

conifer

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QUARTERLY

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ACS REFERENCE GARDEN
**DENVER BOTANIC
GARDEN**

SAVE THE DATES: National ACS Meeting • August 17–19 (20), 2017 • Syracuse, NY

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All editorial and advertising matters should be sent to: Ron Elardo, 5749 Hunter Ct., Adrian, MI 49221-2471, (517) 902-7230 or email conquarteditor@gmail.com

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CONIFER Quarterly

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Cover Photo

Pinus densiflora 'Golden Ghost'
Photo by Joseph F. Elardo at his parents' home.



LEARNING THE VALUE OF ACS REFERENCE GARDENS AT VIRGINIA'S GARDNER MEMORIAL GARDEN

BY BILL BLEVINS

If you're anything like me, taking a 30-minute detour on a road trip is considered a "scenic drive" if the purpose of the alternate route is to visit a conifer garden. I regularly travel Interstate 95 in central Virginia, and every time I see Colesville Nursery off to my east I think, "Man, I need to remember to exit at Ashland next time."

Well, not too far from Ashland is the Al Gardner Memorial Conifer Garden in Goochland, Virginia, between Richmond and Charlottesville. Gardner, who passed away in 2007, co-owned Colesville and co-founded the nearby Acer Acres, which specializes in container-grown Japanese maples. Gardner was an avid conifer collector and advocated for increasing their use in home landscapes.

This American Conifer Society Reference Garden is located on the campus of J. Sargent Reynolds Community College and features over 125 different conifers.

Conifers are interesting to me year-round, but I particularly love seeing how many of them change dramatically in winter. I discovered and first visited the Reynolds arboretum last November and returned for a second visit in March.

Pinus virginiana 'Wate's Golden' with a backdrop of *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Al's Blue' is spectacular. *Picea glauca*

'Pendula' stands solemnly behind. On a cloudy day, *Picea omorika* 'Skylands' rises above the evergreens like a fireworks display.

Just down the hill from the reference garden, you'll find a grove of mature trees representing a wide variety of species. Walk around the buildings and you'll find lush landscaping. Don't miss *Pinus parviflora* 'Tanima-no-yuki' guarding the walkway to Building C. I guess I should have assumed that the area's only school with a horticulture department would have a beautiful property!

Over the past year, I've helped Colby Feller with his work at the ACS Reference Garden atop The Arsenal in New York City's Central Park. I've walked through the conifers at the State Arboretum of Virginia, 70 miles west of Washington, D.C. I regularly visit Richmond's Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and make a point to see their conifer reference plantings, but as a relatively new ACS member, the term "reference garden" didn't sink in with me until my last visit to the Reynolds campus.



Gardner Memorial Garden from a drone



Pinus virginiana 'Wate's Golden' (center), *Picea glauca* 'Pendula' (left), *Cryptomeria japonica* 'AI's Blue' (back right) and *Platycladus orientalis* 'Frank Boy' (front center)

I began collecting conifers in 2013. I have since planted hundreds in my front yard. Since I have plenty of space, I have been buying larger and larger plants recently, but I'm still a sucker for the interesting young plants, typically grown by Iseli Nursery, which you find in pint-sized containers at local nurseries.

Last Spring, I bought *Platycladus orientalis* simply because it looked like a box of spaghetti growing out of a small pot. The plant must love its spot, as it has doubled in size over the past year. Since it was mixed with other dwarf-sized plants at the nursery, I didn't think too much about future growth when I bought it and stuck it in the ground.



Juniperus davurica 'Expansa Variegata'

Walking the paths at Reynolds, I stopped to check out an unfamiliar 6-foot-tall, 4-foot-wide golden shrub and walked around to the other side to locate the tag. Lo and behold, it was 'Franky Boy'! Now I'm reconsidering where I choose to plant mine!

I'll be adding ACS Reference Garden visits to my research routine as I compare my growing conifer wish list with the interesting plants I find on my travels.

Business takes me to Portland next. I see Silverton isn't that far away... 📍

Editor's Note: Bill used a DJI Phantom 3 4K Quadcopter CP.

"WALKING THE PATHS AT REYNOLDS, I STOPPED TO CHECK OUT AN UNFAMILIAR 6-FOOT-TALL, 4-FOOT-WIDE GOLDEN SHRUB AND WALKED AROUND TO THE OTHER SIDE TO LOCATE THE TAG. LO AND BEHOLD, IT WAS 'FRANKY BOY'! NOW I'M RECONSIDERING WHERE I CHOOSE TO PLANT MINE!"

To find a map and explore the AI Gardener Conifer Garden plants and photos online, visit: <http://www.plantsmap.com/organizations/reynolds-community-college>

2017 COLLECTORS' CONIFER OF THE YEAR

BY DENNIS LEE

An upfront warning! Even if you think your “Conifer Addiction” is firmly under control, these offerings may create overwhelming temptations. We actually hope they do, as your indulgence will provide the Society with additional monetary support to promote further conifer education and utilization. Additionally, as a benefit to members, we hope you find this program an opportunity to increase interest and enjoyment in your conifer collection and landscape.

It's our 12th year for the CCOY program and we are elated to offer a surprising new conifer selection which has never been released before. Here's a chance to be one of the very first to obtain a choice garden stand-out. In addition, we are very excited to offer a selection with a work-around in disease resistance and it too is surprising, especially with its name.

The first offering is a chance seedling which has only been under observation since 2005, but it is very obvious that it is an exemplary garden gem. This structurally noteworthy dwarf has good hardiness and also tolerates heat and humidity well. Its refined, verdant green, twisted, scale-like foliage entices prolonged looks of study. Such a plant will not only provide bragging rights of being the first to have, but will also fortify the structure and texture of your garden composition.

The second offering is also a chance seedling. It has been around for over 35 years but has gone out of vogue because of a root disease. Now that disease-resistant rootstock has been developed, this come-back-beauty is now grafted with the potential to be appreciated again. As a narrow, upright, intermediate dwarf, it easily fits into a garden. Its dense, steel-blue foliage lends it to be placed in a prominent location, especially to compliment other colors and to make a statement.

