

# Conifer Quarterly

Vol. 30 No. 1

Winter 2013



# Contents

2-3 ..... **President's Message**

4-7 ..... **Editor's Corner**

8 ..... **Central Region Announcement**

9 ..... **Deer Deterrent**

10-14 ..... **Dwarf Ginkgo Cultivars  
Part I: A cluttered landscape**

16-20 **Powell Gardens' Conifer Garden:  
An ACS Conifer Reference Garden**

21-29 ..... **2012 International Trip:  
The Netherlands and Belgium**

30-33 ..... **A Wasp's Tale: The Search for *Megastigmus*  
on North American Cupressaceae**

34-36 ..... **The Hibbard Broom,  
the "VW Bug" Broom and 'Wilson Park',  
Three Broom Stories**

37-39 ..... **The Beazie and Michael Larned Garden  
for the 2013 National Meeting**

40-41 ..... ***Abies pinsapo***

42 ..... **2013 National Meeting**

44-47 ..... **2012 Northeast Region Annual Meeting**

48 ..... **Directorate**



*Circle Oak Ranch*



*Powell Gardens*



*International Trip*



*Larned Garden*



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

# Conifer Quarterly

Winter 2013  
Volume 30, No 1

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

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One of the greatest challenges of any organization is how to connect its members, share information and make the organization “valuable” to its members. Traditionally this is done via a formal publication like our *Conifer Quarterly*. Plant societies also plan national meetings to allow members to gather, learn and share experiences. In the case of the American Conifer Society, regional meetings and local, less formal rendezvous also let members meet and interact. Unfortunately only about 10 per cent of the actual membership attends our various meetings.

With today’s technology, more of this communication takes place on the internet. The ACS website offers 5 different forums which sadly, are seldom used. There are additional discussions found on the web concerning conifers, but the information can vary much in accuracy and reliability. In January 2010, I led the Northeastern Region on a new venture in the world of social media called Facebook.

The word Facebook conjures up all sorts of various feelings, emotions, and in some cases, fear. Please consider the current statistics:

- 1) One in every 13 people on Earth is on Facebook.
- 2) 71.2% of all USA internet users are on Facebook.
- 3) In 20 minutes, 1,000,000 links are shared on Facebook.
- 4) In 20 minutes, 2,716,000 photos are uploaded.
- 5) In 20 minutes, 10.2 million comments are posted.

(Source, “50 Fascinating Facebook Facts and Figures”, Jeff Bullas – [www.jeffbullas.com](http://www.jeffbullas.com))

Facebook currently has over one billion active users. Over 166 million users are in the USA, followed by Brazil, India, Indonesia and Mexico. The median age of the Facebook user is 22, in 2012.

As you can see, Facebook is where people go to interact, share photos and join various groups to be educated on a multitude of topics. I am pleased to report that the American Conifer Society is alive, well and thriving in this environment. At this time 3 of the 4 ACS regions have a Facebook group or page. By keeping the groups regional, it allows for specific discussions on topics related to your geographic area, such as soil conditions or trees specific to your region. This division also allows its members to interact more and create many "cyber-friendships" which eventually lead to actual face-to-face meetings at a rendezvous or regional event. Some of us are members of all 3 groups, and we share information between the groups. Yes, we allow non-ACS members to participate, with the goal of eventually recruiting these Facebook friends as new ACS members.

I have just reviewed the activity on each ACS page for Dec.1 to Dec 19, 2012:

Northeastern Region: 4 posts – 89 members. Started January 2010 by Larry Nau.

Southeastern Region: **85 posts** – 315 members. Started February 2010  
by Flo Chaffin.

Western Region: 11 posts – 100 members. Started July 2012 by Sara Malone.

What are we talking about? The Western Region posted an album of 201 photos of their recent regional meeting. In the South, members have posted dozens of photos and comments on conifers which are thriving in the South. In the NE, the recent storm damage from Hurricane Sandy is prominent, along with various conifer photos. Personally, I like to post photos of Regional and National Meetings that very night, on which my photos were taken. I have shared photos of conifers in my garden, botanical gardens and posted additional, interesting trivia from the internet relating to conifers.

Within the past 2 years, approximately 25% of the ACS membership is actively involved with ACS Facebook pages. I am certain that number will at least double in the next 2 years. More importantly, Facebook is a fantastic tool to reach out and connect with young people or students as they attend horticultural college, landscape design, or even forestry school. Facebook allows ACS members to share conifer photos and information with each other, but also with groups from around the world. For example, I belong to a gardening group which has over 2,600 members, many of whom were thrilled to see a photo of *Pinus contorta* 'Chief Joseph' for the first time. I ask each ACS member to consider joining us on Facebook and to share your experiences with conifers in your garden, containers, or even conifers in natural settings. Together let's promote conifers and the ACS to the next generation of gardeners and spread "ACS" (Addicted Conifer Syndrome) throughout Facebook's 1 billion users.

Larry

# Editor's Corner: Conifers, Cabernet & Camaraderie

Western Region Report Petaluma, California October 18 - 20



This Editor's Corner brings you something unique. I had the pleasure of being invited to attend the Western Region's meeting and to report on it. My wife and I paid our registration fees and all of our transportation costs and then made it a vacation by extending our stay before and after the meeting. Sara and Ron Malone hosted us at their ranch just a hop, skip and a jump from the meeting site.

Nature shone down on the 45 attendees as the Western Region convened its regional meeting just to the north of the Golden Gate Bridge in Petaluma.

The gathering might have been small, but it was nothing short of being convivial, humorous and vivacious as well. I got to meet past contributors to the *Quarterly* and to make many new ACS acquaintances too.

It seemed as though we had three main tasks ahead of us: 1. Enjoy the gardens, 2. Enjoy the wonderful camaraderie, and 3. Enjoy the cuisine.

Sara Malone of Circle Oak Ranch is to be praised for her excellent planning of the meeting. National President Larry Nau was in attendance as were several travelers from the east, including my wife Susan and myself. Bob and Ruth Davis traveled from Pennsylvania, while Hope Grossmann and Marvin Rumpler came from as far away as Cape Cod.

At every ACS meeting, whether it be a national or a regional meeting, there are silent and live auctions. At the Western meeting, the silent plant auction began on Thursday evening, the evening of the opening social gathering and one day before the start of the meeting. The silent auction would extend to the next evening and conclude just before dinner. The live auction occurred after the keynote speaker on Friday evening. Those Oregon folks (Joe Carli, Doug Wilson and Brian Jacob) kept things lively, and the plants went like hotcakes in a flurry of bidding. Many plants went home by car while others flew east with UPS.



Just some of the silent auction plants

The keynote speaker was Kathy Musial, editor and traveling companion of Zsolt Debreczy and István Rácz, who co-authored *Conifers around the World: Conifers of the Temperate Zones and Adjacent Areas*. What

a story she told! In search of all those conifers, she experienced life in the roughest sense. Living conditions were primitive and hard, but Kathy was a real trooper. She weathered all the physical challenges and then helped bring to print a written resource, invaluable to conifer researchers around the world. She proved to be co-traveler, editor and translator.

