

# Conifer Quarterly

Vol. 29 No. 2

Spring 2012



December morn at Harmony Woods.  
*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan-sugi'  
under a canopy of *Sequoia sempervirens*.  
Photo by Bob Mathey

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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.*

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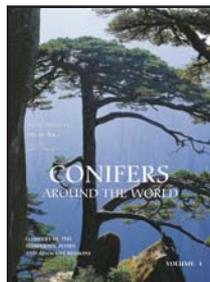


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# Conifer Quarterly

Spring 2012  
Volume 29, No 2

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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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Conifers are becoming more popular in our landscapes. Similar to the rule in their native habitats, conifers seem to compete very well with flowering plants when resources are scarce, or conditions are a bit rough. Conifers are not needy prima donnas. They consistently perform admirably with less maintenance than most flowering plants, and the gardening public is taking notice.

I am happy to report that Collectors Conifer of the Year sales were particularly strong this year. John Martin reports: *Sciadopitys verticillata* 'Picola' (119); *Picea abies* 'Wichtel' (65); *Cedrus libani* var. *brevifolia* 'Kenwith' (51) as of the February 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Congratulations to Dennis Lee for another successful year administering the program! Thank you to all who ordered plants and benefited the ACS.

Another bit of good news is that ACS membership held steady last year, putting a stop to the declines precipitated by the recession. In January and February of 2012, 41 new members joined the ACS, compared to 31 who joined during the same months of 2011.

My advice is to register early for the excellent programs the ACS is making available to its members this year. The International Trip to The Netherlands and Belgium, organized by Tom Cox, is a bargain. Judging from the rave reviews the 2010 Trip to Great Britain received, the 2012 tour will be a fantastic experience. So, be sure to sign up early since space is limited to 42 participants.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Conifer College will take place in Ann Arbor, Michigan this July 12<sup>th</sup>. It will be on a first come, first served basis. There will be a variety of classes to

attend, and, if you sign up early, you will not run the risk of choosing one which already has every seat filled. Experienced ACS National Meeting attendees know to book their hotel rooms well in advance of filling out their registration forms. The Ann Arbor meeting this July 12-14 is going to be a marvelous one, and, dare I say, a record-setting meeting with regard to attendance.

The ACS has many talented individuals. Dennis Groh of Michigan is deserving of special recognition, not only for his role in organizing the Conifer College and the upcoming National Meeting, but for other contributions which have benefited the Society. A couple of years ago I asked Dennis on behalf of the ACS Board of Directors to make an investment plan for our endowment. Last fiscal year, even though we ran an operational deficit, the ACS ended up with slightly more money because of the income generated by our investments.

At the Winter Meeting, the Board enacted some cost cutting measures. However, it looks like a dues increase will be inevitable. The last dues increase occurred 10 years ago. Other business

included making the ACS Reference Garden Program a National one instead of a Regional one. The reasons for this are to adopt the best practices throughout the Regions; comply with IRS reporting requirements; and have a single person who provides oversight of the program as carried out by their fellow ACS Regional Reference Garden Coordinators. This individual will also keep an archive and report to the Board of Directors.

Serving the ACS has been and continues to be a very rewarding experience. I highly recommend volunteering to serve in whatever capacity suits you. If you cannot volunteer, please consider attending an event such as an ACS Rendezvous. Introduce your gardening friends to the joys of conifers. Thank you for being a member of this beloved Society.

Faithfully yours,



Ethan Johnson

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# Living With Nature Through Gentle Guidance

Text by Judy Appel Mathey, Photos by Bob Mathey

Our gardens at Harmony Woods are nestled into a cathedral of *Sequoia sempervirens*. To the best of our knowledge, the coast from northern California to southwest Oregon is the only place where the species is found in nature. Under the canopy of the redwoods, we feature over 300 conifer species enhanced by a vast array of plants gracing over twenty beds. By the very nature of the name “Harmony Woods”, we imply an attitude of living with nature through gentle guidance.

Deer emerge tentatively from our forest, a doe with two fawns at one time,

or two bucks at another. They are alert, but calmly pursue their need of finding food and sometimes resting in the sun on our green. We delight in their presence. Most conifers on our property appear deer proof. Some new growth has been nibbled, but frankly my husband Bob and I can't recall the names of those few affected.

One key to our success in living with the deer is to plant genera which are not attractive to them. Several months ago I looked up and saw a lovely doe under our plum tree, nibbling the fallen leaves from the tops of the plants underneath.



*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan-sugi' (center) under a canopy of *Sequoia sempervirens*.



*Pinus contorta* 'Chief Joseph' with *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Verkade's Sunburst' behind left.

as *Picea pungens* 'Glauca Prostrata'. In addition, there are *Rhododendron*, *Helleborus orientalis*, *Darmera peltata*, the grass; *Hakonechloa macra*, the ferns; *Pyrrosia lingua*, and *Sarcococca*. Most plants were purchased locally.

For plants the deer love, our secret is to guide them away with a product called "Liquid Fence Deer and Rabbit Repellent", which is readily available in our local nurseries. The ingredients are harmless and although we cannot smell the odor shortly after spraying, the deer find it offensive. Bob does the rounds every few weeks.

Her lips were so supple, her tongue lifting each leaf with a beautiful grace so that the plants below were not affected. I imagined how delicious the leaves must be to her. She was the perfect gardener.

The conifers under the plum tree include: *Abies procera* 'Glauca', *Cedrus deodora* 'Divinely Blue', *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Compressa', *Picea glauca* 'Elf' and 'Haal' (Alberta Blue), as well

The only deer fencing we have on the property is for the perennial garden and we used a black polypropylene mesh fencing material affixed to redwood posts. Our fencing company purchased the product from Benner's Gardens in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. It is sturdy and practically invisible. Although we know the fence exists, the plants around



*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan-sugi' (center) with *Picea abies* 'Pendula' in front as ground cover. Tall *Picea orientalis* 'Nana' is to the left with *Pinus uncinata* 'Berhal #4 WB' below and *Taxus baccata* 'Standishi' at center right.

*Dacrydium cupressinum*  
from New  
Zealand under  
a redwood  
canopy.



it and the gardens beyond catch the eye. Just remember to keep the gates closed!

For the bucks who love to remove the soft velvet from their antlers in late summer by rubbing against tree trunks and often damaging the circle of cambium, we use tall semicircular plant supports sold in many gardening catalogues. Join two together with some twine and you have a temporary fix.

The message the doe, a beautiful creature of nature, gives to us is that with well-chosen plants and a few products to

guide, a gardener can enjoy the beauty of both the plants and the deer. For us, that is a bonus to treasure and adds a glow to the seasons.

*Judy and Bob garden in a Mediterranean type eco-climate which is particularly suitable to growing tender leaf plants. They avidly collect conifers as well as Rhododendron species, ferns and maples. Their garden will be on the Garden Conservancy's national Open Days tour next June.*



*Cryptomeria japonica*  
'Birodo-sugi' (left  
front), *Abies procera*  
'Glauca Prostrata'  
(center front), *Picea*  
*glauca* on the right  
with *Chamaecyparis*  
*obtusa* 'Pygmaea  
Aurescens' underneath  
*Cornus capitata*  
'Mountain Moon'  
behind the fence.

# How I Fell in Love with Conifers

Text by Sara Malone Photos by Janice le Cocq



I made my first garden when I was nine years old and, but for a few years off here and there when I lived in cities, I have been gardening ever since. I have gone through gardening phases of all kinds – from *Heuchera* to *Helloborus*; from English cottage to Mediterranean; from sweet peas to *Cercis*. Each season seemed to bring a new book or plant introduction which would dominate my gardening for a while.

