You have now reached the pinnacle of the addiction. You have made your hobby your livelihood. Now any tree purchase can be justified. “It’s a stock plant.” Now there is satisfaction in helping distribute these beauties to the addicted.

**Level 8: Benefactor.** At this level you have spent a big part of your wallet collecting conifers. Now you start relocating your collections and you buy conifers to give away. This is the “Harper Predilection” and difficult to explain to your wife. I call this Philanthropy. Congratulations to Steve Courtney and his staff at Hidden Lake Gardens for a spectacular display of all our favorite conifers in the Harper Collection.

One of the greatest treasures of the meeting was the book *People and Plants*. This collection of stories, tributes, and memories celebrates Justin “Chub” Harper and The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers. Editors Ron Elardo and Steve Courtney, with photos from Don Wild, Dennis Groh, Jack Wikle and Lona Pribble, should be applauded for a job well done in capturing Chub’s impact on the trees and people of the American Conifer Society. This fabulous work is a tribute to our fearless leader, Chub Harper. Many people contributed stories on how Chub affected their lives. Everyone who knew Chub would love to possess this book filled with the history and memories of a person who fostered the Addicted Conifer Syndrome in all of us.

So what exactly is the love of conifers? If we try to psychoanalyze ourselves, why do we get hooked on conifers? Why would we beg, borrow or steal and even mortgage the house or sell our most cherished possessions to get even one special rare conifer? Something comes over us and we go over budget to get the conifer which is a garden-maker. Ron Elardo, our editor, says his nostrils flare open and he can hardly contain himself before the acquisition. He explains that Freud believed everything stems from our libido: that artistic creation is an expression of libidinal needs. This may be too racy for some of our members, but the thrill of victory in acquiring the conifer plays a part in it all. Ron does not even ask himself where he is going to plant the new conifer. He just buys it. Now that he has filled up his yard, he plants his trees in decorative pots. At the last count, he has forty-eight conifers in pots! Then there’s the whole sniffing thing. Are conifers psychological aphrodisiacs? Why do we stuff our vehicles with them so that we can take them home? So we can be tickled by the one so big that it comes to the front seats of the car? Why do we fight to get in the last bid at the auctions, or wrestle the conifer from the grip of another member? I have observed some sneaky tactics to distract or run over fellow ACS member in order to get in the last bid.

The bottom line of our conifer addiction is to get together with others who share the same affliction and admire their tenacity and the beauty of the gardens they create. Remember whatever level you are, join in on the fun and JUST SAY YES! Even Adrian Bloom had to make one last stop to see a garden on his way to the airport!

# You expect me to choose a favorite? You have to be kidding!

Text by Gerry Donaldson Photos by Ron Elardo and Don Wild

The appreciation of conifers, with all their richness of color, texture, size, shape, and versatility is a commonality among the members of the American Conifer Society. The opportunity to share that appreciation contributes to member gatherings both formal and informal. The American Conifer Society's 2012 National Meeting was no exception. Truly beautiful gardens were on both the official tour and the pre- and post-tours.

Here at Hidden Lake Gardens we frequently conduct tours of The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers as well as using the Collection as a tool for classes. We also have thousands of visitors per year, and many inquire about the Collection. A most frequently asked question is: "Which plant is your favorite?" Knowing this, in preparation for the 2012 American Conifer Society National Meeting, Steven Courtney, Hidden Lake Gardens' Manager, proposed we ask the attendees to select their favorites. Thus came about a survey of ACS attendees' personal favorites in The Harper Collection plants. Each attendee was asked to place a flag at the three plants they most enjoyed.

The Harper Collection features five hundred and seventy three (573) accessions of conifers, of some nineteen genera, showcasing almost four hundred cultivars. With many of the original plants donated by Chub Harper in 1981 still in the Collection, as well as lots of additions along the way, choosing favorites was no easy task. Some have said it is the most aesthetic collection of conifers they have ever seen, and remark on the fact that with the exception of two clumps of daffodils, this garden has only conifers!!! It is truly a conifer garden.

As previously noted in *Conifer Quarterly*, for many, A.C.S. really stands for "Addicted Conifer Syndrome" (Susan Eyre), and this syndrome comes about by way of "gate-way" plants which catch the sufferer's eye. Soon they are seeking out a wider conifer experience, something new, something different, something bolder. In my personal experience,



*Picea abies* 'Virgata' branches in winter  
Photo by Don Wild



*Abies numidica* 'Pendula'\* Photo by Ron Elardo

frequently my most recent acquisition is my favorite, until I see something new.

So, what makes a plant a “favorite”? In this survey, uniqueness seems to have ruled. The single plant, which garnered the most flags (votes), was *Abies numidica* ‘Pendula’, weeping Algerian fir. Many of those choosing this plant as one of their favorites said variations of: “I’ve never seen that plant before,” and “Where can I find this plant?”\*

The same can be said about the second favorite plant, *Picea abies* ‘Virgata’, snake branch Norway spruce. While many gardens have various snake branch spruces, seeing such a large, dramatic specimen was, for many, a unique experience.

The third most popular single plant was one of two *Picea orientalis* ‘Skylands’, Skylands oriental spruce, but, when the votes for the two specimens in the Collection are combined, they outnumber the votes for the number one vote-getter, the weeping Algerian fir. The most notable feature of ‘Skylands’ is its bold, bright yellow-gold color.