***Thuja occidentalis* Primo™ 'Isilprim'**

In 2004 Iseli Nursery sowed seeds from an Eastern arborvitae cultivar named 'Zmatlik' hoping to spot some unusual seedlings. One seedling did grab attention and it was quickly realized it had several choice ornamental attributes “of the finest quality”, or **Primo™**. As it relates to this premium conifer, it has firm, spire-like growth which quickly captures

and holds the eye. The refined, scale-like foliage twists and turns to provide much textural interest and beauty, resembling that of a Hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*) rather than that of an arborvitae. In summer, it is a refreshing, vivid green which eventually becomes muted for the winter. Being on the demure side with only 2 to 4 inches of growth a year, its proportions lend itself to troughs and small spaces. It responds well to judicious pruning although that is not necessary as sculptural charm and character will develop naturally without manipulation. On its own in 10 years with good growing conditions, expect 3 ft. in height and 1½ feet in width. **Primo™** is rated suitable for USDA zones 3 through cooler micro-climates of Zone 8. It performs well in full sun or part shade with an average loamy soil. It appreciates soils with uniform moisture content and will be fairly drought tolerant once well established. The 7 to 9 inch high cutting propagated plants we have reserved are limited to 150 and have been carefully pruned to provide you with a stocky, healthy start. For a tough, unique, easy to grow, well-behaved plant with great form and texture, this is a prime candidate for contributing to that “wow-factor” in your conifer collection. Enjoy!

***Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Blue Surprise'**

In 1854, seeds of this species were received at Peter Lawson and Son nursery in Edinburgh, Scotland. Many unusual mutations appeared in the resultant seed crops and soon thereafter this conifer was commonly referred to as Lawson cypress. Noted for its many colorful, ornamental cultivars, this false cypress became quite popular for landscaping purposes. However a root disease, *Phytophthora lateralis*, became prevalent and caused serious losses of both forest and garden specimens. Together, Oregon State University



Thuja occidentalis **Primo™** 'Isilprim'. Photo by Randy Smith.



Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Blue Surprise'. Photo by Sam Pratt.

and the US Forest Service searched out and developed disease-resistant varieties which are now used as rootstock in grafting susceptible ornamental varieties.

A typical Lawson cypress produces two types of foliage as it ages, juvenile and adult. As a very young plant it has short, needle-like foliage. Later, overlapping scales appear which form cascading sprays of flattened, lacey boughs. 'Blue Surprise' never grows up, so to say, as it maintains its upward pointing, prickly-looking foliage which is actually rather soft to the touch. The fine-textured, steel-blue needles are highlighted with silver and take on a purplish cast for the winter. Besides a unique color of blue and a pleasing color change for winter, it has a handsome, narrow upright, dense habit which makes a slight spiral effect. Depending on the site, it may grow 2 to 6 inches a year. Over 10 years it can be expected to be around 6 feet high and 2 feet wide. It is tolerant of shade, but will dazzle much more in sun along with having a more pronounced winter tint. It performs well in average soils, but good drainage is a must. Of course it cannot be planted too deeply so as to cause the upper grafted portion to root out on its own and be at risk for *Phytophthora*. It is suitable for USDA Zones 5 through 7.

We have 100 robust, 18 to 20 inch tall plants reserved which are grafted onto disease-resistant rootstock. 'Blue Surprise' originated as an odd seedling which was noticed by Anthony

P. J de Beer in Tilburg, The Netherlands, in the 1960s. At one time it could be found in many settings as striking pillars of blue. Now again it can add prominence. Restore and create!

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 is \$75.00 for either **Primo™** or **'Blue Surprise'**. Each offering comes with a conditional one year/one time replacement guarantee. 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 costs. For ordering, please complete the form in this publication. Orders will be filled by date of receipt until inventory sells out. All orders must be received by February 1, 2017. We cannot ship outside the United States. Happy conifering to all of you! 🌲

SAVE THE DATES:

ACS CENTRAL NEW YORK STYLE

BY GERALD KRAL

In 2007, the Northeast Region of ACS visited Sycamore Hill Gardens, Topiary Gardens and Mango Gardens located in the beautiful Finger Lakes Region of Central New York. ACS Members are invited to revisit these and other gardens at a much larger venue, a National ACS Meeting, August 17–19 (20), 2017.

The best gardens always change and adapt. See for yourself what 10 years of new ideas, new conifers, and “Addictive Conifer Syndrome” can accomplish.

Our “headquarters” will be the gorgeous, newly renovated (2014 and 2016) Doubletree Hilton Syracuse. Hotel amenities approach 5-star quality. New features include a brand new lobby, restaurant (with an award winning chef), and bar. Outdoor beautification includes the front entrance, landscaping of the outdoor and indoor heated pools, and an expanded patio featuring fire pits and cabanas. A complimentary shuttle will whisk you to and from Syracuse Hancock International Airport ten minutes away. All meeting rooms will feature their own dedicated hi-speed internet. Every guest, of course, gets a warm, chocolate chip cookie upon arrival. Just minutes away is Destiny Mall (the largest shopping center in New York State) offering entertainment, numerous and varied dining options, and exceptional shopping.



The head of the dragon.
Photo by Karen Hanford.



A venerable juniper.
Photo by Dianne Bordini.

Registration and a Social Hour with cash bar and a buffet dinner set the mood on Thursday, August 17. Robert Fincham, a founding ACS member, plant propagator extraordinaire, and soon, publisher of two books will give the Keynote Address. His topic will be, "Something New Is Not Always Something Better". This presentation will also address some of Fincham's incredible *Picea abies* 'Acrocona' x 'Gold Drift' work.

Friday we will visit Sycamore Hill Gardens, Dianne Bordoni's Gardens and Mango Gardens. Sycamore Hill Gardens is a 40-acre private estate designed by Karen and George Hanford. Sycamore Hill boasts several new coniferous exclamation points including a 100 foot long "George's Dragon", a playful homage to George Hanford's love of conifers. The dragon is composed of 32 large specimens of *Picea pungens* 'Glauca Procumbens'. We are picturing only the head. To see the rest, you will need to attend.