As informative as the keynote speech was; as much fun as the auctions were, it was the garden tours which offered the greatest variety of venues I have ever witnessed, certainly at a regional meeting. Four gardens were on the docket. Each was completely unique. Each was individually special.

Western Hills Garden was the first to nourish the eye and each plant lover's sensibilities. It is what I call a phoenix garden, a renaissance garden, in that it has experienced a rebirth in the past few years. It went from originally being a Mediterranean arboretum, to a canopy and shade garden, to an "ever-changing drama". It is not a manicured garden, but rather a managed natural landscape with dots of uniqueness. Western Hills is a plant stuffer's, like me, dream. The new owners and their staff continue to nurture this home to rare and unusual plants.

The second garden belongs to the 2012 Western Region's Volunteer of the year, Sara Malone, and her husband Ron. As Ron explained to my wife and me while we strolled the grounds of the ranch: "There was nothing here," when he bought the property. Sara came later, and, with her, a wonderful conifer garden. Looking over the property, it is easy to see the telltale signs of one with "addicted conifer syndrome". She has painstakingly purchased and placed each and every conifer in her garden. Beds stretch up and out from the Malone's residence and provide homes to an



*Just one glimpse into the renaissance garden at Western Hills*



ever-growing conifer collection.

After leaving Circle Oak Ranch, the bus was commandeered by its passengers and diverted to Pond and Garden in Cotati, Sara's conifer supply source. As if the

*One scene from the conifer collection at the Malone's Circle Oak Ranch*

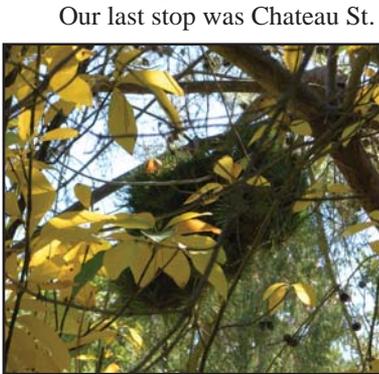
auctions weren't enough, the bus' bays got filled with trees, and many a happy smile reboarded the bus that day. But this was just the beginning.

Day two found us on the way to three more idyllic venues. The first of these was Cornerstone Gardens. The trend to have art reside among plants in botanical gardens is clearly the focus of Cornerstone. There are 26 different gardens, and each one has a "corner" of interest and a plant material theme. I was deeply touched by the garden and labyrinth dedicated to the many Mexicans who have come to the United States in search of a better life for themselves and their families and who have also suffered the pain of racism, discrimination and poverty. Cornerstone is the first "gallery-like" garden in the United States. The next garden on the tour proved to be as truly different from the previous three.



"Ribbons"

Quarryhill Botanic Garden derives its significance from being the largest collection of scientifically documented, wild-source Asian plants in North America and Europe, many of which are conifers. As our group divided into smaller ones and each then wove its way up onto the trails, a witch's broom on a Japanese red pine (*Pinus densiflora*) greeted us. Jane Jensen, Quarryhill's founder, funded seed collecting expeditions to Asia in the late 1980's and early 90's in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Howick Arboretum. The specimens today tower along the pathways and up the slopes of the old quarry. They are extremely rare and endangered in the wild, making Quarryhill a research-oriented garden.



*Pinus densiflora* witch's broom

Our last stop was Chateau St. Jean Winery, where meeting attendees were treated to beautiful landscapes and wine tasting. We sat in the warmth of the late afternoon sun and enjoyed the relaxed company of the place. It was romantic with its surrounds. The staff pampered us with continuous attention by filling our glasses with an array of the winery's fare. We were gently educated as to the bouquets we were enjoying. It was a nice aperitif to our last dining experience of the meeting. On the banks of the Petaluma River we dined with our travel companions. Then it was off to the hotel overlooking the bay and farewell.

Petaluma, California is a beautiful city with wonderful gardens in the vicinity. I plan someday to return to the regions north of San Francisco where my wife and I enjoyed a great regional meeting.

Ron



*Magnolia opipara*



*The grounds at Chateau St. Jean*

*I wish to thank my dear friend Sharon Rabkin Wood of West Lafayette, Indiana for the suggestion of making the CQ's cover a wrap-around one. So many of you have complimented this decision. Sharon died January 7, 2013. Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana named her a Distinguished Hoosier for her long and excellent service in human services.*

Ron



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# Central Region Announcement Summer, 2013 CR Meeting

Text by Jim Kelley, CR President

The 2013 Meeting of the Central Region will be held June 21-22 in Schaumburg, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago. The hotel is the Best Western Plus Hotel, 1725 E. Algonquin Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60173. We will visit 4 amazing private gardens in the northern suburbs of Chicago, and will lunch at the Chicago Botanic Gardens. This is the first time in a long time we will be in the Chicago area. The hotel is close to interstate highways and near O'Hare Airport. The form and brochure with registration info will sent be soon.

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# Deer Deterrent

Text by Dorothy Danforth, Brown Deer, Wisconsin

Photo by Steve Courtney

When I moved into my new home in Brown Deer, Wisconsin, I was naive about the predators I would share my garden with. An example of that: I reported to my friends that I came upon a nest of baby rabbits and placed a saucer of milk at their disposal; it was met with howls of laughter.

My backyard was an open slate with three trees planted in a row, nothing more. One of my first projects was planting a circular bed of award-winning tea roses. For twenty-five years I enjoyed these roses. One afternoon in June I pointed out to a friend that all the roses were blooming, providing a radiant bouquet. The next morning all the blossoms were gone. My first thought was that someone was stealing my roses, perhaps the neighbors. I was right that someone was stealing the roses, but a print in the soil was not made by a human; my new enemy was the deer. This started my education in deer deterrent.

Eventually, the deer, which had been driven from their natural habitat two blocks away where a new housing project was built, found that the menu here was not only roses, but phlox, tulips and daylilies. Fortunately, the deer in Brown Deer have no taste for *Hosta*, annuals or conifers. In order to protect my investment, I had to find a solution, as the local rabbits had joined the garden festival. After trying most remedies on the market, I contacted my dear friend, Deb Wiley, who was the garden writer for *Midwest Living* and who had come here to do a story on my fall garden. She recommended a product called Plantskydd, a Swedish product which was used to spray the forests in Sweden to curtail deer foraging. Plantskydd is a combination of chemicals and dried blood meal.

The first time I used Plantskydd I was repelled by the odor of blood and found it obnoxious to see blood on my beautiful blooms. Eventually, I found that the sight of blood disappeared, and the odor entered the membranes of the plant, which was then detected by the deer, which have twice the odor identifying ability over humans. To deer, blood means danger.

To this day I have enjoyed the tulips, roses, phlox and other enticing plants without loss or destruction. Plantskydd not only deterred the deer, but prevented rabbit foraging. Once I was sitting at the kitchen table surveying my garden, and a rabbit started down a row of blooming tulips which had been sprayed. The rabbit sniffed each plant without eating and then simply moved to the next plant.

Finally, it took off with no appetite for blood. Tulips seem to be the first course for deer and rabbits. One evening deer devoured a whole bed of pink perennial tulips, leaving one tulip. The next night they returned and ate the last one.