The next most popular was also one of bold gold, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* ‘Ogon’, gold rush dawn redwood.

Number five on the most popular list is *Picea abies* (Merrell Broom Tree). Many conifer geeks spend almost as much time looking for witch’s brooms as looking at the road when driving, and most can tell you of a broom near their home, but few have seen an apical broom. This one is truly unique!

\*Technical Editor’s note: *Abies numidica* ‘Pendula’ is an incorrect name.



*Picea orientalis* 'Skylands' in winter Photo by Don Wild



*Abies concolor*  
'Blue Cloak'  
Photo by  
Ron Elardo

The next three choices feature variations on blue color. *Abies concolor* 'Blue Cloak', blue cloak white fir at number six, *Cedrus deodara* 'Karl Fuchs', Karl Fuchs Himalayan cedar, at number seven, and *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Nana Argentea', dwarf Sawara false cypress at number eight.

At number nine, dramatic form appears to rule. Although the rich green color of *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Green Arrow' is certainly pleasing, most often people note its striking shape. (Yes, I know there is a difference of opinion as to whether it is appropriately called *Chamaecyparis* or something else. I will leave it to others to debate proper nomenclature.)

Form also seems to be the focus on number ten, *Picea abies* 'Pendula AA Form', sometimes called The Angel of Hidden Lake Gardens, standing majestically overlooking the Collection. For those who don't know the story, the angel-like shape of this tree was first noticed one day when Chub Harper had come to Hidden Lake Gardens shortly after his wife Anna's death. His intent was to meditate her loss at one of her favorite trees. Later during a planned walk-through of the Collection to assess its needs, the shape was noticed and pointed out to Chub, at which he replied "That's my Anna, the Angel of Hidden Lake Gardens."

While none of the individual plants of *Pinus strobus* 'Pendula' made it into the top ten, cumulatively they would have come in at number four.

Similarly, while *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Pendula' individual plants did not make the top ten, cumulatively they would have been number seven.

So, after all this sharing of favorites and all the comments and justifications given by various attendees of the ACS convention, the question still remains: "What is your favorite plant in *The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers*?" My response is: "Which of your children do you like best?"

\*While not many nurseries grow this plant, some are listing it as available. If you are having trouble finding it and are willing to wait for it, we here at Hidden Lake Gardens have a few available and will produce more. Please contact us for details of Harper Collection propagules and availability.

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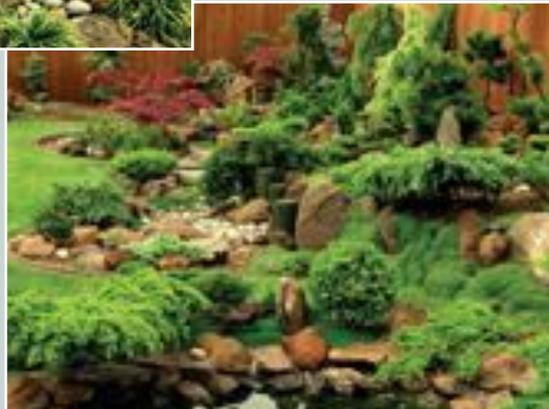
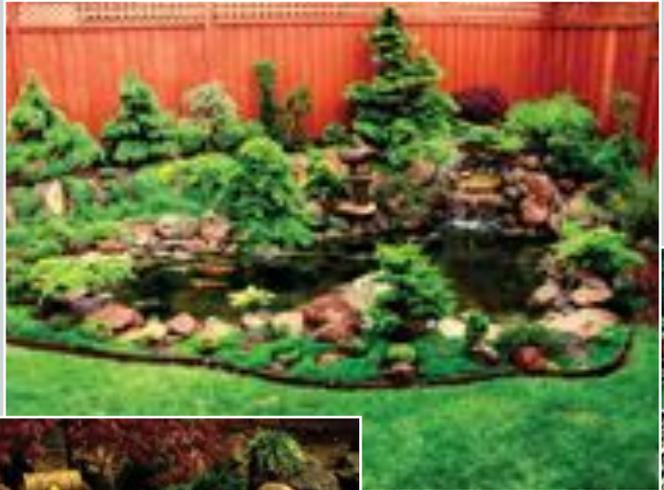
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# The Jack Christiansen Garden: A Photo Journal San Jose, CA

Photos by Jack Christiansen









# My Twenty-Five Favorite Conifers In The Four ACS Size Categories

Text by "Chub" Harper Photos by Bill Barger and Don Wild

## MINIATURE CONIFERS

**Growth per year: less than one inch. Size at age ten years: one foot.**

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

## DWARF CONIFERS

**Growth per year: one to six inches. Size at age ten years: one to six feet.**

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>Abies lasiocarpa</i> 'Green Globe' | dwarf Rocky Mountain fir  |
| 2. <i>Picea abies</i> 'Nidiformis'       | bird's nest Norway spruce |
| 3. <i>Picea glauca</i> 'Conica'          | dwarf Alberta spruce      |
| 4. <i>Picea omorika</i> , 'Nana'         | dwarf Serbian spruce      |
| 5. <i>Picea pungens</i> 'Montgomery'     | Colorado spruce           |