Dianne Bordoni's Gardens show what can be done on a smaller scale with the clever use of conifers to enhance and make this landscape unusual and unique. Thirty-one years in the making, the Bordoni Gardens excel at "layering" plant material, much the way plants grow in nature. The site features a small pond and several wooden structures using repurposed material from the property and, of course, many conifers of specimen quality.

Dr. Mango's Garden has hosted tours by several National and Regional plant societies. Many a happy bride and groom have celebrated their wedding in the gardens of this extensive estate. The Mango Gardens promise us some exquisite conifer plantings with maximum "drool factor".

Sycamore Hill will also be the featured lunch venue on Friday. The "Chicken Bandit", a local food truck, will be at the "TENT" where you can enjoy a leisurely lunch. A sponsored wine-tasting and -pour will also be available.

Friday evening, after a buffet dinner, Christie Dustman, an award-winning garden designer in the Boston,



Abies procera 'Glauca', a cluster of fir cones. Photo by Jerry Kral

Massachusetts, area will give a presentation on using conifers in your gardens. To quote Christie: "Conifers are uniquely qualified as being living sculptures in your landscape. They have a stately and commanding presence [which]... just isn't paralleled with deciduous plants. Conifers provide substance and assist in composition. See your conifers differently by looking through the lens of a landscape designer."

Saturday morning offers a full breakfast followed by announcements and a featured presentation by the famous (or infamous) tag-team of Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila. The topic will be, "Planting When the Roots Aren't Right". To quote Janet and Steve: "Today we have an unprecedented wide choice in plant species and variety. However, we are also in the midst of a perfect storm of production practices and economic realities which likely mean the plant you buy will not have a good root system. It is particularly sad to see dreams ruined and years wasted when a dwarf conifer fails in what may appear to be [an] inexplicable manner."



Picea asperata 'China Blue' (dragon spruce).
Photo by Jerry Kral.

To quote Michael Dirr, considered the World's High Guru of woody plants, after attending a talk by Janet; "What a great presentation. And no one told me you're also a comedian". You will be royally entertained.

A lunch catered by Jolle's French Bistro, featuring an olive oil and bread tasting, will again be at the "TENT" at Sycamore Hill. A sponsored wine-tasting and -pour will feature wines from the Finger Lakes Region. Saturday will also feature visits to Topiary Gardens, the gardens and nursery of Diana Smith and the gardens of C.J. Ryan and Eileen Murphy.

Topiary Gardens are a collector's paradise for all. The 700+ varieties of maples and the 100+ varieties of Asiatic, *Lilium longiflorum*, Oriental and other species lilies are just the appetizers. The gardens around the ponds and house at Topiary Gardens have matured and feature many added details. Conifers and Japanese maples complement each other perfectly. Topiary is a working nursery which specializes in some of the very latest (and rarest) Japanese maple and conifer cultivars.

The gardens of Drs. C.J. Ryan & Eileen Murphy offer a dramatic rockery which slopes down to the shore of Skaneateles Lake. Several conifers enhance this rockery, and the lake view is perfect.

Saturday evening will feature a full service, sit-down dinner and our Silent and Live Auctions. At auction will be a rare offering from the famous Dennis Dodge Collection (held in reserve just for this meeting). Sunday morning enjoy a full breakfast and the tailgate sale.

Sunday is also very special in that we are offering a full day **Conifer College-Central New York Style!** Requiring a special registration and perhaps an extra night's stay, this event combines access to some of the best conifer information available along with an incredible sight-seeing opportunity. All of our main speakers, Fincham, Dustman, Macunovich and Nikkila will be offering classes. Other classes will feature several ACS notables of Regional, National and International expertise. Conifer College will also be offering afternoon field trips where you can observe several styles of conifer pruning, as well as the design and planting of conifer rockeries in large, frost proof ceramic containers featuring the use of miniature conifers. The day will end with a special Dinner Cruise along the shores of Skaneateles Lake. Thanks to the support of several sponsors, this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will be offered at an incredible bargain. You will never see the likes of it again. Seriously consider spending an extra day (or several) in Syracuse and register for "Conifer College-Central New York Style". 📍

Note: Current sponsors for ACS-Central New York Style and Conifer College include: Christie Dustman, Finger Lakes Wineries, George & Karen Hanford, Harbor View Wine and Liquors, and Jerry & Karen Kral.

NEWARK, OHIO

2016 NATIONAL MEETING

BY RON ELARDO

Why do members attend a National Meeting? It's really all about "people and plants", a title Jack Wikle of Michigan gave to a collaborative effort to commemorate the 30th anniversary of The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers at Hidden Lake Gardens in 2012.

After all, there is a bond among us to see conifers in different scenes and gardens. A National or a Regional Meeting also allows us to visit with each other, to renew friendships, to make new friendships, to chat, and to analyze the gardens and planting scenes we travel to share.

The best gardens are those which have been born and have evolved from the hard work of getting one's hands dirty. We all spend money for our plants. Some of us struggle even

to afford the conifers, the size of which does not necessarily equate to the price. The best gardens are also the ones which have been inspired by a vision, like Mission Oaks, on the National Meeting agenda, in Zainesville, Ohio. If you have never seen this one, it is well worth a visit. Mission Oaks literally rose from the ashes of a garbage dump.

Also on the docket was Schnormeier Gardens, which surround the home of Ann and Ted Schnormeier. There were expansive vistas and a lovely conifer garden. Ann also gave private tours of her own garden adjacent to their home. She was a gracious hostess.



Dawes' Conifer Collection
Photo by Rich Larson



The National Meeting in Newark successfully presented vigorous and money-garnering live and silent plant auctions. The lecture series demonstrated some of the best information from our own members. Dennis Groh, our keynote speaker, gave a wonderful presentation on Japanese culture as it related to gardens, language and history. He clearly prepared most extensively for his talk. I liked very much Brent Markus' discussion on color in the landscape as afforded by conifers. I have followed his ideas in my own collection. Jack Wikle returned us to Japan for a discussion and presentation of what bonsai is and isn't. Jack was stationed in Japan after the Korean War. I have known Jack since 2007 and have learned a great deal from him as a bonsai-master and a horticulturist. He is ever so much the teacher. Dave Dannaher condensed a long career in propagation into an enjoyable presentation with indispensable tips for those wishing to create their own propagules. Lisa Hollister narrated her journey in founding Reliance Botanics, LLC, a business which is "A development stage biotechnology company developing innovative biological solutions to improve plant and tree resistance to herbivores, insects and rot." Imagine conifers which can ward off intruders of all kinds! There was also an open forum designed to stump the experts. Members volunteered to answer questions and provided a lively, and, at times, humorous approach to gardening dilemmas.