My gardens have always been nice, have always been admired and, for most of my life, have always satisfied me. Like most people, the vast majority of the plants I grew were herbaceous, flowering perennials, and I was happy with the colorful, seasonal displays they produced. It wasn't until I retired and

found myself with more time to devote to gardening that I began to feel strangely unfulfilled by what I had created.

In the first place, here I was, gardening in Sunset Zone 15, (USDA 8b), which barely ever sees a hard freeze, with a garden replete with herbaceous perennials which were dormant for nearly half the year! Winter, not only a mild season in my Sonoma County, California garden, but a particularly lovely one, abounded with shapeless hulks of dormant – nay, dead – foliage. The perennials, when in flower, were undeniably pretty, but the effort was great – they required heavy shearing in late winter, were slow to get going in spring, and no sooner had they shown themselves to best advantage in May and June than they crisped in the



Entry to the Malone Home

mid-summer heat and began the slow descent into winter, only to start the entire cycle again.

Too, the perennials lacked structure. They were mostly round and grew into each other with a resulting lack of definition, which began to irritate me. These “blobs of color” lacked sophistication and, like a woman with a lovely complexion but no bone structure, were certainly pretty, but no one would call them beautiful. The lack of structure was particularly problematic in the garden’s off-season.

While this theme was swelling in my mind, a counterpoint was beginning to emerge: the maintenance was wearing me out, especially since the plants were dictating the schedule, not me. If I were to miss the late winter shearing, the plants would push new growth through

last year’s dead stems and the resulting mess would require either sacrificing a goodly amount of fresh shoots and setting the plants back, or living with the tangled web of new foliage with detritus underneath. To get the best performance from most of the perennials during the growing season, I had to “refresh” them (i.e. hack the blades out of them) every six to eight weeks. My vacation schedule revolved around the garden chores, most of which I was less and less interested in doing.

Do I sound like someone ripe for a new garden romance? Little did I know that Mr. Right was on his way! He arrived in the form of Adrian Bloom, not in the flesh, but by way of his book, *Gardening with Conifers*, which my friend, Jani Weaver, of Garden Weaver Designs, gave me for Christmas in 2005. Adrian turned

out to be the man of my dreams. In fact, he gave me a new dream entirely: to have a landscape as rich in color as a perennial garden, but with year-round interest and much more structure and texture than the perennials could provide. This was not just a new romance, but also a mature, enduring love affair which resonated deeply with me, after my infatuations with pretty flowers! It was also not lost on me that the woody plants would not require the constant attention demanded by the coquettish perennials.

We all look back fondly to our “first times” in life, and my first conifer was a twofor: a pair of *Cedrus atlantica* ‘Glauca Pendula’ to flank the front entry. Almost immediately upon reading Bloom’s book, and with no regrets whatsoever, I hacked back and yanked out a couple of messy, ungainly, *Miscanthus sinensis* *Gracillimus* and replaced them with the sophisticated, seductive curves of the *Cedrus*. They looked like they were designed for the site and their



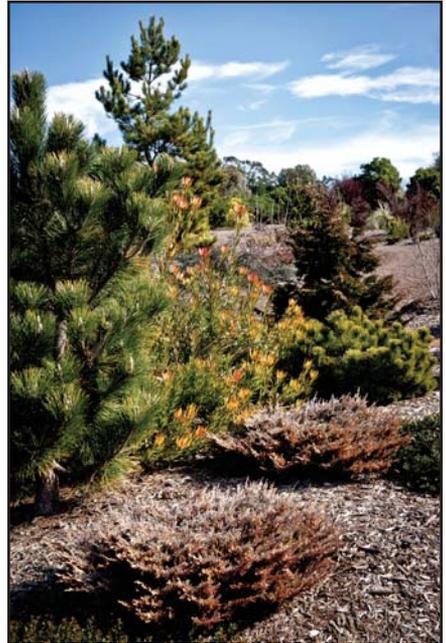
One of many conifer beds Sara created



cool, powder blue needles and smooth, undulated stems invited me to touch them each time I passed. I felt myself interacting with them in ways I had never interacted with a flowering plant; their structure gave them a prominence and a complexity which had me immediately anthropomorphizing and imbuing them with quasi-human attributes. I stopped short of naming them, but don't think that I wasn't tempted.

I never looked back. My next purchase was a *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Mushroom' in full winter lilac-tinted bronze. I started combing the conifer books, the catalogs from nurseries like Iseli and Buchholz, where I couldn't shop, but at least could fantasize, and making wish lists which grew longer and longer. Fortunately, Sonoma County is home to some fabulous nurseries, both retail and wholesale. There are a few which specialize in conifers and I began to haunt them, pumping the owners and staff for their favorite varieties, asking when the new shipments were due and meeting the trucks so as not to miss anything. In more than one case, I nabbed a particular selection which the owner had earmarked for someone else and had it paid for and in my truck before my deed was discovered. In one case, the plant was supposed to go to the owner's mother, and to this day he reminds me that she was supposed to get the *Pinus mugo* 'Allgäu', which is happily ensconced in my garden between a *Hebe* 'Mrs. Winder' and a *Pinus strobus* 'Pendula'.

I have now graduated to special-ordering specific varieties – at times I fall asleep at night with the Iseli catalog, and my husband has to pry it from my hands. I have learned to pick and choose among the genera and cultivars and understand which selection is best for a particular



Conifers and companion plants

spot. I have learned too that some of the workhorses are just as necessary as some of the "divas", and that conifers sometimes come in surprising forms and colors. My garden has graduated from an assortment of flowering perennials to a collection of specimen conifers and other rare and select woody plants. It now has four seasons of interest instead of two and has all of the structure I felt was lacking in its prior incarnation, even on foggy days or in low light. I no longer spend the month of March chopping back perennials; I now spend it admiring the new foliage of the conifers.

I marvel that I went so long before I found true garden love. Now, as I wander the paths of my garden in all seasons, I find satisfaction and sustenance from the incredible variety of conifers which dominate the landscape. Their breadth is astonishing: from the grandeur of



Mixed Media

the sculpted *Pinus nigra* (currently the tallest conifer in the garden) to the delicacy of the *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* ‘Barry’s Silver’; from the rugged stoutness of *Pinus jeffreyii* to the elegance of *Cupressus cashmeriana*; from the turquoise of *Cedrus deodara* ‘Prostrate Beauty’ to the brilliant gold of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* ‘Golden King’; from the whimsical *Sequoiadendron giganteum* ‘Pendulum’ to the wistful *Pinus wallichiana* ‘Zebrina’ – oh, the list is endless!

The seasonal highlights are noteworthy as well. There is the spring new foliage on specimens such as *Picea orientalis* ‘Aureospicata’ and the cones on *Pinus parviflora* ‘Cleary’, which are just as beautiful as flowers and never need deadheading. The summer green of *Pinus thunbergiana* ‘Thunderhead’ and *Chamaecyparis obtusa* ‘Kosteri’ keeps the garden temperature down even when the mercury soars. Autumn’s drama is enhanced by the golden needles of the *Larix* and the blues of all of the *Picea pungens* which showcase the fiery deciduous foliage. Finally, the bronzy winter cloaks of the *Cryptomeria* and *Microbiota decussata* smolder with highlights of lavender and burnt umber.

May I tell you the final, wonderful thing about my new-found love? When

you start a new love affair, don’t you always wait with trepidation to see if your friends will approve? Well, I’m happy to say that conifers play well with others! In my garden they romp with an amazing variety of *Acer palmatum*, Southern hemisphere natives such as *Chondropetalum*, *Leucadendron*, *Leptospermum* and *Phormium*, structural succulents such as *Agave*, California natives include *Arctostaphylos* and *Arbutus* and an array of deciduous shrubs such as *Fothergilla*, *Forsythia*, *Cotinus*, *Cornus* and *Spirea*.