## INTERMEDIATE CONIFERS

**Growth per year: six to twelve inches.**

**Size at age ten years: six to fifteen feet.**

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Abies concolor</i> 'Conica'                 | upright concolor fir             |
| 1. <i>Chamaecyparis pisifera</i> 'Filifera Aurea' | yellow thread leaf false-cypress |
| 2. <i>Larix kaempferi</i> 'Pendula'               | weeping Japanese larch           |
| 3. <i>Pinus cembra</i>                            | Swiss stone pine                 |
| 4. <i>Pinus parviflora</i> 'Bergman'              | Japanese white pine              |

## LARGE CONIFERS

**Growth per year: twelve inches or more.**

**Size at age ten years: more than fifteen feet.**

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. <i>Cupressus nootkatensis</i> 'Pendula'      | weeping Nootka cypress |
| 2. <i>Picea omorika</i> 'Pendula'               | weeping Serbian spruce |
| 3. <i>Pinus flexilis</i> 'Vanderwolf's Pyramid' | limber pine            |
| 4. <i>Pinus koraiensis</i> 'Glauca'             | blue Korean pine       |
| 5. <i>Taxodium distichum</i>                    | bald-cypress           |

## FIVE BONUS SELECTIONS ON MY PERSONAL

### "MUST HAVE" LIST

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Cupressus nootkatensis</i> 'Green Arrow' | Nootka cypress             |
| 2. <i>Picea glauca</i> 'Pendula'               | weeping white spruce       |
| 3. <i>Pinus bungeana</i> 'Silver Ghost'        | Silver Ghost lacebark pine |
| 4. <i>Pinus mugo</i> 'Mops'                    | dwarf Swiss mountain pine  |
| 5. <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> 'Smaragd'         | emerald green arborvitae   |

Revised January 2002



## MINIATURE CONIFERS

*Tsuga canadensis* 'Lewis'  
Photo by Bill Barger



## INTERMEDIATE CONIFERS

*Pinus parviflora* 'Bergman'  
Photo by Don Wild

## LARGE CONIFERS

*Cupressus nootkatensis*  
'Green Arrow'  
Photo by Don Wild



# "A Self-Portrait"

Text by John Vrablic Photos by Ron Elardo

## This is the story of one hobby gardener for our *Conifer Quarterly*

I graduated from Rossford High School in 1964, some College, Army Veteran, 42 years Locomotive Engineer, C+O, Chessie System, CSX, Yard and Road. Home schooled in gardening.

Our two story house on a half-acre was built in 1909. This old house has earned its keep, and I try to keep it up. I feel very blessed to have spent my entire life living here along with

three generations of family in my youth. At least 25 years ago my parents started to incur serious health problems. I started working railroad yard assignments so that I would not have to be away from home overnight. Because of my parents' health, I had to spend most of my spare time near the house. When I was a boy, I did much work in my grandparents' large vegetable and fruit tree garden in the back



of the house. When I decided what to do with my spare time, it was only natural to return to the soil. After having lived with me into their nineties, my parents have now passed away. Since I started the garden as a part of my dedication to caring for them, I found that my interest in the garden did not lessen. I point to a stone in the garden which has the inscription *carpe diem*, "live for today". I also care about Rossford, Ohio and consider the garden my contribution to adding to the pride of my city.

After my grandparents passed away, my father tore down Grandma's big old chicken coop, then gradually put the entire garden into grass and removed most of the fruit trees. I eventually removed all the rest of them. In the early 1980's, I made the old house very respectable for my parents, fixed up the facade of Grandpa's old river stone root cellar in the middle of the property, built a 24 x 34 foot garage with an upstairs and a workshop, a 14 x 16 foot garden shed, new concrete driveway and sidewalks, and a black wrought iron back yard fence. Then in May 1986, just a month after I turned 40 years old, a series of mistakes began. I had 15 ornamental trees which I picked out and had planted by a local nursery. I started a small garden

with ornamental shrubs, annuals, perennials and mulch.

My new hobby started to evolve and expand with *Hosta*, daylilies, roses, some conifers and ornamental grasses. None of this is left today; there are no burial crosses. Such are the rhythms of change. Over the years I tried just about every deciduous tree and shrub which caught my eye in Michael Dirr's *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, which included the borrowed landscape of my neighbors' yards and adjacent city property, the municipal grounds, the library grounds, 17 acres of our church property; my generosity is boundless, and I joined the volunteer city tree commission where I met my buddy Dave Merrell. We are still on there today, a tree city, with more variety than most larger cities have. I just wish Rossford were a garden-crazy city. I do have a friend and neighbor, Gary, on the corner of my street who is growing the rare and unusual in profusion better than I.

It took a long time, but I was finally overwhelmed with curiosity from listening to so many nice things about Hidden Lake Gardens. Sometime in the late 1980's, I made the 50 minute drive there one cool autumn morning, with a quart thermos of fresh coffee. I walked for many hours without meeting anyone, ending up on a hill overlooking the Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers. Seeing two men talking down below, I walked down the hill to meet them. Chub Harper and the Curator Jack Wolf introduced themselves, and we started talking about plants. Chub Harper gave me an application to join the American Conifer Society. Chub asked me where I was from and told me to look up Hans Thumm. Addicted Conifer Syndrome was the result, a very mysterious personal trait. It took me over in a way, over which I had no control. Once started, gardening does not let go.