Occasionally, these visits to public gardens coincide with the Society's formal recognition of Reference Garden status. The designation carries the expectation that the collection will always be ready for the public and, certainly, for the members who convene for a National Meeting. I attended the Regional Meeting in Green Bay, where the conifer collection there was awarded this distinction.

The ACS granted two awards. The Chub Harper Award went to Adrian Bloom. The Snyder Award to our Past President Tom Cox, certainly a major force in our Society and a benefactor of great stature.

As the meeting came to an end, we once again split to the four winds, looking forward to meeting in Syracuse, New York, next year. 🍀

The 2016 Central Region recipient was the Dawes Arboretum in Newark, Ohio, the scene of our National Meeting. This is the home garden of Rich Larson, who is a notable conifer registrar and donor. Whenever you want a conifer, if Rich has it, you can rest assured he will get it for you. He is also a well-known propagator and plant developer.

My reference point for Reference Gardens has always started with The Harper Collection at Hidden Lake Gardens, Tipton, Michigan, near my home; so too the Washington State sites and The Oregon Garden. I have been duly impressed by the Southeast Region's gardens I have visited. In the Northeast, for both regional and national gatherings, there have been beautiful gardens. In preparation for a national meeting visit, time and resources can be at a premium.



IN HIS OWN WORDS...

Jack Wikle's summary of his June 2016 presentation, *Bonsai: What It Is and What It Isn't*, at the American Conifer Society's annual convention, Newark, Ohio.

In addition to showing favorite pictures and reminiscing about my experiences as a young G.I., stationed in Japan in the mid-1950's, Jack Wikle also made these points in his presentation, "Bonsai: What It Is and What It Isn't":

Bonsai can be defined as an ancient art form in which woody plants (trees, shrubs or vines) are grown in containers as representations of old or interesting trees. Thus, the bonsai is a unification of creative activity, design; and gardening, the satisfaction realized in nurturing living plants.

"Bonsai" is a Japanese word. Say it "bone-sigh" to pronounce it the way Japanese do. Bonsai is both singular and plural. One is a bonsai. Many are bonsai.

Like other art forms, bonsai culture is a way of communication. This art makes a personal statement about the beauty of nature, about the beauty of trees and about the beauty of interaction between people and nature. Growing bonsai can also be a way of self-discovery and, ultimately, for some people, deeply satisfying meditative activity.

So, bonsai is not a kind of tree but, rather, it is something people do with trees, an art form found rewarding when practiced at many different levels of involvement and accomplishment.

Unlike art forms such as painting pictures, photography and quilting, the bonsai, being alive, is continually changing, never "finished". Never quite the same today as it was yesterday, bonsai is, in many ways, performance art.

People growing bonsai soon realize they are seeing trees everywhere with increased awareness and appreciation.

The variety of tree species grown as bonsai and the many styling possibilities seem almost endless. Thus, this is not a pursuit one masters quickly and quickly feels a need to move on to other challenges.



San Jose Juniper
Photo by Jack Christiansen



Sierra Juniper
Photo by Jack Christiansen

The bonsai beginner is advised to do some reading and to talk with active bonsai enthusiasts to gain an understanding of the basic requirements for trees to survive when grown in containers. Then, acquire some plant material, more than a tree or two, in which one doesn't have too much invested emotionally and monetarily—plants which don't have to survive—and experiment.

If you really want to do this, don't give up too easily. It is not uncommon for a first bonsai to die. Grow with more than one tree so that, if one dies, your loss is not 100%. Having more than one tree gives you more trees to learn from and more trees to have fun with.

Enjoy your bonsai. Both the product and the process can bring a great deal of pleasure whether working with a few experimental trees or the collection of a lifetime. 🌲

2016

THE AMERICAN CONIFER SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

BY GERALD KRAL

Tanner Dell of Clinton, Iowa, was awarded a partial ACS Scholarship of \$1000. Dell will be entering Iowa State University as a freshman for the fall of 2016.

This is the first time the American Conifer Society (ACS) has awarded a scholarship to an undergraduate student. In spite of severe physical challenges as a teenager, Dell has impressed all his mentors with his courage, love of life, willingness to learn and engaging personality.

Dell will be majoring in Horticulture. David Horst of Bickelhaupt Arboretum, Dell's sponsor, worked with Dell the last two years. To quote Horst, "I have been employed with the Bickelhaupt Arboretum for 30 years and have

been very impressed with Tanner's desire to learn...he assists with the grounds maintenance and record keeping...observing his performance first hand I have found him to be an outstanding young man...his knowledge and interest in Horticulture is exceptional."



The ACS congratulates Tanner Dell and hope his interest in Horticulture will also include a lifelong interest in conifers. Tanner will be using his award to help pay for tuition and books. All ACS Scholarship winners have the opportunity to publish how they used the award and how it helped them in a future issue of the **CONIFERQuarterly**. I suspect we have not heard the last of Tanner Dell.

It seems that 2016 is a banner year for Iowa State University. The second ACS Scholarship for \$2500 was awarded to Brandon Miller of Ames, Iowa.

Miller will also be enrolling at Iowa State, but as a graduate student. Miller is currently a member of the ACS, and Miller's Sponsor is Andrew Schmitz of the Brenton Arboretum. Miller will use his scholarship to help with the Fall 2016 semester. The award will also grant Miller the opportunity to pursue his thesis project and graduate with an M.S. degree in Horticulture.

Miller is very involved with the Heritage Tree Project at Iowa State University. He will be working on the propagation and perpetuation of the historically significant trees on the campus. Among these trees are several conifers and ginkgos.

Miller states: "I am an avid 'cone head.' My passion is working with rare, unusual, and underrepresented woody plants. My appreciation for conifers stems from my admiration for firs, pines and ginkgos. I find unusual selections such as dwarfs, variegates, weepers and altogether unusual variations absolutely fascinating!"