Because of the blood coagulates, I recommend pouring this amazing product in a spray bottle, using the whole amount at once. It can be sprayed in front of the bed to prevent the animals from cruising the garden. I did not use any this past summer. Evidently, the deer and rabbits have memory. I hope it is long lasting.

*(Editor's note. Plantskydd is marketed to last up to 7 months when sprayed in October. If plants are resprayed in April, the repellent's effects will last through the summer.)*



# Dwarf Ginkgo Cultivars-- Part I: A cluttered landscape

Text by Sara Malone Photos by Harold Greer

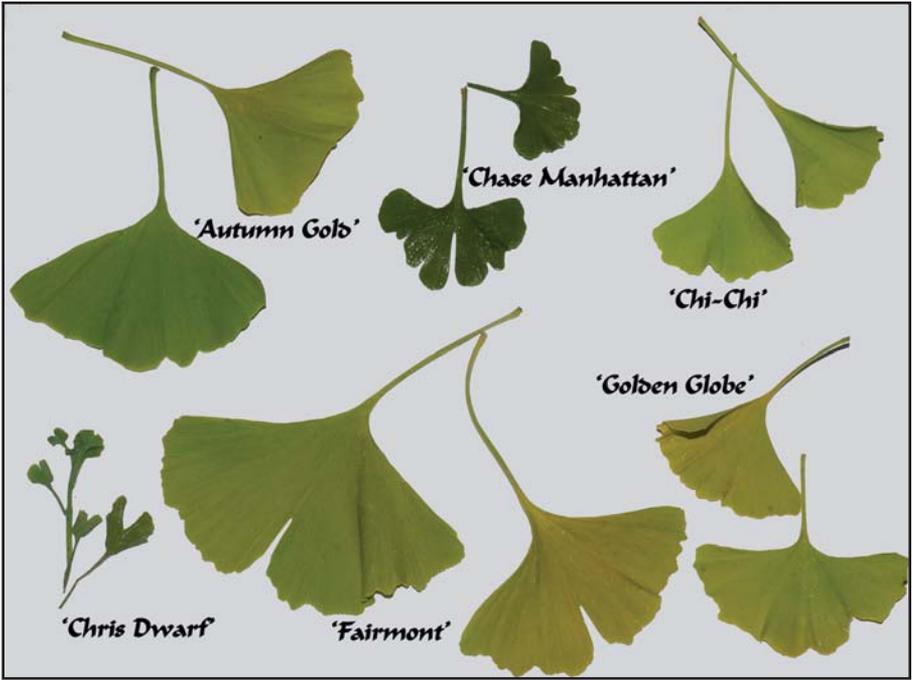
**M**y introduction to *Ginkgo biloba* was years ago, as a third year biology student at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, when my path between fall semester classes took me past a large tree with foul-smelling fruit. I was puzzled, because I had passed the tree for two years and never so much as wrinkled my nose. A member of the botany faculty enlightened me. It was a *Ginkgo*. *Ginkgo* are dioecious and wind-pollinated; the tree in question was female, and the only male specimen on campus was far enough away that the wind conditions had to be just right at pollination time, which made success sporadic. Little did I know that that was the last time that I would ask a question about a *Ginkgo* and receive an unequivocal, short, factual, useful answer!

I embarked on the quest to make order of the world of dwarf *Ginkgo* cultivars only to learn that it is a world rife with confusion, lack of documentation, little long-term growing experience and enormous reliance on second-or even third-hand observations and interpretations. The usual frenzy on the part of collectors to obtain the latest, rarest, most unusual cultivars has added to the obfuscation, as it provides motivation to keep nomenclature fuzzy and the number of different offerings high. These conditions plague other genera, as collectors of dwarf conifers are only too well aware, but the world of dwarf *Ginkgo* has some peculiar characteristics which exacerbate the situation.

*Ginkgo* are not strictly conifers, and, at this writing, have been classified into their own division, Ginkgophyta, with a single class, order, family, genus and species, of which *Ginkgo biloba* is the only extant representative. The *Ginkgo* fossil record dates back some 200 million years. Native to China, they are believed to be extinct in the wild, as today's populations now appear to have been cultivated. *Ginkgo* are, however, gymnosperms, and so are more logically lumped with conifers than not, and the American Conifer Society includes them under its umbrella. *Ginkgo biloba* 'Mariken' was even chosen as the ACS Collectors Conifer of the Year in 2007.

Even those who have not grown *Ginkgo* almost certainly recognize them, as they are used ubiquitously as street trees, due to their extensive range, high tolerance of air pollution and their resiliency to wind and snow. In addition, because they are stoic, long-lived and generally slow growing, they require little maintenance. Their durability is exemplified by the six *Ginkgo* which survived the atomic bomb blast in Hiroshima, a trauma not likely to be approximated in anyone's garden, black thumbs notwithstanding! The lovely, iconic *Ginkgo* leaf is a familiar shape in art, craft and jewelry. *Ginkgo* have long been a favorite choice for bonsai.

Dwarf cultivars began appearing in the trade in the mid-1980s and there are now somewhere around 30 available in the U.S. As noted, *Ginkgo* is a monotypic



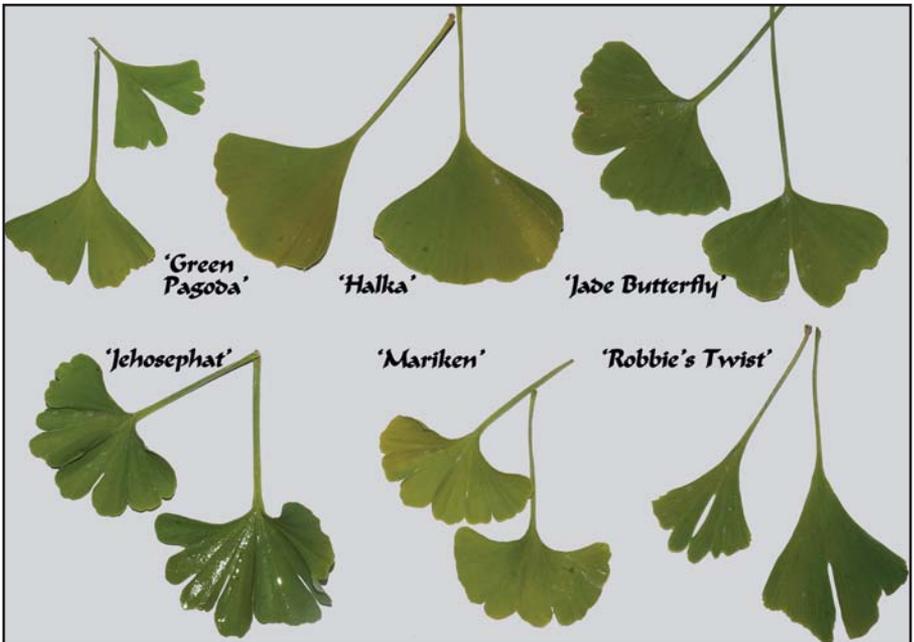
genus. Thus, all cultivars come from one species, limiting the range of variation. Not all are reliably named or documented and many are so new that not much is known about growth rates, mature size and form or even sex, as *Ginkgo* generally do not flower or fruit for 20-25 years. Whereas the species generally has a large, irregularly shaped crown, dwarfs come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some are low and branching, others vase-shaped, columnar or pyramidal; some have different shaped or sized leaves. and one even has interesting bark formations. Their cultural requirements are similar to those of the species, and they generally all share the trait of buttery, golden autumnal color. The vast majority of cultivars originate as witch's brooms, which *Ginkgo* produce with reasonable frequency. Two notable exceptions are 'Gnome', which originated as a chance seedling at Iaian Hiscock's Commercial Nursery in Tennessee, and 'Ross Moore', which Ross Moore, of Moore's Natives in North Carolina, found growing in a client's garden.