What good is a beautiful home if, when you go outside, you're absolutely nowhere. The spirit of my landscape today, after 26 years, of trial and error, is its own creature, an evolving creature. The whole place is a paradox because of the way it is carved up. It appears much larger than it really is. Now the stage is set for visual impact, an enchanted place of magic where anything is possible; controlled abundance is the key. There are over 1,000 irresistibly collectable plants, including almost 700 rare and unusual conifers, the living backbone of my garden. With room for more, the variety is beguiling and endless.



I have been putting down a top dressing of crushed pine needles from Georgia, one handful at a time, every year now for quite some time. The ambiance of the place will shine in the gleam of your eyes. There is nothing on earth like garden beauty. The garden never looks the same. A happy plant will fill you with delight.

The right plants will give you quiet and satisfying company. Just be alert and appreciative! Dwarf conifers will charm you until you become enchanted, and your senses will be satisfied. No plant is more willing. They are indispensable for the planted place, they strengthen design and make beautiful winter



pictures, a guaranteed continuous good effect. The right plants will touch your deepest feelings. There will always be some treasure here which cannot fail to touch you. You will always take with you a lasting impression. To see dwarf conifers at their best is an astonishing sight, quietly breathtaking.

Once you start planting, it's too hard to stop. Evergreens are friendly and conifers do make good

neighbors, yet they seem never to stop growing. The reality of garden maintenance is sometimes overlooked in our enthusiasm. Pruning is the easy part, "doing a John", named after me, takes longer and means cleaning out the brown needles and dead wood. The radiant look of the "John'd" conifers through the long winter makes all this worth the effort to me. Jack Wikle taught me how to prune, and my good friend Dave Merrell, who found the king of the brooms, "The Merrell Broom" now at Hidden Lake Gardens in the Harper Collection, keeps me on the ball, because he is interested enough to be critical and make pertinent suggestions for the best alterations. I prune all the time. It took a while to catch on. Now, I just look at a conifer and see just what to take out which doesn't look right. That is how I prune. It's that easy. If you want to have a lot of plants, learn how to prune so it looks like you hadn't pruned at all and your plants just grew that way.

I still have grass to cut, just not as much as before. Grass is a chore. Everything has to earn its own keep, or it has to go; ruthless upkeep, meaning sick looking plants get snuffed. It has to look like there is always room for more plants. "No Heinz 57" means no two plants are touching each other or the ground unless they are a spreader, and no big plants block nice views. Every scene has a distinctive character, striking and unusual, offering beauty and fascination. This garden evolved without a master plan and has to change constantly because I get bored very easily. There are a lot of very interesting rocks which have to be seen to be believed. They sort of echo the feeling of having been there a long time. Handicap

accessible concrete walkways leave no visitor excluded. I have several shellacked hornet's nests in a protected area which still look good after many years outside. There are many nuances which don't compete, lurking where you find them, offering mystery and surprise and a touch of whimsy to make you smile. There is always something more to be found, and the surprise of finding it. A couple years ago the City Administrator offered a thousand dollars to the person who found the first weed when the European garden tour came here with Charlie Pacquelot, a good old boy, and nobody won.

When I hired on the C+O RR, we were still on the 16 hour day. Some of the guys I worked with were hired before my mother was born. They liked to wear their 40 and 50 year service pins where you could see them. I worked a local for a while with an old head, peacock-blue eyed Dutchman conductor, who every now and then would ask me to pick him up a daily racing form in the morning on the way to work. He would say: "John, remember, they only go around once." I relate that to my garden. Some things only happen once in a lifetime. We are born, we die, and, if luck will have it, we may have one garden for the rest of our life. They used to say that life begins at 40. Actually life begins on the day you start a garden. My interest in horticulture has now crystallized. You can never draw a line and consider the garden to be finished. Nothing is ever the be all and the end all, although I have read that you might get it right when you're about 97 years old. Get plugged in and make it happen. Here is to hope that never dies!

I am 66 years old, having fun and being happy, doing what I want to do when I want to do it. Then there is the you-know-what, TIME! Please stop the clock. This getting older thing keeps growing like a weed. It takes longer to get a lot of things done with the added bonus of aches, pain and forgetfulness. Now I am looking for mental compost, but I don't let my chores get too exhausting. I know gardening reduces stress and contributes to wellness. I just hope it keeps me from getting decrepit. How I waited impatiently for my trees to grow large and then had to cut some of them down to let more light in. Now it's mostly hands-on with the little ones. They are more fun now and easier to move around.



This past summer was hot and dry, right up there with 1988, and the weeds are viciously invasive. Yet, no matter how hot it gets, mornings are the best time to work outside. Getting something done in the garden is so rewarding even though the work is never done. The sense that there is more to come and that every day will bring change is still exciting. I love the cheerful melodies of the birds, the cicadas singing, the crickets at night, the turpentine of the pine needles and the fragrance of the garden, I like the way the spruces bristle. Unexpected beauty is always a thrill; all the colors, shapes, textures, and diverse patterns which change with every step I take. So great is their appeal that it has a profound effect on my spirit. Just being outside when the weather is nice is worth something. I look forward to sitting on

the porch in stormy weather or going for a moonlight walk around the yard. Visiting gardens is an adventure for ideas and stimulus. Most of all I love the thrilling discovery of finding new plants, especially slower growing conifers. They are so much fun, and, even if you lose one, you still had your fun.