It took me a while, but I finally found the love of my garden life. Like all true love, I expect it to grow stronger and sweeter with age.

### Resource List:

#### Books:

- *Gardening with Conifers*, Adrian Bloom, Firefly Books, 2002
- *Designing with Conifers*, Richard L. Bitner, Timber Press, 2011

#### Nurseries:

- Pond and Garden Nursery, Scott Wilson, Cotati, CA (Conifer and Japanese maple specialist. Carries a lot of dwarf varieties)
- Sweet Lane Horticultural Nursery, Ed Grossi, Santa Rosa, CA (Wholesale, but may be available by appt or with a designer. Huge selection of specialty conifers, many in larger sizes)
- Urban Tree Farm, Travis Woodard, Fulton, CA (Huge nursery with focus on trees and woody shrubs. Great selection of some of the more common varieties, with very attractive prices).

# Northeast Region Meets

Text and Photos by Michael Mahoney

If you travel south of Boston, roughly following the coastline of Massachusetts Bay to the Cape Cod Canal, you are in the area we locals call the “South Shore”. Here, for the history buffs are some of the first towns settled in what was called the New World circa 1620 (Plymouth) and 1630 (Boston). Half way between the two pre colonial “villages” is the town of Rockland and the location of the Northeast Region meeting in September 2012.

The chosen theme of the meeting will be “Residential Landscaping with Conifers”. If you are a hobbyist, gardener, nurseryman, or landscape professional and you have ACS (Addicted Conifer Syndrome), you may start wondering what to do with your treasures. Since most of us cannot afford our own arboretum, we need a place to display our “collection”. Starting with the speaker on Friday night and continuing through the bus tour on Saturday, you will see various settings displaying conifers and will learn ways to enhance your property with your conifers at the same time.

The meeting will be held September 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn in Rockland, Massachusetts, about 25 miles south of Boston. After the buffet on Friday night, our speaker will be Brent Markus. Some of you will remember him from the National Meeting in Silverton, Oregon, but you may not have realized Brent is also a Boston resident. As a nationally recognized landscape



Rindy and Gerry Bennett Garden

designer and owner of Rare Tree Nursery in Silverton, Oregon, Brent holds a degree in Landscape Architecture from Cornell, a Masters in Horticulture, and is presently completing his thesis for a doctorate at the Urban Horticulture Institute at Cornell. He will focus on the use of conifers in landscape design, comment on the gardens on tour, and answer your questions about conifers as well as Japanese Maples and other plants which may be useful in the residential landscape.

The tour on Saturday will feature four very different private gardens, each with conifer collections and each with a different approach to displaying the plants in the landscape

First will be long time ACS member, Les Wymans’ garden, who has been collecting miniature and dwarf conifers

for over thirty years. His collection is displayed in a natural woodland setting in a recently developed residential area. As the former owner of Wymans Nursery, adjacent to his current home, Les is credited with introducing many local gardeners to the value and variety of conifers in the landscape.

You will also visit the home of Vera and Mark Anderson, who have developed their collection on a corner lot surrounding their 19<sup>th</sup> century New England farmhouse. They have incorporated their conifers with numerous other shrubs and perennials. They built a small koi pond and also a waterfall. Last fall, a small “Summer House” was built to relax and view the gardens from a different vantage point.

The Bennett property, a late 18<sup>th</sup> century house in a historic district, has been completely restored and Rindy and Gerry have chosen to landscape with a large variety of conifers extending into the wooded lot at the rear. The woodland area includes running stream and pond complemented with a wide variety of native plants, perennials, hostas and day lilies. You will also be fascinated to see the unique pool house which was built by a group of wood-wrights from Plymouth Plantation to replicate a 17<sup>th</sup> century pilgrim house.

A stucco and beam Normandy-style farm house built by Mike and Sue Mahoney about 20 years ago will feature lunch and garden walks. You may opt to rest under the tent or take your lunch throughout several garden settings which at last count held about 375 conifers of all sizes and varieties. About 14 years ago, Les Wyman passed on a potent case of ACS, the disease, and there does not seem to be any cure on the horizon. Last

fall, a bog area was refined, and then a waterfall and holding pond were started to add other features just in time for the tour.

Each garden setting is different, each house has a different era and style, and each property displays a different approach to the landscape and the use of conifers.

Of course, Saturday night will bring the ever popular silent and live auctions, not to mention the famous “Can Raffle” promoted and run by Marlow Marcus.

Plan to come early or extend your stay because there will be an extensive list of member gardens for pre- and post-tours and all within a short driving distance. Then plan to visit historic Boston, maybe the Arnold Arboretum, or Plymouth, which displays a replica of the Mayflower in port and live interpreters at Plymouth Plantation. The “new towns” of Concord and Lexington are just 10 miles north of Boston, and the locals know that September is the best time to visit Cape Cod. No traffic, no tourists. Everything is open and the rates are down.

So save the dates September 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and come to “Bawston”.



Suzanne and Michael  
Mahoney Garden.

# ACS Scholarship Historical Synopsis

Text by Gerald Kral

The history of the American Conifer Society Scholarship will be updated each year as applicants receive awards. A benefit of the ACS Scholarship is getting an article published in the prestigious *Conifer Quarterly*. Reference is given for the Issue, in which each scholarship recipient's article appears. Reading these articles can give applicants some guidelines on submitting their personal applications. The scholarship recipient's educational experience is given at the time of their application.

**2005:** The ACS Scholarship is established. The amount is set at \$1000.00. No applications were received.

**2006: Kevin Stevens:** Stevens received \$1000.00 to attend a 6-week Garden Seminar in Kyoto, Japan.

**2007: Andrew Pulte:** (Masters Candidate in Horticulture, University of Tennessee) Pulte received \$1000.00 to cover school related expenses and help off-set his travel and lodging to attend the 2007 ACS National Meeting in Seattle. *CQ:* **Vol. 26, No.1, pp. 38-39**

**2008: Ryan Contreras:** (Ph.D. Candidate in Horticulture, University of Georgia) Contreras received \$1000.00 to cover school related expenses and to attend the 2009 ACS National Meeting on Long Island. Contreras presented a synopsis of his research at the Long Island meeting. By popular demand, a

synopsis of his joint research with John M. Reuter, University of Georgia, on developing a Japanese cedar which will not brown in winter, appears in *CQ:* **Vol. 27, No.1, pp. 19-23**

**2008: Matthew S. Wilson:** (Masters Candidate in Horticulture, University of Auburn, Georgia) Wilson received \$1000.00 to cover school related expenses and purchase educational materials. *CQ:* **Vol. 26, No.2, pp. 14-15**

**2009:** The ACS Scholarship was increased to \$2500.00

**2009: Marlyse Duguid:** (B.S. University of Connecticut). Duguid received \$2500.00 to cover school related expenses to complete her Masters Degree in Forestry at the Yale School of Forestry. *CQ:* **Vol. 27, No.2, pp. 38-39**

**2010: Jared Barnes:** (Ph.D. Candidate, North Carolina State University) Barnes used part of his \$2500.00 to cover expenses for an NCSU-sponsored trip to Southern England. He also used some of the scholarship to cover school related expenses pursuant to receiving a Doctorate in Horticulture. *CQ:* **Vol. 27, No.4, pp. 9-11**

**2011: Mitchell Zost & Alan Dosenberry:** (Seniors, Michigan State University) Dosenberry & Zost were awarded a Special Request Scholarship and shared \$2500.00 to cover expenses

related to an original research project at The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers at Hidden Lake Gardens in Tipton. Project related expenses were covered. The project is being monitored by Dr. Bert Cregg, Department of Horticulture, Michigan State University. A synopsis of their work appears in the Spring Issue of the 2012 *CQ*.