Working with Dr. William Graves, Miller's advisor, Miller is currently propagating the progeny of an old grove of *Ginkgo*. The plants will then be offered for sale to alumni of Iowa State so that they have the opportunity to grow a living piece of the campus in their own backyards. Miller will also have the opportunity to publish an article in **CONIFERQuarterly**.



Bringing the next generation into our society via the ACS Scholarship is a great investment in the future. It is hoped that this will help foster a life long interest in conifers. 🌲

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ACS REFERENCE GARDEN

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

BY ANN FRAZIER, OUTREACH ASSISTANT, DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS
PHOTOS BY MIKE KINTGEN

The Rocky Mountain region is renowned for the vast expanses of conifers which clothe not only the higher mountains, but also much of the semi-arid, middle elevations and borderline deserts throughout the Intermountain Region and Southwestern U.S. Conifers here may not grow in such variety or to the enormous size they do along the more humid and temperate West Coast, but the Rockies boast a number of endemic taxa. The conifers here grow more slowly, and often take on windswept, aesthetically beautiful forms which are not often encountered in the wetter maritime regions of the U.S. The species found in this region range from those which live mostly at tree-line (the true bristlecone [*Pinus aristata*], limber pine [*Pinus flexilis*], whitebark pine [*Pinus albicaulis*], and Lyall's larch [*Larix lyallii*]), to several species of junipers found at lower elevations (*Juniperus monosperma*, *J. scopulorum*, *J. osteosperma* and *J. deppeana*).

However, even with such variety and drama of natural conifers, only a small handful of species of conifers were available from nurseries in this region until the 1980's. Over 90% of the conifers encountered in cities here

until that time consisted of these few species, mostly seed grown, and planted again and again. It took the dedication of a very few local plants-people, who took an interest in both native and exotic conifers, and the creation of the Rock Alpine Garden at Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG) in 1980 to popularize a wider diversity of conifers among gardeners in this region. Over the next few decades, the collection of dwarf conifers at DBG expanded to the extent that it is likely the largest such collection between the Sierra Cascade crest and the Midwest.

Overall, DBG currently has six families, 20 genera and 122 species, 402 taxa, 790 accessions, and 1,820 living plant locations of conifers within its various gardens. This represents an astronomic expansion compared to the impoverished number of conifer flora which was once grown in regional gardens.



Different views of the
Japanese Garden and the
Bonsai pavilion



Scenes of the Dwarf Conifer Collection



aristata dominate the collection. DBG leverages the unique and variable traits of dwarf conifers through interpretation and education, holding valuable discussions about plant diversity and genetics around these visually stunning plants.

Japanese Garden and Bill Hosokawa Bonsai Pavilion

The Japanese Garden introduces visitors to traditional Japanese philosophy and culture through a Japanese garden designed for the Rocky Mountain Region. The name of the garden, *Shofu-En* represents “garden of pines and wind.” The main feature of this garden is the abundant use of beautifully aged native character pines (*Pinus ponderosa*), trained in the Japanese style. Shofu-En was designed by Koichi Kawana, President of Environmental Design Associates in Los Angeles, California, and opened in 1979. The basic style of this garden is called *Chisen-kaiyushiki*, which means “strolling garden around a lake”. In this garden, Koichi Kawana decided to feature Colorado plants in the classic Japanese style, and, with the help of volunteers from the local bonsai club, collected over 100 ponderosa pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) which were stunted by harsh, windy conditions in Roosevelt



Different views of the Japanese Garden and the Bonsai pavilion

In 2016, Denver Botanic Gardens was designated as the seventh Western Region ACS Reference Garden, showing its dedication to educating the public about both native and exotic conifers which can be grown in the area. Although conifers are found throughout almost all of the gardens at DBG, either integrated into the design, or acting as a backdrop, there are several collections of particular interest. The Dwarf Conifer Collection, the Japanese Garden, and the Rock Alpine Garden all showcase unique conifers, or unique forms, whereas the Western Panoramas, Gates Montane Garden, and the Mt. Goliath site display conifers native to the various ecosystems of Colorado in more naturalistic settings.

Dwarf Conifer Collection

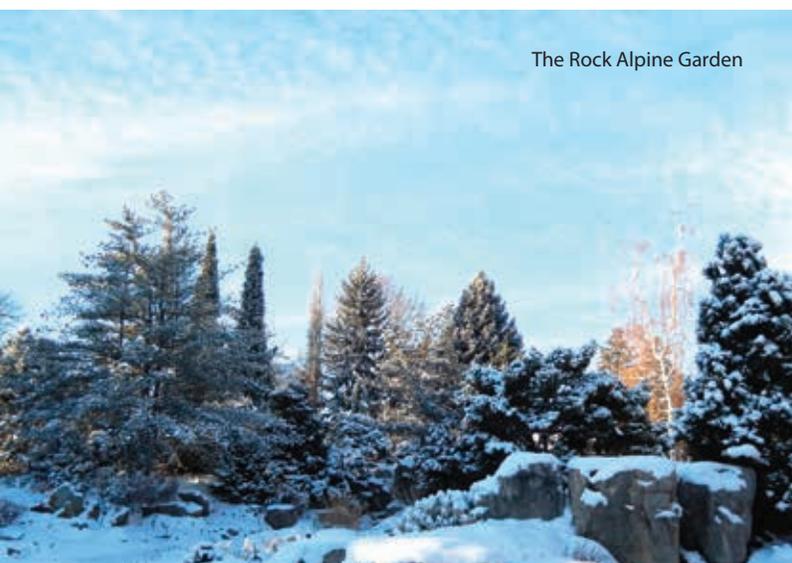
The Dwarf Conifer Collection features the majority of the dwarf conifers housed at Denver Botanic Gardens and was built in two phases around an existing collection. The internationally renowned conifer enthusiast, Jerry Morris, donated most of the specimens in this collection, and consequently, this is the largest collection of Morris’s conifers in the world. Morris harvested scion and seed from brooms throughout the Rocky Mountains for almost 50 years and introduced many dwarf varieties of native Colorado species with highly unusual and desirable mutations. Exclusive selections of *Picea pungens*, *Pinus ponderosa*, and *Pinus*



National Forest, west of Boulder, Colorado. They transplanted them and trimmed them to look like clouds floating above the surface of the garden. Some of these small trees are more than 400 years old. To keep them small, the tips of the new growth (called candles) are snapped off in spring and branches trimmed and tied to preserve their shape. Right next to the Japanese Garden is the Bill Hosokawa Bonsai Pavilion, which opened in 2012. The core of the DBG bonsai collection, known as the Rocky Mountain Collection, uses native plants trained in traditional bonsai techniques, including ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *glauca*), among many other species seen in the Front Range of Colorado.