I don't think we ever get over losing our friends and loved ones. It seems like the good times will never end. I watch my neighbor Ed. He is 83, home alone, never complains, keeps busy most of the time, always pleasant and willing to sit down and talk to me at any time. Ed has the answer: "Don't just sit around doing nothing and complain about everything." Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today

is our gift, the real present, if you can't change it, don't worry about it, go there, or dwell on it. Just put your head down and go, case closed.

I know several ACS members I seldom see, yet their good vibes reach out to me. There is an osmosis one gardener seems to have for



another; they should all know who I'm talking about. I can't spell names very well. I share your conifer love, and miss seeing you more often. There are many coniferites I have only read about in the *Conifer Quarterly* issues, yet I feel I know them. There is a strong, common bond among all lovers of gardens, which usually makes for instant friendship. I really enjoyed the ACS National Meeting in Ann Arbor this year. Curiosity brings us together. As hot as it was, nobody was really complaining. I admired that. The fellowship was as good as it gets. The whole deal charged up my battery, or whatever you call it. My heart goes out to all of you who made this happen.

John Vrablic

Editor's note: I visited John's garden for the first time with Hans Thumm two weeks after the National Meeting. Hans also brought me to one of his design projects and his own nursery. I visited John again and asked if he would allow me to do a profile on him. John asked for some questions. To my surprise, he emailed his wonderful story. In his own beautiful words he has described a marvelous journey which has produced and still sustains an incredible garden. Thank you, John, for allowing all of us to know you and your garden.

# Book Review

Text by Tom Cox

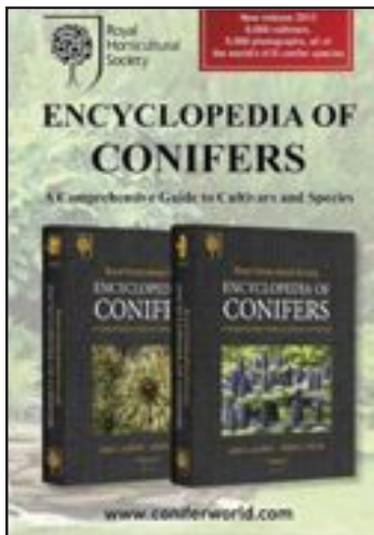
## ***ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CONIFERS: A Comprehensive Guide to Cultivars and Species***

Aris G. Auders and Derek P. Spicer. (2012) Royal Horticultural Society.  
2 volumes ISBN 9781907057151  
\$236.00, hard cover.

Written by Aris G. Auders, a conifer collector and photographer from Latvia, and Derek P. Spicer, Chairman of the British Conifer Society; unquestionably this is the *magnum opus* of all books ever written on conifer cultivars. No other work comes close!

Seven years in the making, this two volume (1,500 pages) set is beautifully illustrated with over 5,000 high quality photographs. As a reference book for conifer cultivars, the photographs are accurate. While the actual plant may slightly differ based on growing conditions, the photographs provide the reader with a good idea of what the plant might look like in the landscape. It is refreshing to see large photos instead of the typical thumbnail shot which is lacking in detail. Also, many pages are devoted to a high resolution, full-page image of a single specimen. No other book offers this. Covering about 8,000 cultivars, and all of the world's 615 conifer species (this number varies based on the taxonomist), plus their subspecies and varieties, this is a herculean effort.

While the rather brief description of each cultivar is about the same as one would typically find in a good nursery catalog, what makes this work special is the vast number of plants which the authors cover in this one work. I am astounded at the sheer number of hours in research this must have required. Auders and Spicer mention the synonyms for numerous cultivars, which can be helpful when one is attempting to straighten out their database, as well as when labeling. This is well researched, and the authors provide some interesting history. For cultivars, Auders and Spicer also include the discoverer or originator, along with the date and country of origin. There is botanical consistency throughout the book, and the authors have closely adhered to the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (ICNCP).



As a reference for most of the world's recognized cultivars, it is without peer, but as a general conifer reference, it misses the mark. This is not a criticism as such, since this work serves to augment previous books by authors such as Farjon, Eckenwalder, Debreczy and Rácz, who did not address cultivated varieties. From a taxonomic standpoint, the authors follow Farjon in their treatment of the 615 species they cover. Their inclusion of species also helps the reader attain a better understanding of lineage. Understandably, temperate conifers receive more detailed coverage, but an overview of tropical conifers is also offered.

My only criticism is the same as that with all European authors and those from other regions outside the southeastern U.S. Their knowledge of growing conditions in the southeast region appears non-existent, and, for some reason, they appear reluctant to reach out for data. No pictures appear from the southeast region, and no principle conifer collectors, nurseries or arboreta are mentioned in their "List of Originators". This is further manifested in the absence of cultivars in their book with a southern origin such as *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Komodo Dragon', 'Tarheel Blue', 'Chapel View' and 'Radicans' -- four excellent selections of Japanese cedar. Also, in a number of instances, the authors are incorrect in their zone hardiness for various species which have performed well in Zone 7 and 8, where they rate them as Zone 9. These predictions are often based purely on the native habitat and also fail to take into account the effect of summer heat on the hardening of wood. The potential downside to these generalizations is that gardeners may not be tempted to try something which is rated as tender.