The majority of named cultivars (except 'Green Pagoda', which, per its catalogue, Stanley & Sons grows from cuttings) are propagated by budding or grafting, with the scion wood of the desired plant grafted onto seedling rootstock of *Ginkgo biloba*. Lucille Whitman, of Whitman Farms in Salem, Oregon explains: "Much of the scion wood for dwarf *Ginkgo* cultivars is in short supply, due to the slow growth rate of the plants, their small stature and their relatively short time in commercial propagation. However, the good news is that if you can obtain the scion wood, grafting is easy and has a high success rate." Due to this shortage of scion wood, many of the newest and sexiest cultivars are perpetually sold out and difficult to lay one's hands on. Crispin Silva, of Crispin's Creations Nursery in

Molalla, Oregon, echoes Lucille's frustrations about the scarcity of scion wood; he described building up a stock of scion wood as his biggest challenge in propagating *Ginkgo* cultivars.

It quickly becomes apparent after talking with growers that there have been many new introductions over the last decade or so and very little documentation as to their specific growth patterns, growth rate, stability and variability. Add to that the scarcity of scion wood and the general slow growth rate of the genus, and you have a situation rife with approximation, hyperbole and misrepresentation, even if much of it is unintentional. A quick search of *Ginkgo* cultivars on the GardenWeb Forums, for example, produces pages of questions with incomplete, conflicting or unsatisfactory answers. Many of the cultivars have uncertain antecedents: for example it is not clear if 'Chris's Dwarf' and 'Munchkin' are synonyms or not - two distinctly different forms have been observed. A similar situation arises with 'Chase Manhattan' and 'Bon's Dwarf', with some claiming that they are the same plant, others that they are distinct and different.

There is also confusion surrounding the four or five offerings which originated at Spring Grove Arboretum in Ohio. One cultivar is named Spring Grove™, which is the trademarked name for a cultivar called 'Grovbil' (presumably a purposely un-euphonious shortened combination of Grove and biloba), which was originally termed Spring Grove #9. Thus, at one time or another, three different names have been applied to the same cultivar. 'Grovbil' only appears as a secondary name in the listing in the Spring Grove Arboretum catalogue - the plant is universally known as Spring Grove. Another cultivar was originally named Spring Grove #86, but renamed 'Jehosophat'; another is called 'Spring Grove Sport' and another was



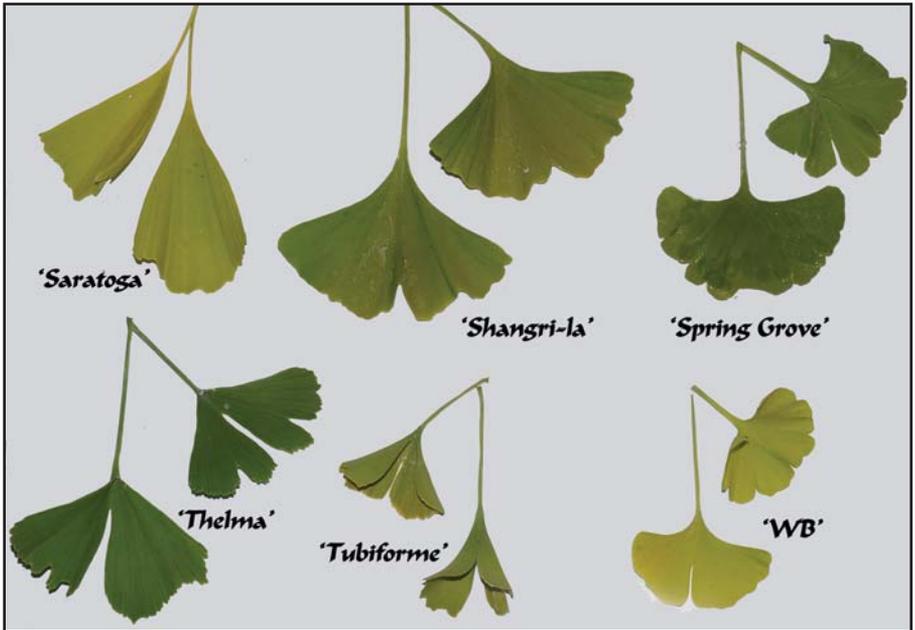
recently registered as ‘Queen City’, which may or may not be the same as #22, which is referred to on several sites. ‘Queen City’, although a legitimate cultivar, is so new that an internet search comes up completely dry. There may be yet another not in commercial distribution.

Richard Larson, Nursery Manager of the Dawes Arboretum in Newark, Ohio and the North American Registrar for all conifer genera (once again, *Ginkgo* are included) expresses his frustration with the situation: “Registration is relatively easy and it’s free, but a lot of people don’t want to register plants, so we have *Ginkgo* coming out [which] were never registered. That means that there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about a number of dwarf cultivars, but no recorded information.” He also notes that like certain other conifer genera, such as *Taxus*, *Ginkgo* are strongly plagiotropic, so that scion wood taken from different parts of the stock plant produces different growth patterns in the grafted product. This makes for differing growth patterns within one cultivar, raising questions about whether the plants are truly of the same name. Finally, due to lack of funds, the annual ‘checklist’, or perusal of the literature of a particular genus, which is supposed to be done on *Ginkgo* is not being completed, so that there is no current list of legitimately registered *Ginkgo* cultivars available, to serve as a guide as to which cultivars are “legit” and which might not be.

Because oddities are sought after by collectors (and consequently valuable), any indication of a different growth pattern is emphasized, although it should be noted that *Ginkgo*, their cultivar names or descriptions notwithstanding, do not display variable forms to the degree observed in other genera. When asked about weeping forms, for example, Richard notes: “No *Ginkgo* is going to weep like a cherry.” Similarly, Gary Handy, of Handy Nursery, when describing ‘Robbie’s Twist’, says that despite the fact that it is often described as “contorted”, “It is not a true contorted, like say a filbert or a corkscrew willow.” So, for those of you seeking the unusual, temper your expectations and remember that the dwarf *Ginkgo* are going to display more subtle modifications of the species habit than you might hope to find.