Rock Alpine Garden

More notable and unique plants are found in the Rock Alpine Garden than perhaps in any other spot at DBG, and they range from champion trees to specimens likely not grown in any other public garden in the U.S. The collection spans species normally not found in steppe climates to those which only thrive in steppe climates.



The Rock Alpine Garden

Conifers play an important role in the garden and the *Cupressus bakeri*, *Picea likiangensis*, *Cupressus nootkatensis* 'Pendula', and *Pinus parviflora* 'Aizu' are all state champions. The rock garden holds one of the largest collections of both species and cultivars of conifers at DBG, including many dwarf cultivars. Many of these individuals are over 30 years old and are reaching mature sizes. Currently there is a focus on procuring all of the high elevation five-needled pines from the American West, along with several rare Mexican *Picea*, not normally on display in public gardens. For the past 30+ years, the Rock Alpine Garden has served as a testing ground, where many plants normally not thought suitable for Colorado gardens have thrived, expanding the local plant palette.

Naturalistic Gardens with Native Conifers

Because of its location at the base of the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains, Denver is unusual in its close proximity to many different habitats, including the High Plains/Riparian habitat, the Foothills/Montane/Ponderosa Pine habitat, and the Subalpine/Bristlecone Pine habitat. DBG has created a series of naturalistic gardens which highlight the native flora from each of these regions. This collection of gardens sets DBG apart regionally from other major botanic gardens in North America. The Western Panoramas Garden includes different borders, highlighting distinct ecosystems of Colorado and the West. Of interest to conifer lovers are the Ponderosa Border which features many specimens of ponderosa pines native to the Foothills/Montane ecosystem, and the Bristlecone Border, which includes many fine examples of this high-altitude pine. The Gates Montane Garden displays plants native to the foothills and montane plant communities of Colorado and similar areas of the West in a naturalistic setting. Plants east of the main walk are native to Colorado mountain habitats, including native conifers such as *Pinus ponderosa*, *Pinus flexilis*, and *Juniperus scopulorum*. Plants west of the main walk include significant species from elsewhere in the West, including conifers such as *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (giant sequoia), *Calocedrus decurrens* (incense cedar), and *Pinus jeffreyi* (Jeffrey pine).

Last but not least in DBG's efforts to maintain and highlight the native Rocky Mountain flora is the Mount Goliath Natural Area, a satellite site managed by Denver Botanic Gardens and the U.S. Forest Service. Mt. Goliath is located along the Mt. Evans Scenic Byway at 11,540 feet, climbing from the sub-alpine zone into the tundra at 12,152 feet. Denver Botanic Gardens maintains several naturalized rock gardens at this site, which represent the various plant communities in this alpine and sub-alpine location, including talus, scree, rock crevice, bristlecone pine forest, fellfield, wet meadow, and alpine turf. This site provides the opportunity to experience ancient bristlecone pine forests, with 1,600+-year-old bristlecone pines (*Pinus aristata*), in what is believed to be the second largest bristlecone forest in Colorado.

We are pleased to join the American Conifer Society's Reference Garden program and look forward to welcoming ACS members to our Garden! 🌲

Denver Botanic Gardens

1007 York Street, Denver, CO 80206
720-865-3500 (general information)
720-865-3501 (information desk)
www.botanicgardens.org



Eve #1 by Michele Oka Doner

GROUNDS FOR SCULPTURE

BY RON ELARDO | PHOTOS BY MAUD HENNE

New Jersey is known as “The Garden State”. That nickname came to be on August 24, 1876 when Abraham Browning of Camden made the declaration on New Jersey Day at, of all places, the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition.



One of Standing Figure for
Women in the Sun
by Leonda Finke

Grounds For Sculpture is located at 18 Fairgrounds Road, Hamilton, New Jersey. Like the mythological phoenix which rises from its own destruction, this arboretum was born from what was left of the old, abandoned fairgrounds. The site had but “three dilapidated buildings” and “a rubble strewn field”. (www.groundsforsculpture.org)

This sculpture garden was established in 1992 according to its brochure: “to promote a greater understanding of and appreciation for contemporary sculpture by organizing exhibitions, publishing scholarly catalogues, and offering a variety of educational programs to the public.”

The “park” became a place to exhibit sculpture, as it also became a serious garden and arboretum. In fact, the arboretum is also a conifer garden.

The conifers this arboretum contains include:

Chamaecyparis obtusa ‘Nana’
Pinus orientalis
Pinus abies ‘Pendula’
Pinus omorika
Pinus parviflora
Pinus bungeana
Pinus densiflora ‘Oculus Draconis’
Pinus densiflora ‘Umbraculifera’
Pinus thunbergii
Pinus heldreichii
Cedrus atlantica ‘Glauca’
Cedrus deodara ‘Aurea’
Pinus strobus ‘Pendula’
Chamaecyparis pisifera ‘Filifera Aurea’
Pinus wallichiana
Pinus sylvestris
Chamaecyparis pisifera ‘Squarrosa’
Juniperus rigida ‘Pendula’
Pinus wallichiana ‘Zebrina’
Pinus flexilis

Sciadopitys verticillata
Picea pungens ‘Glauca’
Cedrus atlantica ‘Glauca Pendula’
Taxodium distichum
Pinus nigra
Metasequoia glyptostroboides
Larix decidua
Ginkgo biloba

The grounds have been refurbished and contain a Domestic Arts Building, a water garden, a restaurant and Dance Pavilion. There is the Toad Hall Shop & Gallery, an amphitheater and the Red Maple Allee and many more venues. Visitors are given a map which leads them on the pathways to all points of interest and the trees, the conifers and the deciduous ones alike (maples, poplar, elm, crapemyrtle, Harry Lauder’s Walking Stick, willow, zelkova, sweetgum, buckeye, oak, linden, birch and beech, tulip tree, stewartia, locust and horse chestnut).