With noted extremely minor exceptions, I like this book a lot and highly recommend it. It is my "go to" source for information on cultivars, and a book of its type I value most. The format is easy to use with each genus being listed alphabetically, followed by its various species and then cultivars. No book on conifers I have ever come across has this many pictures. Many were photographed in summer and winter to show color and texture changes through the seasons. While some of the cultivars may currently not be attainable in the U.S., this is a great book to peruse on those cold winter days when all we want to do is sit by a fire.

At the time of this review, the details on any ACS discount or stateside shipping has yet to be worked out. For more information visit [www.coniferworld.com](http://www.coniferworld.com) and Amazon.

Tom Cox



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# Report on the Jean Iseli Grant Presented to Hidden Lake Gardens in 2008

Text and photos by Steven W. Courtney

**H**idden Lake Gardens was fortunate to have received the Jean Iseli Grant in 2008. Our application's primary focus was the insurance of the continued availability of plants from The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers. The grant was matched by the Iseli Nursery.

The combined funding has made a significant difference in Hidden Lake Gardens' ability to produce Harper Collection trees for itself and for other botanic gardens. In addition, individuals have also reaped the benefit from plant duplication. Thus, all those touched by the project at the Gardens continue to be very grateful.

The greatest expenditure of the funds made it possible to purchase compatible rootstocks for grafting. Other supplies needed for the operation such as grafting tools, rubber bands, pots and growing media were also obtained through the Iseli grant. To date, we have grafted hundreds of plants. We also have had to root some of the species which tend to be hard to graft, but will root, such as *Tsuga*. Some of the plants produced from our grafting and rooting procedures have been sold at our annual Mother's Day plant sale, at conferences and also at our Visitor Center.

In addition to the grafting operation, a Nearing Frame needed to be constructed for the rooting end of the production project. This structure has housed and nurtured those specimens we have had to duplicate by rooting. The Nearing Frame was also paid for by the funds from the Iseli grant.



*Thuja  
occidentalis*  
'Sherwood  
Frost'



Nearing Frame



*Abies concolor* 'Hosta La Vista'

In the course of producing plants, we had great success as well as a few failures. However, even our failures were translated into improvements so as to make the process better and maximize production. We realize that the Iseli grant was merely a seed for our future production of Harper trees.

Admittedly, a limited number of the grafts have been made available for sale to the general public. Plant sales support primarily the ongoing operations of this production venture beyond the initial funding to be sure. The grafts have been very well received and were very special because we could tell the purchaser that they were propagated from plants in the Harper Collection by the staff of Hidden Lake Gardens. Botanical gardens and arboreta have typically begun to attract visitors and customers who want to take a piece of the facility home with them. This is a growing trend.

One added benefit from the Iseli grant has been our ability to produce *Abies concolor* 'Hosta La Vista'. Even though the broom is not located in the Harper Collection, it is a signature plant of Hidden Lake Gardens and has a great appeal to many coniferites. This witch's broom is in Hosta Hillside. 'Hosta La Vista' finds itself growing across the country. It has in turn been grafted by others interested in furthering the plant's place in conifer history. The mother tree, *Abies concolor*, is in decline, and so too the broom itself. These occurrences make even more significant the Iseli funding and what we at HLG have done with it. Since witch's brooms, of which there are two in the Harper Collection, are

sought after by conferites, as the basis of tighter and more dwarf trees, their propagation becomes ever so much more important.

In summary, Hidden Lake Gardens has been making major contributions to its own collection, to those of other botanic gardens and arboreta, and to the general public by using Iseli money to promote the furthering of the Harper Collection. We would like to thank the selection committee for having provided this grant to the Gardens and for continuing to support the efforts of public gardens in many geographical areas.



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## **Next Issue: WINTER 2013**

Our next issue will feature:  
**Hearing from ACS Members on  
Future Themes for the CQ**

Conifers are an amazement over which we and nature share stewardship. They are such unique plants that surprise all who stop by to sojourn. The themes proposed are meant to inspire and to inquire. Whether you are a novice, an explorer or a connoisseur and you have a story to tell – a favorite conifer, pictures, plant care, problem solutions, a new hybrid or cultivar, we want to hear from you. We welcome any interpretation or addition to the main themes we offer.

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

The Science of Conifers  
(Spring 2013)

We at *Conifer Quarterly* welcome news alerts about conifers or about our members.

Contact Dr. Ronald J. Elardo  
(conifereditor@yahoo.com) to  
discuss your ideas

# 2013 Collectors Conifer of the Year

Text and Photos by Dennis Lee

For the 8<sup>th</sup> year of our program, we are featuring three selections which all together allow for greater opportunity of being suitable for the variables which govern our members' gardens. Suitability is not only limited by performance from differing climatic conditions, but is also impacted by personal preferences for form, color, and texture. The degree of "Conifer Addiction", of course, also comes into play.

Two of the conifers are very cold hardy and will be adaptable to quite northerly areas. Also, both of them provide an opportunity to brighten up a landscape by incorporating yellow into the scene. Utilizing yellow-foliaged plants can induce cheerfulness and warmth in a garden, something which can be even more appreciated and important in the colder and starker months. Besides eye-catching, yellow color, one of them also draws attention with its weeping and cascading habit. This can impart the illusion of flow in the garden, or captivate an observer with a remarkable silhouette in certain lighting.