Another peculiarity of *Ginkgo* cultivars is that most people prefer male plants, due to the malodorous qualities of *Ginkgo* fruit, which is botanically not a fruit, but rather the fleshy outer coating of the seed. While some female offerings exist, selected and grown for those who appreciate the taste of the hard inner seed, the vast majority of named cultivars are male, or thought to be male. So, now we are down to one sex of one species, from which to produce cultivars! In fact, because so much *Ginkgo* propagation is restricted to cloning male plants, there is thought to be some threat to the biodiversity of the genus. It seems odd that the sex of the plant should matter much with a dwarf, especially one that can take 20 years to bear, where the ‘fruit’ would be far fewer than on an enormous species tree, but “male” has become an important adjective in *Ginkgo* marketing. Therefore, male plants are promoted.

Clarity is made more elusive still by the fact that many retailers include boilerplate language in their write ups, such as “flowers and fruit are not ornamentally significant”, which implies that the cultivar in question *has* fruit and



is thus a female, when in fact it is a male cultivar. A quick Google search for any number of cultivars reveals exactly the same language on different retail - and in some cases wholesale - websites, indicating that many vendors simply copy (with or without permission) the descriptions supplied by others. One retailer, when contacted about the accuracy of the descriptions of his *Ginkgo* offerings admitted that they were written by a third party and he had no idea if they were correct or not! In addition, most retailers, even the more knowledgeable, specialty nurseries, have a very short (and often very narrow) experience with dwarf *Ginkgo* cultivars, and so must rely on others to provide specifics about growth rates, habit and other particulars. When someone cannot speak from personal experience, there is far more opportunity for descriptions to get mangled. We have been playing the *Ginkgo* version of “telephone”, the old game where a phrase or word is repeated down a line of people until what the last person hears bears little resemblance to what the first person said. Thus, a particular cultivar is described by different vendors as “columnar”, “irregularly branching” and “arching and curving” - surely contradictory!

Given the difficulties, what’s a collector to do? Stay tuned for the next issue of the *CQ*, where we’ll share the results of our interviews with growers, retailers, arboretum professionals and plantaholics with a list for those who want the most reliable selections...and further, choices for those who want to push the envelope!

*Editor’s note: Any readers who have experience or questions they would like to share for Part II, please email or call the author directly at the contact information in the ACS Directory.*

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# Powell Gardens' Conifer Garden: An ACS Conifer Reference Garden

By Alan Branhagen

**P**owell Gardens, Kansas City's Botanical Garden is a young garden (celebrating 25 years in 2013) and one which has been well planned since its inception. Nationally renowned Landscape Architects from Environmental Planning and Design and its spinoffs planned the 970 acre garden. Major gardens include Perennial, Rock & Waterfall, Meadow, Island, Fountain and Heartland Harvest Garden (America's largest edible landscape). Powell Gardens' architecture is classic prairie style by E. Fay Jones and Maurice Jennings Architects – in fact, Powell Gardens contains the largest collection of their works at a public facility, and Mr. Jones was voted the 4<sup>th</sup> most influential architect of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by the American Institute of Architects. However that may be, sometimes the seed of a garden is not sown by a master plan or designer. A garden's staff, board or major donor can influence plans, but Powell Gardens has been careful not to let this create a hodge-podge collection out of touch with the mission, quality design, and premier horticulture standards. The Conifer Garden at Powell Gardens was never on a master plan, but a garden whose creation was beautifully inspired by the involvement and generosity of a master in his avocation, past president of the American Conifer Society Marvin Snyder.

It's hard to describe the evolution of the Powell Conifer Garden. It oddly began



with a seasonal display in our conservatory which included a garden railroad which in turn required plantings in scale with the trains. What is better than dwarf conifers? Through acquisitions for that display and donations from Marvin, we all of a sudden had quite a collection of conifers with no home once the railroad display's time was up. The theme of the landscape around the new E. Fay Jones designed Visitor Center was "evergreen" as a place to see beauty in the winter landscape without having to venture out too far into that season's inclement weather. Many of the first conifers were thus planted on the east side of the Visitor Center, including a trial, now the magnificent Hazel Smith Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), donated by Marvin.

In 2006, a major fountain garden was constructed to the north side of the Visitor Center and it unearthed the site's sandstone subsoil, beautifully drained with a slightly acidic pH -- so different from the wet, poorly drained clays of the garden's topsoil. The new Fountain Garden required an extensive change of grade with new walks from the north end of the building. An existing bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) at the northwest corner of the building's terrace walls and a trio of wonderful lacebark pines (*Pinus bungeana*) at the northeast corner of the building's terraces were retained and these plants anchored the new garden's plantings. The landscape fill required for the new beds would be from the fountain construction sandstone rubble subsoil which would allow the perfect soil for most conifers and plants requiring well-drained soil. So, the new north end bed of the visitor center, raised and constructed with well-drained soil was planted to a beautiful border of conifers with emphasis on varieties which would take the site's windswept location (there was at that time an open field to the north). Initial plantings were weeping Formosan juniper (*Juniperus formosana*), *Juniperus rigida* 'Temple' and



*Conifer  
panorama*



*Sequoiadendron giganteum* 'Hazel Smith'

*Juniperus communis* 'Oblonga Pendula'; weeping eastern white pines (*Pinus strobus* 'Pendula'), 'Peve's Minaret' and 'Peve's Yellow' bald cypress and a beautifully blue-needled *Abies concolor* 'Candicans'.

I got a call from Marvin regarding a premier collection of conifers he had designed for the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City, which had to be moved. This new opportunity sealed the deal so that the north border of the Visitor Center would become Powell Gardens' Conifer Garden. Horticulturist, Richard Heter, in charge of this area of the garden, met Marvin at Linda Hall and hand

dug the specimen conifers and delivered and planted them in their new home. I can't imagine the garden without these beautiful specimens which provided instant impact: *Picea abies* 'Acrocona', 'Elegans' and 'Mucronata' Norway spruce, *Picea omorika* 'Elizabeth' Serbian Spruce, a pair of *Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Fletcheri' Douglas-firs, 'Connecticut Turnpike' and *Picea orientalis* 'Shadow's Broom' oriental spruce, and *Pinus sylvestris* 'Nana' Scots pine. The new conifer border attracted so many positive comments from visitors that it became its own garden separate from the Visitor Center's beds and soon needed more space to allow for what I'll call my "chlorophyll addiction" and the generosity of Marvin. Of course, the Conifer Garden displays more than just conifers and has a beautiful tapestry of several groundcover type sedums, smaller perennials which require well-drained soil conditions, and other dwarf companion shrubs from boxwood to *Weigela*. The garden was mulched with pea gravel for a finished look and to hold in moisture.

In 2008, I designed an expansion to the Conifer Garden which extended the garden beyond a foundation planting of the Visitor Center to create an enclosed space or outdoor room. Stockpiled sandstone rubble was used to create a raised bed extending like an arm around (west and north of) a small lawn space. Marvin, along

with Rich Eyre of Rich's Foxwillow Pines, donated many conifers to make the bed an instant garden while Powell Gardens supplied some additional conifers. Here we moved our beautiful *Thuja occidentalis* 'Rosenkranz' arborvitae (originally thought to be a dwarf), added Tanyosho pines (*Pinus densiflora* 'Umbraculifera'), *Thuja plicata* 'Virescens', western arborvitae, *Picea orientalis* 'Skylands' oriental spruce and even a trial *Cunninghamia konishii* 'Samurai' China-fir, which has survived to this day. Smaller conifers were added in stages as we tried to create beautiful conifer combinations adding *Picea sitchensis* 'Silberzweig' Sitka spruce and *Juniperus conferta* 'All Gold' and 'Silver Mist' shore junipers and others. This extension was also planted with companion groundcover sedums, appropriate perennials, and dwarf shrubs; then mulched with pea gravel to tie in with the existing border.