Pinus wallichiana 'Zebrina'
behind Red Diamond by
Joel Perlman



Garden State by
Isaac Witkin

The transformation of the Grounds was accomplished by Brian Carey of AC/BC Associates in New York City. Bruce Daniels, Facilities Director, chose rare and unusual trees for the project. Those plantings too represented rebirth, like the site itself. The trees came from estates, abandoned nurseries and construction sites. "Landscape construction began in 1989. Since then over 2,000 trees, representing more than 100 species and cultivars, have been planted". (GFS brochure) The Master Gardeners of Mercer County helped create the Grounds' brochure and care for the plants.

Maud Henne visited this arboretum and provided the photos you see here. It was my pleasure to pull it all together for you and for Maud. 🍷



Sacred Stone by
Toni Putnam



Wave Hill by
Robert Ressler



Solemn by Robert Strang



HIDDEN LAKE GARDENS PROPAGATION SEMINAR

BY GERRY DONALDSON

For the second year in a row, Gerry Donaldson (Horticulture Manager) and Jon Genereaux (Head Propagator) organized and conducted a seminar on propagation at Hidden Lake Gardens, Tipton, Michigan.

This time the geographic appeal grew to draw participants from as far to the west as Iowa and Minnesota and to the east as New York; much farther than the year before. The seminar was divided into two parts. Jon's segment was entitled "The Necessities of Life", mine "Growing Treasures: Creating Whole Plants from Little Bits". For each section the instructors created take-away pamphlets outlining every step of the Power Point presentation, the procedures, salient terms and the cultivars, which would be used for creating the participants' propagules. One didn't even need to take notes. It was all laid out perfectly.

The instructors structured the classrooms for the visual presentation, the layout of the scions to be used and the necessary tools. Each seminar participant had everything



Jon Genereaux

at their disposal for a successful experience. In addition, volunteers were available to assist.

Paul Pfeifer, Managing Director of Hidden Lake Gardens, greeted the participants, who were divided into two consecutively running sections. Then the groups would switch for the second form of propagation. This process ran very smoothly.

For Jon's group, the session began with a scholarly reveal of the plant world as part of the evolution of the universe. After all, the distillation of life on earth came from the depths of the chemical reactions surrounding the creation of the stars and then the planets revolving around them. Jon brought the audience through the biology and physics of photosynthesis, transpiration and glucose production in plants. He discussed the art of grafting to unite scion and rootstock in order to insure a good graft, uniting "green on green". The living laboratory of The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers at Hidden Lake provided the scion material for the grafting sections. The section participants then proceeded to create their propagules and the mini-poly shelters for their creations.

My section was concerned with growing treasures from The Harper Collection through "stick" propagules. This kind of propagation results from the gentle wounding of one side of a cutting so as to encourage the root production and the resultant success of the propagule. This comes from undifferentiated cells becoming root cells. The participants focused on hardwood, needled evergreens (conifers). I presented the positive reasons for this kind of propagation: economical and compatibility.

Once the cutting physiology was revealed, Bill Snyder of Blue Horizon Nursery outlined the creation of the poly tents for raising the propagules. From that point on, the seminar participants began creating their own treasures.

This seminar used to run in parts on several weekends in late winter (the best time to propagate). Its evolution, starting in



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2015, into two roughly three-hour segments has been a hit. Participants can come to Hidden Lake Gardens just for the day and go home with their "treasures" and instructions for the care of their future conifers. 🌲

By Gerry Donaldson

OF EGGS AND WITCHES

BY BOB IGLESIAS

While scrolling through TV channels one evening, I came upon a group of commentators discussing “uncaged” eggs. I paused, amused by the oddity of the term they were using. If eggs were “uncaged”, then one could reasonably assume they had been kept in cages at some point. I playfully envisioned the absurdity of all those unhappy eggs securely locked into tiny cages

Of course, the topic under discussion was really about the caging of egg-laying hens. But, as a way to distinguish certain eggs from others, “caging” had been shifted from the hens to their eggs. This linguistic transfer made me think about how easily the use of inappropriate words and phrases can become established, without regard to the nuances of literal meaning.

Those of us with a special interest in conifers have seen differences in spelling and punctuation of the name used for “broom” mutations in trees. Much of what we see is simply incorrectly written. As with the eggs, these errors can become established through repetition.

Sometimes, something else is involved. Some variations in spelling and punctuation of the term used for the mutations have different nuances of meaning. In references discussing broom mutations as a general topic, there are permutations such as **witch’s brooms** (the multiple brooms of a single witch) and **witches’ brooms** (the brooms of witches). Some singular or plural spellings of the term in English could reflect whether the folkloric story involved one or more witches in the enchantment of the broom. This could allow for variation in how the name is written.

The literal meaning people apply may reflect a particular story version of an old folkloric tradition. Since those stories were initially passed along *orally*, multiple versions could and did occur. With a few rarely used exceptions, such as “stag head”, “tuft” and “tussock”, most of the English names applied to the mutations as a botanical term reflect a German folkloric tradition which was creatively interpreted as well.



Caged Egg

German folklore is rich in legends about witches and the rituals they held in the woods, especially during their annual gathering on *Walpurgisnacht*, the night before the religious Feast of St. Walpurga. It was on this night that witches met in the mists of the Brocken, the highest of the Harz Mountains in Germany, to await the arrival of Spring.

The old legends were applied to odd growths which were sometimes seen in the trees. People spoke of the “Night of the Witches” and told of how those oddities came to be. The stories varied. Some versions claimed the growths were places in the trees where witches had touched during their flights on enchanted besom-brooms. Other stories attributed the growths to be “nests”, withered branches created where one or several witches had rested between broom flights. Still others indicated that the growths were deliberately created by witches as a source of new enchanted brooms.

My favorite “explanation” has been one I read about some years ago. The story noted that witches’ brooms were often

found in cemeteries. Many people believed that the soul of a recently deceased person lingered until the body was interred. If a witch was inadvertently buried in hallowed ground, her released soul would snag on the branch of a nearby tree, thereby causing that branch to wither.