**Michelle Kehyaian:** (B.S. Environmental Design, University of Massachusetts, Amherst) Kehyaian used her \$2500.00 to attend the ACS National Meeting in Silverton, Oregon, and set up a network which will help her maintain and further develop the Benenson Ornamental Conifer Collection at the New York Botanical Gardens. Her article appeared in the Winter Issue of the 2012 *CQ*.

Gerald Kral



### **Submitting photography to *Conifer Quarterly*:**

Please keep in mind that you must have your camera set to the highest possible resolution when capturing your images/photos to be submitted to *Conifer Quarterly*. This means you will be able to store fewer images or your card or memory stick when your camera is set to take high resolution photos.

An average sized photo should be around 3-5MB (megabytes). We can always take larger files and reduce them, but not the other way around, without loss of data.

Please send your .jpg photos and articles (word document, .doc with very little formatting) to the editor as either: 1) email attachments (keep in mind most service providers only allow up to 10MB's) or 2) on a disc well in advance of the published deadlines.

Not providing print ready (large enough) photos often results in your article not being included in the *Conifer Quarterly*.

# A Romance to Pine For

By Mary Morris Donaldson

Over ten years ago I met my husband, which started an intense romance for the flora world. Within two years of meeting him, my lust grew for all kinds of cones, needles and exfoliating bark. This, I suppose, is how I contracted ACS, Addicted Conifer Syndrome.

It is hard to believe I would ever develop a craving for conifers, when I had gone through life up to the point of meeting my husband, knowing only two trees, a Christmas tree and not a Christmas tree. I appreciate those who refer to all evergreens as pines. But it is even harder to believe that was all I knew when my father, while I was growing up, had a hobby nursery; but, alas, I worked very hard at not learning one botanical thing.

After several dates at Clancy Lewis Arboretum, Meijer Gardens and Hidden Lake Gardens, my eyes were being trained to see the details my future husband pointed out which make a spruce or a pine unique and beautiful. I was intrigued by the sweeping grace of *Cupressus nootkatensis*\*. I found the ferny foliage of weeping hemlocks delicate. I just like saying *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera', while on the other hand when I say *Larix kaempferi*, I'm teased and am told: "Just say larch!" The bark of *Pinus bungeana* became a favorite, while the carefree tumble of the weeping *Pinus strobus* beckoned me to caress its needles. The silvery needles of *Abies koreana* 'Silberlocke' are curved like perfect eyelashes on a Greek goddess and don't even get me

started on the purple cones! But it is my *Picea omorika* 'Pendula Bruns', which is the grand dame of my landscape. When I first met her, she was shabby, shocked from being dug up, balled and burlapped, and trucked to the nursery. I babied her for a year and when I couldn't stand it anymore, I brought her home. Setting down roots in her new home, she flourished almost overnight. Her draping skirt falls to the ground after slinking down the curves of her body, er, trunk, while her main leader grows in sensuous curves, teasing towards the sky.

Anyone need a cigarette? Nah, not you hard-core coniferites who know that tobacco is dangerous in the soil of some of our prized possessions. But it has been the coniferites I have met over the years who have shared their love for this genus of plants and have been generous in their knowledge and encouragement. My relationship with my husband is good, even when I do occasionally become a conifer widow, when he and his buddies go broom hunting. He says they ARE hunting witch's brooms down those two tracks. Still, after being married under the *Cedrus libani* in The Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers, we are in agreement; we can never have enough conifers between us.

\*All names verified with:

Dirr, M. (1998). *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing L.L.C.



*Picea omorika* 'Pendula Brun's'

# Conifer College

Text and Photos by Dennis Groh

The 30th annual American Conifer Society National Meeting is July 12-14, 2012 in Michigan.



Come to *Pure Michigan*® this July and plan to attend and enjoy a special ACS National Meeting in Ann Arbor,

Michigan. If possible, add some extra time to enjoy the area before and after the official meeting. There is plenty to do and see! Not far from the hotel is the campus of The University of Michigan and its environs.

Thursday morning **Conifer College** will offer an impressive list of 26 speakers from 11 states and Great Britain who will present a great diversity of exciting and educational topics. Adrian Bloom is the Keynote Speaker Thursday evening.

Friday the group travels to see the internationally recognized Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers at Hidden Lake Gardens (HLG). Three more lectures will be offered in the Visitor Center, along with a private cone collection display. Handouts will be provided on the bus for all the



Shelter in the Harper Collection

HLG activities, including Benedict Hosta Hillside, the Bonsai Collection, Evergreen Hill, the Conservatory and Hidden Lake, to name but a few.

The Friday evening plant auction will have a special selection of unique Michigan brooms and broom seedlings. These plants have been evaluated and proven special, but are only in the hands of a few collectors. Plant auctions in the Central Region have traditionally been lively and hold the record for most money raised for the ACS.

Everyone likes the private garden tours and two special gardens, large enough to accommodate the crowd we expect, will be visited. However, some of the smaller pre- and post-gardens have also had visitors come great distances to enjoy. If possible, your trip planning should include enough time also to visit

some of these gems while in the area.

A new book will be available for purchase honoring Chub Harper and his Collection. It will have marvelous images, human-interest stories, and an evaluation of the Collection over 30 years.

Gee Farms and their Arboretum will blow plant lovers away Saturday. Rumor has it, a first-ever tailgate sale will occur in the Central Region early Sunday morning. While not authorized by or affiliated with the ACS, post meeting tailgate sales have been popular in other regions.

**If you come, you will:** expand your knowledge, meet new friends and share insights, get your money's worth, see something you just have to take home, and have some fun!



Entrance to the Harper Collection

# *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*

Text and photos by Dan Luscombe and Chris Reynolds

In 2008 Chris Reynolds, Curator of the Bedgebury National Pinetum in Kent, and Dan Luscombe, Assistant Curator, traveled to Vietnam as part of Fauna and Flora International's Global Trees Campaign, which works to save threatened trees from extinction.<sup>1</sup> Bedgebury is the world's leading conifer collection, managed by the Forestry Commission. The task of Dan and Chris was to offer advice and expertise to the Centre for Plant Conservation (CPC) in Hanoi on measures to conserve five rare and highly endangered conifer species, all of which have been seriously affected by logging, habitat loss, and are likely to be further threatened by climate change.



Chris Reynolds with mature *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*

Among these endangered trees was the Vietnamese golden cypress, *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*, which in 1999 became the world's most recently discovered conifer genus. Its predecessor was Australia's Wollemi pine in 1994. Only three or four new conifer species have been discovered in the last fifty years.

Basing themselves at the Bat Dai Son Nature Reserve in northern Vietnam and accompanied by staff from CPC, Chris and Dan scaled the remote limestone karst mountains to where the few known golden yellow cypresses grow. Fewer than 500 individual trees are known in two small pockets, making it a very high priority for conservation.

Field surveys by CPC, supported by the Global Trees Campaign, had established that low reproduction in the wild was one of the problems facing the species; and, attempts by the CPC to produce seedlings in a special tree nursery at Bat Dai Son to supplement the wild population had met with very limited success. In 2009, Matt Parratt from the Alice Holt Forest Research Centre in Surrey made a follow-up trip to Vietnam to try and establish why the Vietnamese golden cypress was not reproducing from seed. He was available to advise on the optimum time to collect seed from the species and on identifying which cones might potentially provide viable seed. During the following year, Nguyen Quang Hieu from CPC visited Bedgebury Pinetum with seed from the golden cypress. Using x-ray equipment



*Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*

from Alice Holt, they identified which seeds appeared to contain embryos. These were sown in seed trays in the nursery at Bedgebury in May 2011.