2012 brought another extension of the Conifer Garden by creating a bed alongside the east side of the garden. Paths which lead north from the Visitor Center to the Fountain Garden and the new Heartland Harvest Garden pass along this east side of the Conifer Garden. A new bed, constructed with remaining sandstone rubble beside the path, provided the last "east wall" of the outdoor room which is the Conifer Garden. This (final?) conifer bed included many specimens donated by Marvin and Iseli Nursery including 'Rowe Arboretum' lacebark pine, *Cupressus nootkatensis* 'Sparkling Arrow' Alaska cedar, a weeping eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana* 'Pendula'), *Picea omorika* 'DeRuyter' Serbian spruce, *Taxus baccata* 'Silver Spire', English yew and others. Powell Gardens added groundcovers, perennials



*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Emelie Snyder'

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and dwarf shrubs with a mulch of pea gravel to complete the garden.

The Powell Gardens' Conifer Garden is maintained by horticulturist Richard Heter and gardener Peggy Batman. Its 110 cultivars of conifers and gymnosperms are curated by Marie Fry, who manages our plant records. It was designed by myself, but wouldn't be what it is without the inspiration and generosity of Marvin Snyder, and plant donations from Rich Eyre and Iseli Nursery. The garden survived the 2012 season which was the driest growing season ever recorded for the Kansas City region and as well as being the hottest year (as of the end of September). We did lose a very few choice plants and have some needle burn on a few others, but the garden is overall a resounding success with many positive comments by visitors. I know gardens are never static, but constantly evolving as plants grow larger and extremes of our heartland climate test the adaptability of all the unique conifers we grow. As some specimens become too large for their space, they may be transplanted to other locations at Powell Gardens. New conifers will continue to be added to fill spaces and create new color, texture and shape compositions. I know visitors to Powell Gardens are inspired by the garden, and hopefully it will make them think differently about conifers beyond standard foundation plantings to the incredible wealth and beauty of unique cultivars available at nurseries.

It also must be mentioned that this Conifer Garden, along with the whole of Powell Gardens, has been acknowledged as an ACS Reference Garden in 2012. There are approximately 800 conifers to be found throughout the extensive gardens. Nut pines can be found in the Heartland Harvest Garden including the rare *Pinus gerardiana*. The Mediterranean inspired vineyard landscape in that garden utilizes 'Taylor' junipers (*Juniperus virginiana*) in place of columnar Italian cypress, which are not hardy here. Bald cypress, dawn redwoods, pines and spruces are widely planted as part of a total of 22 genera and 81 species of conifers found at Powell Gardens. More obscure species include Florida torreyia (*Torreya taxifolia*), Florida yew (*Taxus floridana*), northern hiba arborvitae (*Thujaopsis doltsopa* var. *hondai*) and Cathay pine (*Cathaya argyrophylla*). All conifers are clearly identified by plant labels.



Conifer Gardens' north border

# 2012 International Trip: The Netherlands and Belgium

Text by Tom Cox. Photos by Eric Hofley

**O**n Tuesday September 4th, 2012, 35 members from the American Conifer Society gathered together at the Renaissance Amsterdam Hotel for the start of a whirlwind tour through some of the best gardens in The Netherlands and Belgium. The evening kicked off with a private cocktail welcome reception where guests mingled and became acquainted with each other. ACS member Jim Wagner celebrated his 80th birthday, and we surprised him with a birthday cake and a hearty chorus of Happy Birthday. I'm proud to mention that Jim is a retired U.S. Army two-star general.

The next morning we were taken by coach around the beautiful city of Amsterdam then dropped off at the vibrant Albert Cuyp Market area for lunch on our own. After lunch we regrouped for a canal cruise of Amsterdam followed by a coach tour of the surrounding Dutch countryside. The sightseeing tours were intended to introduce participants to Holland as well as offer a relaxing day which allowed individuals to adjust to the change in time. For the next two weeks we would be touring gardens and other venues which would introduce us to various aspects of the plant world--from species level, to production of cultivars and even a peek at how flowers get processed to cross time zones and oceans, arriving in pristine condition. We would be expertly escorted during the entire tour by our wonderful, friendly, and English-speaking driver, Ton.

**On Day 3** we departed the hotel at 6:15 AM for a visit to the Aalsmeer Flower Auction. Although the departure time meant having our bags in the hotel lobby at 6:00, all participants were raring to go. Upon arrival at Aalsmeer we were met by our market guide who expertly moved us around the labyrinth of activity. Aalsmeer is the largest flower auction in the world, and we all were anxious to observe this emblem of Dutch efficiency. The auction building is the 4th largest building by floor space in the world, covering 10.6 million sq. ft. or 243 acres. Around 20 million flowers from all over the world (Europe, Ecuador, Columbia, Ethiopia, to name a few) are traded on a daily basis



*Aalsmeer Flower Auction*



*Abies amabilis* 'Spreading Star'

with that number increasing 10% around special days such as Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. The auction is set up as a Dutch auction, in which the price starts high and works its way down. Bidders sit in a large auction area with multiple laptops where they are only given a short time to bid before the flowers are made ready for shipment around the world.

By 9:00 in the morning we were back on the bus headed for our next stop at the Blijdenstein

Pinetum in Hilversum, where we had lunch and toured the magnificent property. For those unfamiliar with the term *Pinetum*, it is an arboretum which specializes in growing conifers. The collection at Blijdenstein forms part of the Dutch National Plant Collection and contains one of the world's most important conifer collections. We saw many rare and endangered species which were quite old, including the original plant of *Abies amabilis* 'Spreading Star'. We were all pleased with our first garden stop. For many, this was a first opportunity to see so many **species** of conifers as opposed to **cultivars**. This was also the start of the warm and welcoming hospitality we would experience in every garden we visited.

The garden portion of our day concluded with a guided tour by Wilbert Hetterscheld of the famous Von Gimborn Arboretum in Doorn. Started as a private collection in 1924 by German ink manufacturer, Max Von Gimborn, this garden was acquired by Utrecht University in 1966 and appears to still be well funded. It is significant to point out that it contains one of the largest conifer collections in Western Europe and that it holds the national Dutch collection for the genus *Tsuga*, as well as some of the largest specimens of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* seen anywhere on the trip (some as tall as 90'). On the way to our hotel in Arnhem, it was impossible not to hear the chorus of approval over our first gardens. Could it get any better?

After check-in at the Rijn Hotel on the outskirts of Arnhem, we gathered for sundowners on the terrace overlooking the Little Rhine River and then enjoyed dinner prepared for us by the hotel. Across the river were flatlands with bushy shapes reminiscent of Van Gogh's "Fields". In the distance was the town of Arnhem, the lights of which glowed brightly after dark. The beautiful city of Arnhem was made famous by the World War II *Battle of Arnhem* and the 1977 movie *A Bridge Too Far*, which dramatized the events of the battle.