Consider that for centuries, European gardeners maintained the landscape in a formal style, pruning, clipping and pollarding the trees. By so doing, they cut off any potential brooms. In some neglected cemeteries however, the brooms were able to develop and be seen.

My search of the topic found little available on the derivation of the English term "witch's broom". The only reference I found which even attempted to find a connection, was an article published in *Arnoldia*, the bulletin of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum (Vol. 27, June 23, 1967, Numbers 4-5). The article, titled "Dwarf Conifers from Witches'-brooms" (*sic*), began as follows:

"The English term witches'-broom translates directly from the German word Hexenbesen. Both parts of the German compound word are found in English as Hex, meaning to bewitch, and besom, a bundle of twigs (usually of birch), bound together...."

The quote suggests a shared meaning between the German and English names and implies, but does not establish, a transfer from one to the other, other than indicating that the parts of the German compound noun Hexenbesen appear in English as "hex" and "besom". The word "witch" derives through *wicce* in Middle English and not *Hexe*, which is closer to "hag" in English.

The author of the *Arnoldia* article, Alfred J. Fordham, admitted that his search for information on English folklore had proved fruitless. When Dr. Richard S. Meriam, Professor Emeritus of the Harvard Business School, volunteered to search the German literature at Harvard's Widener Library, he found there was more printed material about witch folklore and brooms in German than in English.

Dr. Meriam's finding regarding a preponderance of printed material in German could suggest that Germans had a higher level of interest regarding their own folklore (and/or broom mutations) than was true of English speakers at the time.

While witches have been part of British folklore for centuries, that folklore did not initially focus upon the riding of broomsticks and instead related more to the evil spells that the witches cast. Apparently, the German tradition about the ritualistic gathering of witches on *Walpurgisnacht* became popularized

in Britain and elsewhere through the literature, prints and paintings of the Victorian era. In the United States today, that version of the witch has become commercialized as the caricature used for Halloween decorations.

My search of the topic also led to an interesting insight into our use of the word "broom". While the English words "besom" / "beson", and the German *Besen* are believed to derive from the same Proto-Germanic source, I was curious as to why the word "broom" is used today.

During the Middle Ages, most people in Britain and Europe lived on small farms, villages or towns. The typical house had floors of either packed earth or wood planks, usually sprinkled with straw. As one can imagine, sanitation was generally poor and it was difficult to keep things clean. The *besom*, a bundle of twigs tied around a stick, was a common and useful tool for "rough" sweeping unavoidable debris and dirty straw out the door.

A similar tool, the *brom* (broom), was also used at the time, but for more specialized tasks such as sweeping ashes from a fire pit. More "refined" than the *besom*, a *brom* was a bundle of straw or similar materials, such as dried herbs or reeds, used as a hand-whisk (whisk-brom) for brushing surfaces in better detail. Due to their similar sweeping functions, the names for *besom* and *brom*/broom became joined as "besom-broom" (or "broom-besom") and this eventually was shortened to just "broom".

For better or worse, the English language keeps evolving. The trend today is to use whatever is simple and quick, despite an unfortunate loss of precision in communicating. E-mails and texting are good examples. So are those uncaged eggs, I suppose.

One wonders where all this is heading. Is it possible that someday we'll be using "witch brooms" as a botanical term, simply to avoid confusion about where to put that apostrophe? Maybe we'll dispense with those apparently annoying "rules" completely. Keep it simple. Keep it quick. And, just use the *emogi*. 🌲

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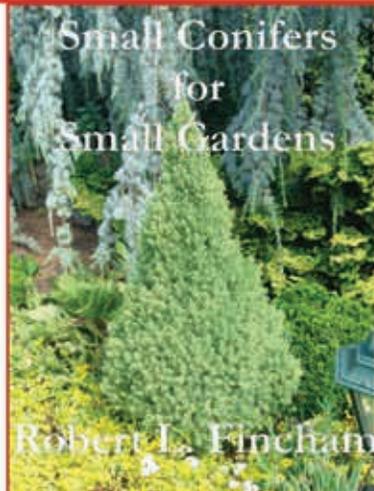
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REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Northeastern Region President	Colby Q. Feller , 5 Peter Cooper Rd. Apt. 7E, New York, NY 10010-6629, PH (347) 661-5478, E-mail: colbyfeller@yahoo.com
Director	Michael Mahoney , 150 Elm St, Hanover, MA 02339, PH (781) 826-2915, E-mail: mdm150@verizon.net
Southeastern Region President	Dr. Martin Stone , PO Box One, Bowling Green, KY 42102 PH (270) 799-7669, E-mail: martin.stone@wku.edu
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Director	Sara Malone , 909 Mustang Ct., Petaluma, CA 94954, PH (707) 486-0444, E-mail: webeditor@conifersociety.org

STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

National Office Manager	Steven W. Courtney , American Conifer Society, PO Box 1583, Maple Grove, MN 55311, PH (763) 657-7251, Email: nationaloffice@conifersociety.org
CONIFERQuarterly Editor	Dr. Ronald J. Elardo , 5749 Hunter Ct., Adrian, MI 49221-2471, PH (517) 902-7230, E-mail: ConQuartEditor@gmail.com
Website Editor	Sara Malone , 909 Mustang Ct., Petaluma, CA 94954, PH (707) 486-0444, E-mail: webeditor@conifersociety.org
Collector's Conifer Chairman	Dennis Lee , PO Box 1332, Stow, OH 44224, PH (330) 688-4283, E-mail: coniferden@msn.com
Seed Exchange Chairman	Jim Brackman , Old Highway 410 SW, Olympia, WA 98512, PH (253) 736-5864, E-mail: jtreeguy45@comcast.net
Conifer Registrar	Richard Larson , The Dawes Arboretum, 7770 Jacksontown Rd., Newark, OH 43056, PH (800) 443-2937, E-mail: ralarson@dawesarb.org
ConiferBase Editor	David Olszyk , PO Box 5631, Lacey, WA 98509, PH (360) 456-2896. E-mail: david.olszyk@gmail.com
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