So far, fourteen seedlings have germinated, for the first time outside Vietnam. In addition, these are the only surviving seedlings in captivity anywhere in the world. In four years time they will hopefully mature enough to be planted out in the Pinetum, joining nine other golden cypresses grown from cuttings donated by the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and planted in 2005. They are also the first ever planted outside Vietnam. Despite the much colder British climate, these specimens are doing well. The lessons learned on how to germinate and grow these rare trees from seed will be shared with CPC in Vietnam to enable them to produce seedlings to reinforce populations in Vietnam and support conservation of the species in the wild.

While the successful germination was taking place, CPC staff discovered a new

stand of just fourteen golden cypresses in northern Vietnam. Although most of them were dead or badly damaged, one surviving tree stood 20 meters tall (60'), with a diameter of 1.2m, making it the largest specimen yet discovered. Seed from this new population has been

collected by the CPC staff, and the Bedgebury team hopes to raise seedlings from it, in order to increase the genetic diversity of this endangered species.

<sup>1</sup> The Global Trees Campaign, a joint initiative between Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) works to secure the future of the world's threatened tree species and their benefits for humans and the wider environment. In addition to working to save rare conifers in Vietnam, the Global Trees Campaign and its local partners are also saving baobabs in Madagascar, magnolias in China and other highly threatened trees around the world. See [www.globaltrees.org](http://www.globaltrees.org).



*Xanthocyparis vietnamensis* seedling

# American Conifer Society 2011 Post Conference Tour Article

## Visiting the Forests of Oregon

Text by Doug Wilson and Joe Carli. Photos by Leonard Oddo

In the early fall of 2011, the Western Region hosted the ACS National Meeting at the Oregon Garden, Silverton, Oregon. Program presentations covered a broad range of topics from native conifer ecosystems to air layering propagation and champion tree research and preservation. For many guests, the added benefit of visiting Iseli Nursery, Porterhowse Farms and RareTree Nursery was a conifer collector's dream come true.

The post conference tour was a journey which took us from the Oak

savanna (*Quercus garryanna*) and mixed Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests of the Willamette Valley to the high desert ecosystem of Central Oregon. In Bend, a major hub for that area, we learned about fire interface issues facing many communities which reside amongst forests.

Dr. Stu Garrett was gracious to provide us with a program which covered native conifer ecosystems of the region. His talk brought out the hydrological, geological and succession aspects of forest development. The next



Visit to Porterhowse Farms



Sparks Lake

day our legs got a good workout with a hike led by Dr. Garrett and Dr. Jeffery Herbst near Sparks Lake in the Cascade Mountains. This lake is surrounded by

Mt. Bachelor and The Three Sisters mountains, which are prominent features in the landscape. Sparks Lake is the home of the Ray Atkinson Memorial



Davis Canyon Loop

Trail. Mr. Atkinson's photography of the region documented much of the natural landscape for generations to enjoy.

While in Central Oregon, we saw the Juniper, *Juniperus occidentalis*, steppe grasslands and the lodgepole pine, *Pinus contorta*, and the ponderosa pine, *Pinus ponderosa*. As we headed south we got a quick view of a former champion ponderosa pine measuring a circumference of 28' 11" and 162 feet tall.

The real gem of the tour was our visit to Oregon's only national park, Crater Lake. We were fortunate to have a "step on" tour by Ranger Mike Cook, who shared great stories of the history and ecology of this one of a kind wonder. We traveled around the perimeter of the lake taking in "postcard perfect" views

along the way. We learned that Crater Lake National Park was established in 1902 by lobbying from local residents who understood the uniqueness of this place. It is the deepest lake in the United States, fed only by rain and snow. No rivers or streams feed the lake. The water is considered to be the clearest and cleanest body in the world. Crater Lake rests inside a caldera formed some 7,700 years when the 12,000' tall volcano, Mt. Mazama, collapsed following a major eruption.

For a sense of the size of Crater Lake, some measurements of the lake include 183,000 acres, and a depth of 1,943'. The lake measures from 4½ to 6 miles in width. As a crater, the volume of the lake is 5 trillion gallons. On this part of our tour we saw ponderosa pine, *Pinus ponderosa*, at higher elevations, mountain hemlock, *Tsuga mertensiana*, white bark pine, *Pinus albicaulis* and subalpine fir, *Abies lasiocarpa*.

We continued our arboricultural odyssey into Southern Oregon visiting the Umpqua and Rogue River Valleys. We got just a "little" wet on the Hellgate Rogue River Jetboat excursion. This half-day trip exposed us to the flora and fauna of the river on a sunny day. Some of the sightings included osprey,



The largest ponderosa pine in Oregon approximately 500 years old.

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Crater Lake



Wildflowers at Crater Lake



Willamette Valley Vineyards. We had a wonderful time as hosts to our guests visiting from all over the country. In the end, the trip would not have been a success without the attendees. Thank you for visiting our part of the world.

eagles and deer along the way. One of the more astute ACS members spotted a communications tower disguised as a Douglas fir!

Our tour continued on to Roseburg to visit the gardens of ACS members Jack and Sharon Ayers and Ken and Elena Jordan. Both of these gardens have

wonderful conifer collections and are open to visitors by appointment. As the reality of our splendid tour was soon to end, we headed north with our last stop being at the Willamette Valley Vineyards where we could drink in a spectacular view west towards the coast range while enjoying some fruit of the vineyards



Ken and Elena Jordan

**Next Issue: SPRING 2012**

Our next issue will feature: My Addicted Conifer Syndrome

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.

Conifers and the Holidays (Fall)

Scientific Research on Conifers (Winter)

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

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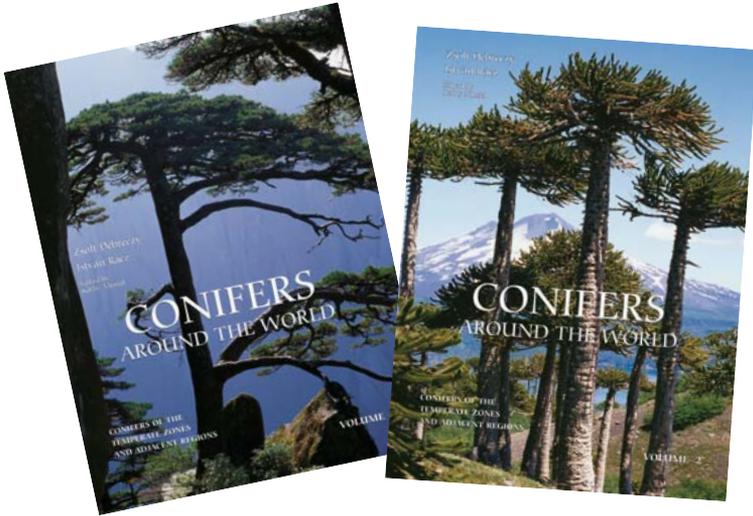
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**Conifers Around The World – Volumes 1 and 2**  
**Debreczy, Zsolt and Racz, Istvan (2011) DendroPress Ltd.,**  
**Budapest. ISBN – 978-963-219-061-7 0 \$250.00, hard cover.**



Likely no book in recent history written specifically about conifers has been more eagerly awaited than *Conifers Around the World*. A number of books have recently been published on this subject, but most are either about selected cultivated varieties (cultivars), conifers in the landscape or a taxonomic monograph at the species level. This is not written to diminish the contributions of those publications, but rather to highlight the uniqueness of this work. As part of a larger effort to document all of the temperate trees of the world, this two volume set is devoted specifically to conifers. In doing so, the authors have traversed the globe to document and photograph conifers in their natural habitats. It is fair to say that most all known species of temperate conifers are represented, each in rich color along with easy to follow taxonomic descriptions. Comprising two weighty

volumes, this 1,089 page masterpiece contains 474 range maps, nearly 1,300 illustrations and more than 3,700 color photographs. No other publication of this magnitude comes close to these numbers. What makes this possible is the extensive fieldwork where the authors observed, photographed and carefully documented species in an *in situ* environment. Given the time and expense required to do this, most authors rely heavily on herbarium samples.