Although the next day was only the **fourth day** of our tour, we had already seen so much and we would soon learn that today would be no different. Our first stop was De Belten Pinetum. Started in 1961, De Belten contains a private collection of conifers from around the world and, as one would anticipate, with over 50 years of growth, many were quite large. Like so many places we all have come to know, it is amazing what comes of someone's passion. I am reminded of the following quote;

*Few manmade things of lasting beauty ever arrive on earth, except as a result of someone's obsession.* With over one thousand specimens, this is a living museum of conifers from around the world. The 5 acre property is still largely maintained by family members and volunteers. In the afternoon we visited the private garden of Ronald Vermeulen. This was the start of an incredible string of conifer collections at the *cultivar* rank. Given that most members of our group are growing cultivars; this was *eye candy* at its best. Everywhere we looked there were hundreds of plants,



Ronald Vermeulen garden

all in pristine condition, with not a weed to be found. Standouts included *Pinus monophylla* 'Tioga Pass', *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Tenzan', and *Picea sitchensis* 'Sugarloaf'. Ronald was one of the individuals who assisted in the planning of this trip. He was also helpful when the ACS visited the Czech Republic a

couple of years ago. Bedankt (thank you) Ronald!

We headed back to our hotel, where we were met by two guides who led us on a walking tour of the historic town of Arnhem. Hearing the history and viewing the architecture made for a nice close to an exciting day. It was a beautiful evening and most of the group stayed in town for dinner while some of us strolled back to the hotel along the banks of the Little Rhine.



Kools Nursery

We started **Day 5** at the famous Kools Nursery, owned and operated by the husband-wife team Nelis and Marjolein Kools. We went behind the scenes to discover one method used to give *production* plants their start, a state-of-the-art greenhouse where cuttings are rooted and then grown out.

We also toured their show garden, in which they have assembled, in only 9 years, an amazing collection of conifers on a small parcel of land near the village of Deurne. The garden is complete with a pond, and a pasture with pigmy goats is in the center of the garden. There are many forms of *Sequoiadendron*, *Sequoia*, *Taxodium*, and *Metasequoia*. The property contains the national collection of *Sequoiadendron*. I was most excited to discover a highly variegated form of *Torreya nucifera*, which I had never seen before. With the help of neighbors and family, Marjolein prepared a tasty lunch which complemented the exhilaration we all felt -- no easy task for 35 people. After lunch, Nelis took us to yet another gem, Kessel

retail nursery, where we had the opportunity to see many of the plants for sale which were produced at Kools. So many plants and no way to get them home.

On Sunday-**Day 6** we started at the private garden of Edwin Smits. Considering that Edwin is a familiar name to many of us, we were all anxious to see his garden and to meet him. Even before the bus arrived we could see the start of his beautiful property, and it was fun seeing our bus unload so quickly. Before we could even be welcomed, guests scattered to see rare goodies, and the sound of camera clicks filled the air.



*Edwin Smits garden*

There is an entire series of conifer cultivars with “Filip’s” in the name (that is Edwin’s nickname). Perhaps the most exciting is *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* ‘Filip’s Golden Tears’, so far the best of the golden upright weepers. One of his introductions, *Thuja occidentalis* ‘Filip’s Magic Moment’ is now being offered in the U.S. and there will

surely be more. One of the more intriguing areas of his collection is the *Sciadopitys*, which were all grouped in a section. One in particular, ‘Mireille’, named after his lovely wife, caught everyone’s attention. Its featured gold yellow tips which are said to turn completely yellow in the spring. Two other cultivars to be on the lookout for are ‘Big Filip’ and ‘Little Filip’. Once again, our group was treated by our hosts to a sumptuous lunch which allowed more time in their garden.

This day would not be for the faint of heart for after lunch we visited the garden of Henk van Kempen. Henk was the principal individual who helped



*Henk van Kempen garden*



organize our visit, and we will always be grateful for his help. We could easily fill two *CQ*'s with a list of Henk's plants. It may well be the largest collection we saw and, as everywhere else, all plants looked in prime condition. It is interesting to watch the likes of Edwin, Henk and others; these are serious plantsmen who travel throughout Europe and the U.S. in search of new material -- many from witch's brooms they discover.

The final treat of the day was a meeting with the Dutch Conifer Society, which was organized by Henk at his property. Members traveled from as far away as Germany to visit with us, and we all felt so honored. It was a special treat to walk around with them as we admired Henk's collection. Luckily for the Americans, most Dutch members spoke great English, which made communications easy. This



*Wiel Linssen garden*

of course was aided by a common interest in conifers, along with great food and drink to complete the afternoon. Thanks to all who attended to welcome us and let us participate in the bilingual challenge which, to a person, they won.

It is at about this point where one starts to run out of superlatives to describe these incredible gardens, but Gary Gee

kept telling us that on this **Day 7** we were to visit one of the ***crown jewels***. Our only garden today would be that of Wiel Linssen. In terms of placement of plants and overall landscape, this was as good as it gets. Wiel has spent many years developing beautifully constructed paths and other hardscape which are tastefully designed to accentuate numerous woody gems. Like others, Wiel is a quiet person who patiently answered questions and opened his home to us. We left his garden gasping for air, and I remember thinking to myself that they must have shipped all of their weeds to another country.

After lunch we visited the Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten, where American soldiers who perished during the liberation of The Netherlands lie buried. A tall memorial tower can be seen before reaching the 65-acre cemetery. Beyond the chapel and tower, rest the graves of 8,301 Americans, most of whom lost their lives nearby. Their headstones are set in long curves. It was inspiring to see that the cemetery is well maintained, and that the town still remembers their sacrifice. Our final stop was a visit to the highest point in the Netherlands, the Vaalserberg, where from a tower we could view the Dutch-Belgian-German borders.

**Day 8** we would venture into the French-speaking region of Belgium to visit

what for several of our members was their favorite garden. The private garden of Laurant Gillet was totally unknown to any of us, and we did not know what to expect. This would be the first garden we visited which had a mix of both conifers and broadleaf flora. It was expertly crafted with manicured grass paths throughout, accentuating his rare collection. *Hydrangea paniculata* ‘Pinky Winky’ and other oak leaf hydrangea selections were in full color. In addition to the myriad conifers were several selections of *Cornus kousa* (Chinese dogwoods), *Ilex* and *Euonymus*.



*Laurant Gillet garden*

Again, we were invited into their home to partake of refreshments made especially for us. This was a family affair with parents and other relatives pitching in to keep us well fed. The garden was wonderful, made memorable by the kinship we felt with our hosts. As we departed, the family escorted us to the Mardasson Memorial which honors American soldiers

killed and wounded in the *Battle of the Bulge*. We then drove through the old city of Bastogne and had a brief stop at a statue of General George Patton; then bid our hosts farewell.

Our bus’s final stop was the Crown Plaza Hotel, where we would meet our guide for a walking tour of the charming city of Maastricht. Another picture perfect day.