The third selection is a genus which has not yet been offered in the program and is suitable for hot, southern gardens. It possesses appeal as a dwarf with unusual looks and a low-growing habit. Besides being a conversation piece, its form, texture and color transformation provide for much interest.

***Picea abies* 'Gold Drift'**: Norway spruce is well known for producing many mutations and non-typical forms. Thus, there are a great variety of selections one can choose to create an interesting and pleasing garden. However, 'Gold Drift' really stands out as exceptional. It was found in 1990 by Bob Fincham of Coenosium Gardens in Washington as a yellow sport on a weeping Norway spruce, *Picea abies* 'Reflexa'. After evaluation, Bob released limited quantities 10 years later, and demand is expected to exceed supply for some time.

With its pendulous habit, 'Gold Drift' can be placed to drape over a wall or a rock ledge, allowed to travel across the ground as a rambling groundcover, perched to cascade down a variable slope, or staked to achieve a desired degree of aerial dominance. Depending on how it is utilized, its form in 10 years could be 6' high by



*Picea abies* 'Gold Drift'

2' wide, or vice a versa. Under ideal conditions, it has been known to grow a foot a year, but 4" to 6" is generally what to expect. It is so amenable and responsive to pruning and training that it can be fitted into somewhat constricted garden spaces and still provide long term interest and enjoyment. Without any boundaries or attention, it will eventually become a predominant landscape specimen. In any case, each 'Gold Drift' will take on a unique look whether it is influenced by the creativity of the caretaker or by inherent environmental conditions.

As for its color, the new growth is a lime green in early spring which becomes a vibrant gold in late spring and summer sun. The gold persists into winter and, as this season progresses, the color becomes more subdued, and the plant takes on a yellow frosted appearance. The color intensity thus cycles from brilliant and bold to a soft glow.

'Gold Drift' is considered hardy into USDA Zone 3 and can be expected to perform well into USDA Zone 7. Best performance will be achieved in acidic soils with good drainage and moisture retention. Our plants are grafted onto *Picea abies* understock and the grafts have been encouraged to take on an upright direction. At this stage of their development, they can either be trained to be upright, or, without attention, they will naturally be more horizontal.

***Pinus mugo* 'Carstens Wintergold'**: The versatile mugo pine is often seen in common landscapes along with more specialized ones such as rock gardens, especially after dwarf forms became readily available. 'Carstens Wintergold' is a slow-growing, compact broadly globose form which is exceptional for its intense winter color. Although its curved needles on dense, rigid branches are green in summer, cold weather initiates a color change to deep bright yellow. As the cold intensifies, the more it becomes a beacon of brightness. Where it receives ample winter sunshine, closer inspection will often reveal infusions of orange or copper highlighting the needles while their bases will graduate into shades of green. If there is a desire to electrify a somber winter scene, compel attention from an observer, or create a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde seasonal surprise, this is a conifer for such effects.

This selection is hardy into USDA Zone 3 and will perform well into USDA Zone 6. Below Zone 6, the plant can be stressed where it experiences exceptionally hot, muggy weather which does not cool off at night. Our plants are grafted onto *Pinus sylvestris* understock which does well in USDA Zones 3 through 7. This understock also tolerates poorer drainage, poorer soils and slightly alkaline soils better than mugo pine. The graft union appears a little higher up on the understock than many may expect (4" to 5"). This allows for a more



*Pinus mugo* 'Carstens Wintergold'

prominent initial presentation in the landscape. As the plant grows, it will quickly envelop its short pedestal.

Growth is about 2” per year. In 10 years the plant can be about 1’ 6” high and about 2’ wide. It tolerates some summer shade well, but full winter sun will insure the brightest coloration.

‘Carstens Wintergold’ originated as a seedling before 1988 and was found by Erwin Carstens of Varel, Germany. The website for the family-operated Carstens Nursery lists this selection as ‘Carsten Winter Gold’. This variation in the name is also found in the trade and in listings. However, the American Conifer Society recognizes only ‘Carstens Wintergold’.

***Cunninghamia lanceolata* var. *konishii* ‘Little Leo’:** China fir grows over a large range in Asia with isolated populations on the island of Taiwan and in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. At one time these populations were classified as a separate species of *Cunninghamia*. However, DNA testing has shown little genetic differences so that now taxonomists consider them a variant form of China fir with only superficial differences.

‘Little Leo’ was found and named by Leo Coolwyn of Coolwyn Nursery in Monbulk, Australia. It is a very dwarf selection of the species with a flattened, round, pin cushion form and a ground-hugging habit. The multi-stemmed,



*Cunninghamia lanceolata* var. *konishii* ‘Little Leo’

overlapping branches have spiny looking, green juvenile foliage which flashes silver. The foliage, however, is actually soft to the touch and is further accentuated with brown buds along the short stems. In the winter, additional interest arises when the foliage takes on tones of bronze to purple.

The plant only grows about 1” to 2” a year. In 10 years it could be 6” high and 12” wide.

Sometimes new growth will tend to show more vigor and thus appear more dominant. If one favors a more open and less diminutive form, enjoy what happens. Otherwise, simply snip out any such growth.