Superbly edited by Kathy Musial, Curator of Living Collections at the prestigious Huntington Botanical Gardens, this work is much more than a photographic atlas. In these two volumes the authors cover interesting topics such as conifer identification, conservation, morphology, distribution and climate. Each section contains numerous interesting facts about conifers and related geography that are not discussed

in similar publications, and the best part is that the writing is not so technical as to be above the comprehension level of the average reader. Another attribute of this work is its mention of similar species and how to differentiate between them. This is one of the most frequently asked questions by our members. If only more authors would take the time to do this.

As a conifer reference, the volumes receive high marks. A unique feature is that they are arranged geographically, focusing on 11 regions. Within these regions, the taxa are arranged alphabetically. While this is a bit clumsy, if one is trying quickly to find a specific species, it is offset by the ability to open the book to a region and know what taxa are growing there. This easily becomes a source of fascination as we are shown where conifers we cultivate naturally occur. The authors' coverage of the diversity of conifers in Mexico and Central America is eye-opening. For some unknown reason, this is a region which is underemphasized in other conifer books. This is unfortunate since there is a treasure-trove of beautiful conifers which are only found there – in fact, Mexico contains the highest numbers of pine species in the world.

The pictures are all of high quality on heavy paper so as to appear accurate. While interesting, for the most part the photographs are not what one would typically consider beautiful from a landscape view. They are intended to show how the species appears in the wild. It is interesting to note the difference in form when grown in the wild versus in cultivation. Each species is accompanied by multiple photographs which capture foliage detail, cone morphology and a full shot of the subject specimen.

The one area of confusion is the number of species, subspecies and varieties which the authors list. In this work the authors list 541 taxa. This number includes species, subspecies, and varieties. Given their work only addresses temperate flora, this is a high number. For those who follow horticulture, it is widely known that botanists widely disagree on what constitutes an accepted species or variety. As an example, in *Conifers Of The World*, Canadian botanist James Eckenwalder recognizes 546 species. In *A Handbook Of The World's Conifers*, Aljos Farjon recognizes 615 species. Both of these authors cover all conifers to include those from tropical regions. Some species covered in this book such as *Juniperus morrisonicola* and *Abies flinckii* are not recognized by either Farjon or Eckenwalder. In addition, new species have been added such as *Abies zapotekensis*, *A. neodurangensis* and *Pinus yecorensis* (all found in Mexico). While it appears that Debreczy and Racz are far less inclined to synonymize taxa, they do reduce a number of commonly recognized species to varietal or subspecies status. Here, as in other works, we are left to pick and choose which names we go with.

In summary, this is a worthy book for those seeking a better understanding of the world's conifers. There is much to learn from these two volumes. While the cost of \$250 (\$212.50 for ACS members) is not cheap, a project of this scope is rare and the price is more than justified. I highly recommend this book.

For availability in the U.S., see <http://www.interdendr.org/>.

Tom Cox



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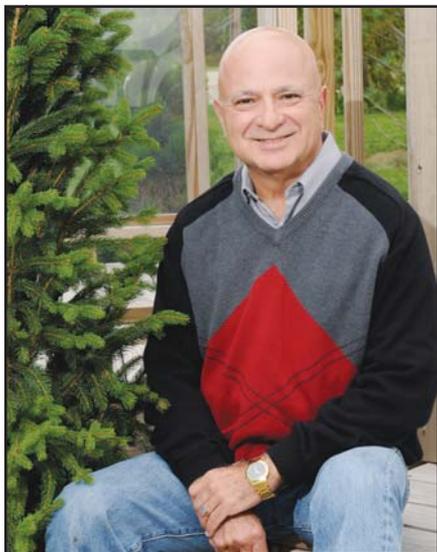
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# The Editor's Corner: A Tale of Two Reports

Text and Photos by Dr. Ronald J. Elardo



The winter here in Michigan was unseasonably warm, and there was more rain than snow. The lack of snow pack and cold temperatures had interesting results. For one, my USDA Zone 5 and also my out-of-zone, potted conifers were not only able to acclimate themselves to their confined quarters, but they have come through the winter and they look great. Secondly, my personal war with the rabbits, the mice and the rats has been won with a little chemical help.

My potted conifers spent the winter in three locations in and around my house. My attached garage was the winter-home to those conifers living in glazed and terra cotta pots. The obvious reason was to protect the pots from cracking. The garage stays at freezing or a bit warmer. I made sure that the trees

were watered with untreated water. They went into the garage at the beginning of November when temps began to slide downward. They had set their buds for spring, and I believed they were ready to move indoors. The garage is brightened by two southwestern-facing windows. Only *Pinus densiflora* 'Oculus draconis' is exhibiting the effects of dessication. Some of the potted conifers which spent the winter *indoors* included: *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Compressa', *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Ellie B' and *Abies koreana* 'Silberperle'. All the other *Chamaecyparis obtusa* (see *Conifer Quarterly* Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 35) resided on my northeastern-facing, back deck along with *Abies pinsapo*, *Cedrus atlantica*, *Cupressus nootkatensis* 'Pendula' and *Pinus nigra* 'Oregon Green'. This deck contains many other large conifers as well. The back deck conifers received enough water from rain and snow to keep their beauty while, in some cases such as *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Confucious', winter color showed its loveliness. At last count, the microclimate of my back deck was home to twenty potted conifers.

In the Winter *CQ* I reported on the measures I was taking to minimize or even possibly eliminate rabbit and rodent damage to my conifers. After the winter of 2011, I had to do something to avoid the wholesale pillaging of my *Picea abies* 'Cupressina', *Picea omorika* 'Pendula Bruns' and *Picea abies* 'Pendula', to name but a few of the many plants which suffered severe damage. I had employed four-foot rabbit



*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Confucious' and *Pinus sylvestris* 'Bonna' in the background. In the foreground *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Little Ann', *Picea pungens* 'Prostrata' and *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Tempelhof'.

fences only to watch the snow pack assist the rabbits scale the fences, enter the beds and feast. Enter Plantskydd. In October, prior to resurrecting the rabbit fences, I used the granular and mixed forms of this deer and rabbit repellent. I sprayed over 250 plants and then I waited. I even went so far as to leave a couple of sacrificial plants (not conifers) unprotected. I would walk among my trees and plants to observe how things were progressing. Or not progressing, as it were. Not one *Acer palmatum*, not one conifer, none of the treated plants were destroyed. To be sure, there was nibbling, and I could see their footprints circling the trees, probing. They even burrowed

underneath the rabbit fences, only to find the scent and the taste of the Plantskydd offensive. This deer and rabbit repellent is purported by the manufacturer to last through April when applied in October. So far so good.

It will only be a matter of time before the rabbit fences come down. By the time you read this, spring will have already beckoned, and I will already be planning to incorporate new acquisitions into my conifer collection. It will also be time to haul out the succulents and cacti to join their potted conifer brethren in once again adorning my home.

Ron

In the *Winter CQ* there was a tree in the Tom Cox article "Trek into the Russian Wilderness" (p. 26, bottom right), the caption of which was incorrect. The tree in question is **not** *Taxus brevifolia*, but rather *Picea breweriana*. My personal apologies go to Tom.

Ronald J. Elardo

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# Evaluation of the Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers

Alan Dosenberry, Mitch Zost, and Dr. Bert Cregg  
Michigan State University, Department of Horticulture

**A**uthor's note: *The American Conifer Society (ACS) will hold its 2012 National Meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan July 12-15. The program will include a keynote speech by noted horticulturist Adrian Bloom, the ACS Conifer College, and a field day at the Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers at Hidden Lake Gardens. For more details on the program and registration information visit the ACS website at: [www.conifersociety.org](http://www.conifersociety.org). In advance of the ACS meeting and field day at Hidden Lake, we conducted an assessment of the Harper Collection as part of a project funded by the American Conifer Society Scholarship program. The complete project report and inventory of the Harper Collection will be included in a book published in honor of Chub Harper and his*

*contributions to horticulture and the ACS. Below we provide a summary of the report. This short version of the report was prepared by Gerald Kral.*

The Justin "Chub" Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers is one of the largest and most diverse collections of ornamental conifers in the United States. The Harper Collection was established at Michigan State University's Hidden Lake Gardens in southern Michigan in 1981. Prior to that time, Mr. Harper had been amassing a collection of dwarf and unusual conifers at his home in Moline, Illinois. With assistance from the Davey Tree Expert Company, over 300 specimens were hand-dug from the collection in Moline, loaded onto three semi-trucks, and transported 360 miles east to Hidden Lake Gardens. Survival of the newly established collection



Alan Dosenberry and Mitch Zost

was excellent (over 90%) and over time Mr. Harper and his colleagues continued to add new accessions to the collection. Today the Harper Collection includes more than 540 accessions.

Because of the Collection's longevity and Mr. Harper's philosophy of low maintenance conifers, the Harper Collection provides a unique opportunity to evaluate the long-term performance of hundreds of conifer cultivars under southern Michigan's zone 5b, conditions (average annual low temperature -10° to -15°F; average rainfall 35"). With support from the American Conifer Society (ACS) Scholarship program we conducted an assessment of the Harper Collection in 2011. The objectives of the assessment were to: 1) develop baseline data on the entire Harper Collection, 2) compare observed growth performance of accessions in the Harper Collection in relation to their ACS Size and Form designation and 3) develop recommendations for future assessment of the Harper Collection and similar collections.

## Methods

The assessment was conducted in late spring 2011. We measured total height and crown spread at the widest point of each plant in the Collection. Based on our measurements and earlier records in the Hidden Lake Gardens' database, we estimated annual height and crown spread growth as the total growth divided by the number of years since the earlier measurements. We determined the actual ACS Size Class for each specimen based on the measured annual height growth rate or spread growth rate, whichever was larger. In some cases, plant size



had not been recorded previously. Therefore, we were unable to estimate the annual growth rate. For each plant in the Collection we looked up the ACS Size Class, if available, from the Conifer Database on the ACS webpage <http://www.conifersociety.org/> and entered these designations into the spreadsheet for the Harper Collection. Using the Pivot Table feature in Excel, we developed tables comparing the observed growth performance of specimens in the Harper Collection with their ACS Size Class for each cultivar.

## Results

Accessions and cultivars. As of Spring 2011 the Harper Collection included 549 accessions representing 397 different cultivars from 21 genera (Table 1). In terms of cultivars represented, *Picea* (122

cultivars) and *Pinus* (94) were by far the best represented followed by *Abies* (36), *Tsuga* (34) and *Chamaecyparis* (27). The Collection includes approximately 20% of all *Picea* cultivars listed in the ACS Database (122 of 620 cultivars listed) and 10% of all *Pinus* and *Tsuga* cultivars listed in the Database. At the species level, *Picea abies* was the most represented species with 54 cultivars (22% of all ACS listed cultivars). In a fitting testament to Mr. Harper's fondness of Swiss stone pine, the Collection includes 9 cultivars of *Pinus cembra*, or 50% of all cultivars listed in the database for the species.

**Size Class analysis.** Dwarf conifers are the most common Size Class in the Harper Collection, based on both ACS cultivar designation and observed growth rates (Figure 1). Of the 411 cultivars in the Harper Collection for which Size Classes are listed in the ACS Conifer Database, 182 (44.3%) are classified as Dwarf conifers. When plants were classified based on observed growth rate, almost the same percentage (44.1%) was designated as Dwarf conifers. Intermediate conifers were the next most common designation based on either ACS classification (29.2%) or actual growth rate (38.8%), followed by Large conifers (16.3% ACS; 12.6% actual) and Miniature (10.2% ACS; 4.55 actual).

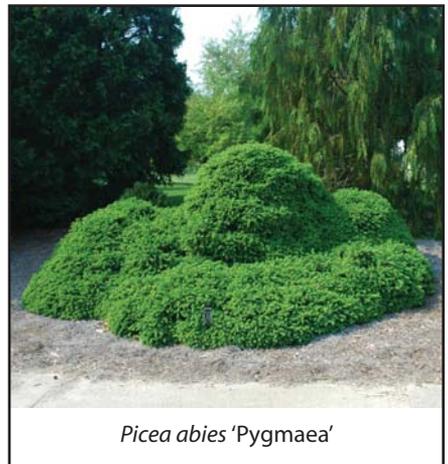
Among the Size Class designations, Dwarf conifers were most likely to grow true-to-type as the actual growth rate of 59% of specimens in this group matched their ACS-listed Size Class. Approximately 35% of conifers listed in the dwarf Size Class grew faster than their maximum designated rate (6" per year). Intermediate conifers were the next most likely to match their designated growth rate, with 50% growing to true-

to-type and 19% exceeding the 12" per year. Most (93%) of the plants listed as Miniatures in the ACS grew faster than the 1" per year maximum and most (87%) of the plants listed as Large conifers grew slower than their 12" per year minimum.

There are a couple of factors that may contribute to the discrepancies between observed growth rates and ACS size designations. Growth of many of the Miniature conifers may have exceeded the designated rate since site conditions are generally favorable throughout the Harper Collection. Also, many of these are relatively new accessions, providing a short time-frame in which to evaluate their growth potential. The Large conifers, in contrast, represented some of the oldest accessions in the collection. As trees age, height growth tends to decrease such that some of these trees were relegated to Intermediate status based on their observed growth rate.

## Recommendations

The Harper Collection and similar conifer collections around the country



provide a tremendous opportunity for understanding the long-term performance and potential of conifers in various environments. Likewise, the Conifer Database on the ACS website is an outstanding resource to disseminate and standardize information on ornamental conifers. Based on our experience, there are a few simple steps that could improve the utility of conifer collections and the ACS database as repositories of long-term information on conifer performance.

#### Measurements and record-keeping.

One of the hallmarks of the Harper Collection is that the Hidden Lake Gardens staff has kept meticulous records; each plant is assigned an accession number at planting, entered into a database and conspicuously labeled. In addition to these steps, developing standardized protocols for long-term periodic assessments can help yield important information on the performance of trees in collections. We suggest measuring height and crown spread at planting and reassessing collections on a regular basis. It is important that the date of measurement is recorded in order to calculate annual growth rates.