‘Little Leo’ is suited for troughs and for placing up front in a setting where it can be fully appreciated. From a distance one may think that they are about to approach a new selection of *Cryptomeria* or even believe that it could be some unknown selection of juniper. Close up examination will leave one intrigued even after reading the label.

Our plants are propagated from rooted cuttings. They prefer a moisture retentive, well drained, acidic soil. ‘Little Leo’ performs well in Zones 7 through 9 and under hot, humid conditions. A site with mostly sun is best. However, they will tolerate some shade.

**Ordering:** The Collectors Conifer of the Year program is restricted to active members of the American Conifer Society. Purchases are limited to one of each selection per member. The cost for each offering is \$75.00. ‘Gold Drift’ and ‘Carstens Wintergold’ each come with a conditional one year/one time replacement guarantee. Our inventory of ‘Little Leo’ is limited to 50 plants and replacements are not available. Consequently, we can only guarantee that they will arrive in a healthy state, or a refund will be provided. Accompanying each plant will be an anodized aluminum tag with its holder which identifies the plant as a winner of the American Conifer Society’s annual award of “Collectors Conifer of the Year”. Shipping is included in the above costs. For ordering, please complete the order form in this publication. Orders will be filled by order of receipt until the inventory sells out. All orders must be received by February 1, 2013. We cannot ship outside the United States.

Happy *conifering* to all of you!  
Dennis Lee

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# 2013 National Meeting - August 8 - 11 Hudson River Valley

Text by Frank Goodhart



Michael and Beazie Garden *Photo by Michael Larned.*

**T**he 2013 national meeting is hosted by the Northeast Region. The venues are in the beautiful and historic Hudson River valley. This is a rustic and rural area with mountain views, rock outcroppings, and other natural scenic areas which will agree with your soul and nourish it. The venues include Quaker Hill, a 250 acre garden which was built to mimic nature in all aspects, including native plants of the eastern seaboard. We will visit the Steinhardt estate, where there is a conifer collection as well as exotic animals all on a rolling area with rock ledges. The garden of two of our members, Michael and Beazie Larned is our third venue. Here in this outstanding garden one can find nearly every type of garden room. Rock walls and outcroppings add to the fun here, and the collection of conifers is well displayed. Our last venue has not been determined just yet. A post tour is being considered.

Our hotel is the Holiday Inn in Mt. Kisco, just off the Saw Mill River Parkway.  
The closest airport is White Plains NY.

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# The Answer Guy

## *“Why the ACS dues increase?”*

Text by Chris Daeger

This *Quarterly*'s fictional question comes from all the membership. The answer comes from your entire National Board and officers who make up the Answer Guy staff, and this is one of those times the answers were needed from as many sources as possible.

Of course many of you wish to know why the dues are increasing and rightly so. The Board worked very hard to balance the ACS budget. Cuts were made, and costs for everything were considered and adjusted. When the dust cleared we still faced a deficit; a true sign of the times. Our membership numbers are down too.

As much as this may sound like a cliché, the costs of doing business keep going up. The costs to put out the *Conifer Quarterly* have risen; postage and mailings have increased too. Our contracted employees, and increases in our vendor's costs have been kept to a very minimum.

We hope that the minimal increase, which goes into effect in 2013, will not be a burden on anyone. If it's any consolation, our dues have not increased since 2006. We also found that other organizations such as ours are facing the same scenarios. The Board is hopeful that it will be many years before another increase is even considered.

However, the following items may help soften the blow and in turn actually be one of those instances where you will be getting more “bang for your buck”. Some of these are part of the cost cutting measures discussed at recent board meetings. We are pleased to present to you some soon-to-be implemented improvements to the membership benefits.

- Improvements to the website such as being able to renew your membership online, register for annual meetings, and even links to educational videos on Youtube!
- The membership directory will be available on a “Members only” portion of the website. You'll be able to look up a fellow member or garden, find their email address and contact them.
- The conifer database will be improved as well as finding past *Quarterly* issues and more regional news too.
- Plans on improving and enlarging the *Conifer Quarterly* are being considered as well.

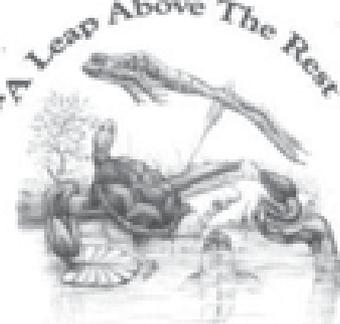
We would like to offer this request for all the members of our great society: Will you do all of us fellow Coneheads a favor and be willing to try and recruit just one new member in the coming year? The addition of that many new members will go a very, very long way in increasing our revenues, spreading out costs, and, more importantly, giving us all many more people with whom we can share our love of all things conifer.

## Publication Dates

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Calendar Quarter</u>	<u>Deadline to submit articles</u>	<u>Publication Date (approx.mailing)</u>
Winter	Jan/Feb/Mar	Nov 22	Jan 31
Spring	Apr/May/Jun	Feb 15	Apr 30
Summer	Jul/Aug/Sept	May 15	July 31
Fall	Oct/Nov/Dec 31	Aug 15	Oct 31

### Submit articles/photos to:

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The John Vrablic Garden, Rossford, Ohio *Photo by Ron Elardo*



Th Larned Garden *Photo by Michael Larned*



The Paula and Ray Rollet Garden *Photo by Susan Eyre*