ACS Database. The ACS Database is an incredibly powerful tool which currently includes records on nearly 4,500 conifer cultivars and species. Since the database is an on-line resource accessible to all ACS members and the public, it is not only a repository for information, but provides a common reference point and opportunity for standardization. For example, highlighting illegitimate names on the Database helps to eliminate their use and ensures that ACS members share a common language when discussing conifers. Maintaining such a massive

database is an enormous undertaking, nevertheless the more complete the information on the database the more useful it will be. In our project we found that 25% of the accessions in the Harper Collection did not have a size class listed in the database and 29% of the accessions did not have Form Class designated. We note this not to be critical, but to highlight an opportunity to improve the utility of the Database. We suggest that the ACS develop a committee of experienced

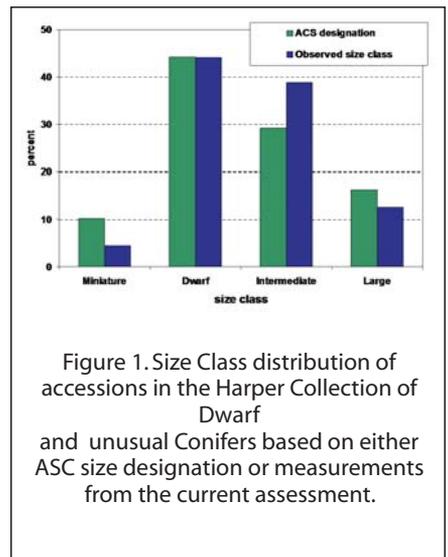


*Picea omorika* 'Berliner's Weeper'

**Table 1. Cultivars and accessions in the Harper Collection of Dwarf and Unusual Conifers, Spring 2011**

Genus	Cultivars	Accessions
Picea	122	151
Pinus	94	118
Abies	36	42
Tsuga	34	42
Chamaecyparis	27	34
Thuja	21	29
Juniperus	17	76
Larix	11	11
Taxus	11	13
Xanthocyparis	6	12
Taxodium	4	4
Pseudotsuga	3	3
Cedrus	2	2
Microbiota	2	5
Calocedrus	1	1
Cephalotaxus	1	1
Cryptomeria	1	1
Metasequoia	1	1
Pseudolarix	1	1
Sciadopitys	1	1
Sequoiadendron	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>549</b>

coniferites to review the records in the database. Where key information (Form Class, Size Class, USDA Hardiness Zone) is missing, the committee will develop a consensus opinion and enter this into the database. Given Mr. Harper’s passion for conifers and for disseminating accurate information about them, we believe insuring the Database includes the most complete and current information possible would be an appropriate way to continue his legacy.





Lower Harper



Harper Planting Photo by Steven W. Courtney

# Brent Markus and RareTree Nursery, one Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Text by Dr. Ronald J. Elardo, Photos by Brent Markus



Brent Markus at RareTree Nursery,  
Silverton, Oregon



*Pinus omorika* 'Peve Tijn'

There is a formula for success in life. Writers like James Joyce, author of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, knew that formula and embodied it in his autobiographical, stream-of-consciousness novel. Philosophers, depth psychologists and cultural historians recognized this formula in the many tales of heroes from time in memoriam too. This formula involves something *an sich*, something made up of dreams and mentors and synchronicity. It is a system, in which individuals become individuated; they become *in-divisible*, whole, and thereby capable of shaping their own destinies by becoming magnets for helpful persons and resources. In interviewing Brent Markus, this editor discovered such a life's path. He shaped his destiny as a landscape architect and nurseryman from a young age with the



*Pinus peuce* 'Arnold Dwarf'



*Pinus pumilla* 'Glauca'

Brent had lengthy conversations with Don about plants and conifers. Through Don he met Larry Stanley of Stanley and Sons Nursery, Boring, Oregon. Larry became yet another of his mentors. He had a very strong influence on Brent, an influence Brent acknowledges exists to this day. It was through Larry that Brent experienced plant shopping and evaluation. With his dad, Brent *ordered* “the big stuff” for the landscaping job he was envisioning for his parents’ home. Brent, his dad and his brothers went to Oregon to select the trees for the project, which then made their trek east in refrigerated semis. Brent was already more than waist-deep in landscaping and he was a mere teenager.

help of people, education and resources.

Brent began his life as a nurseryman and landscape architect when he was just fourteen years of age. It was at that time in 1996 that his parents, Drs. Donalee and Norman Markus, had decided to renovate their garden. His father brought him to Border’s in Chicago to peruse landscape books and help develop a vision for the re-landscaping of the family’s property. That started it all for the young Brent. In addition, he visited the Chicago Botanic Gardens near his home often, where his innate affinity for plants drew him to the conifer collection there. Brent also made the acquaintance of Henri Bort, retired curator of the Japanese Garden, who taught him about plants, training trees and garden design. Brent started ordering catalogues on dwarf conifers and he was, so-to-speak, off and running.

Don Porterhowsé of Porterhowsé Farms, Sandy, Oregon became, after Henri Bort, one of Brent’s mentors.



*Pinus strobus* 'Louie'



*Abies concolor* 'Wintergold'

Clearly he had an image of what his parents' garden should look like. In fact, the result was so inspiring that, by the age of sixteen, he was being commissioned by friends of his family to design landscapes for them. Although it may be inconceivable that so young a person as Brent might be able to be so gifted, it is not at all improbable that he, like so many *Genie* before him, could translate his instinctual, inner vision of beauty into reality. As he describes this stage of his life, he went "crazy". Early on, he also made the acquaintance of Rich and Susan Eyre of Rich's Foxwillow Pines, which as everyone knows, is *the* breeding ground for the incurable *addicted conifer*



RareTree Nursery,  
Silverton, Oregon



*syndrome*. Brent caught it too. Rich and Susan proved to be another source of inspiration, plants and, most of all, camaraderie for Brent.

Brent formalized his eye for plant selection and landscaping with academic credentials from Cornell University, New York State's land grant university. There he studied landscape architecture with a focus on landscape history and herbaceous plants. He interned with the famous Belgian landscape architects

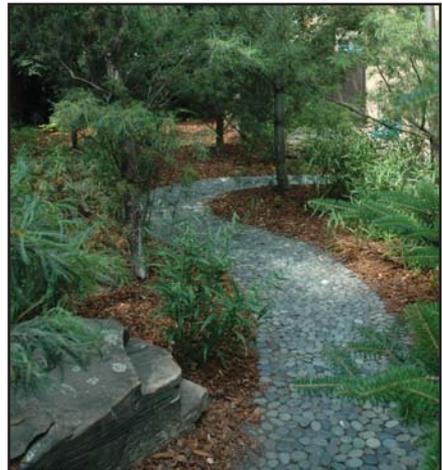
Jacques and Peter Witz of Witz Landscaping, Antwerp, Belgium. He then studied for his Masters at Cornell, this time with concentrations on cultural freezing environments in container plants. He is currently writing his doctoral dissertation, also at Cornell, on how the root freezing tolerance of container plants can be influenced with growth hormones in order to maximize container plant survival. Brent emphasizes that, on the nursery end of things, rootstock is



City Garden  
before in  
Chicago, Illinois



Before



After

the key to tree survival. It was during his Masters program that Brent also became a nurseryman.

Brent has created a niche for himself through his landscaping of small, urban spaces, referring to them as “pocket gardens”. For example, he landscaped a full city block in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago, Illinois. He worked among the traditional brownstones there and created experimental and intimate gardens. He stretched the canvas upward by using lots of columnar trees and adding ornamental grasses. He made use of contorted white pines. Mexican river stones form pathways. The result of his plans is a vertical vision to match the large, towering structures.

Brent’s signature is a combination of color and textural contrast in the same view. He uses unusual conifers to create four-season gardens. Yellow conifers act as accents to shine against a background of saturated green or blue or near a red Japanese maple.

Brent has primarily landscaped in both the Chicago and Boston areas, but would be interested in working in any part of the country. Since 2004, Markus Specimen Trees has provided the field of landscaping with a very new perspective and philosophy.

In my humble opinion, Brent Markus represents a remarkable young man with an innate talent for landscaping.



Suburban Garden, Highland Park, Illinois

## 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 15
Spring	Apr/May/Jun	Feb 15	Apr 15
Summer	Jul/Aug/Sept	May 15	July 15
Fall	Oct/Nov/Dec 31	Aug 15	Oct 15

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