**On Day 9** we visited only one garden destination, but what a destination! Wespelaar Arboretum was started in 1984 as an extension of the plant collections of Philippe de Spoelberch to the north of his estate of Herkenrode. We were expertly guided through the collection by their director, Koen Camelbeke. While not a conifer-centric destination, the arboretum is home to one of the world’s best collections of *Acer*, *Magnolia*, *Stewartia*, *Styrax* and *Ilex*, much of which is of wild origin. There are also numerous large conifers and again, I practically had to drag people back to the bus. We were privileged to have the opportunity to tour what the Huffington Post considers to be one of the thirteen best botanical gardens and arboreta in the world.

The afternoon was spent on a guided tour of Brugge, considered by many to be one of the most picturesque cities in the world. Our hotel was the romantic Oud Huis de Peellaert in the center of this famous Belgium town.

**Day 10** still found us in Belgium, where we visited the private garden of Mr. A. Bultinck. This was another garden no one had heard of and it, too, turned out to be one of the group’s favorites. This was a two-for-one stop as the plantings extended

Scenes from the  
Bultnick garden



into his daughter and son-in-law's residence next door. This was another great example of a gardener expertly mixing conifers with broadleaf plants. I found Mr. Bultnick to be a most interesting person who has devoted a great deal of

time hybridizing *Cornus*, *Hibiscus*, and *Hydrangea*. Nowhere did we find better conifers--all in pristine condition.

Mr. Bultnick joined us for lunch, after which we visited Het Leen Arboretum in Eeklo, Belgium. This 14-acre arboretum contains one of the better collections of *Sequoiadendron* we saw on our trip from one specimen which was over 70' tall to numerous intermediate forms I've not previously seen. Significant among these were *Sequoiadendron giganteum* 'Compactum', 'Pygmaeum', 'Blauer Eichzweig' and 'Bultnick Yellow'.

While our tour was nearing completion, there were still some surprises awaiting us on **Day 11**. We returned to The Netherlands for our first stop to visit the garden of Andy Domen. Andy is a plantsman of the highest order and has developed a vast array of interesting selections. For plant lovers in general, this was a significant stop as we saw many new plants Andy is working on for production. I suspect we shall see many of these become available in the U.S. trade once the word gets out.

We then drove to the city of Zundert where we visited M.M. Bomer Nursery. Here we saw numerous *Abies*, *Ginkgo*, *Metasequoia*, *Picea*, *Sciadopitys* and *Taxodium*, as well as some interesting cultivars of *Fagus sylvatica* and *Cornus kousa*. David Bomer is another in a long line of great Dutch nurserymen.

Our final stop would be at the home and nursery of good friend Peter Schrauwen. Peter was another one of the individuals who stepped up and helped with the planning of this trip. There was so much to see in his garden that no one wanted to get back on the bus. Peter is responsible for introducing great plants



*Trompenburg  
Arboretum*

such as *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Gitte', *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Lieve', *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Yellow Spire', *Sequoiadendron giganteum* 'Kaatje' and

'Pete's Weeping', and *Chamaecyparis thyoides* 'Versent Blue Rock'®. If some of these selections are unfamiliar to you, they won't be in a few years. Our last day was bittersweet. Many of us needed to get home, but no one seemed bored of the gardens and other activities. This day was set aside for a visit to the famed Trompenburg Arboretum, which was made famous by Dick van Hoey Smith. It was here that Dick continued a five-decade legacy preserving the garden he inherited from his father. It was awe inspiring to walk in the garden where a giant once trod. We were greeted by their director, Gert Fortgens who led us on a tour of their significant trees, stopping along the way to provide history and perspective. Trompenburg is one of those gardens which should be on every garden enthusiast's bucket list. Their collection is extensive and includes many rare conifers such as *Fokienia*, *Austrocedrus*, *Dacrydium* and *Wollemia*.

That evening we celebrated our 12-day odyssey with a farewell dinner cruising the canals we had walked along during our days in Amsterdam. Seeing the buildings which are charming during daylight hours, start to glow as night fell added another lasting memory to our bursting cache of plants, people and beautiful surroundings during our tour of The Netherlands and Belgium. It was time to bid farewell to all of this and to each other. This was a tour we all won't forget and

many were asking when can we get together again and where?

Towards the end of the tour I was interviewed by a Dutch newspaper and asked the following: "What impressed you the most?" My response was: "the warmth and hospitality of the Dutch and Belgian people who opened their homes, their gardens and their hearts to make us feel welcome." These are wonderful people.

I want to close with an excerpt from an e-mail I received from Mr. Bultinck whose garden we visited in Belgium. Mr. Bultinck is in his seventies. This is evidence of the lasting impact these tours can have.

*I thank you very much for your mail and very lovely words of thanks. I was very honored with your visit we In our small country which Belgium is and especially in my small garden. When I planted my garden in 2001, I could never suspect one day I should be honored with such a HIGH LEVEL VISIT which the ACS is, really I couldn't!*

*I am very glad to hear that the members of the group were excited indeed, this makes my heart warm. May I ask to transmit my very best greetings to each of the members as far as you are able to reach them. To close Mr. Cox please accept mine and my family's very friendly greetings to you and your family as well as to all of the members of the group. You were really a remarkable visitors group, I will remember for the rest of my life and afterwards.*



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**Chris Reynolds, curator of Bedgebury National Pinetum:** ".....The wealth of detail and information is truly astonishing. The authors are to be commended on their efforts and I would advise all serious gardeners and landscapers to get a copy: it will be well worth it..."

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suggests that they should be able to infest a broad range of North American Cupressaceae, yet there is no evidence that they do. Additionally, the many Cupressaceae which have been introduced to the continent are known hosts to *Megastigmus* in other locales, yet are not parasitized here. According to the literature and our knowledge, there is only one recorded instance of *Megastigmus* parasitizing Cupressaceae in North America. *Megastigmus thyooides*, an undiscovered species at the time, emerged from seeds of Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyooides*) collected in North Carolina in 1994 (Turgeon et al., 1997).

This discrepancy in distribution is the crux of the current research of Candau, who is responsible for uncovering whether *Megastigmus* are a present pest of Cupressaceae in North America and the potential extent of parasitization. His work is part of the international research project, “*Megastigmus* and Conifers: The Biology of Invasion”, which has bases in France and Canada. This project may seem as if we were pointlessly searching for a needle in a haystack. Maybe we are, but invasion biology cannot continue to operate as a restoration science. In order to be successful in this field, invasions must be prevented, and that’s one specific aim which Candau has through this project.

So why haven’t we seen an invasion yet? One opinion is that Cupressaceae species are not as commercially important in North America as are other tree families. Thus, slower trade could have held back an invasion of *Megastigmus*. Most imported or introduced species also do not arrive on foreign soil as adults, but as seeds or seedlings. If *Megastigmus* did infest any of the seeds brought to North America, they would have to find a suitable host upon emergence. They are not likely to find their original host; therefore, another suitable host would have to be close by, and the insect would have to be non-host specific, i.e. having the ability to recognize a different, but similar Cupressaceae species as a host and be sufficiently compatible with it. Another reason includes the vastly different cone morphology within the Cupressaceae family, ranging from Juniper berries, to frail *Chamaecyparis thyooides* cones, to hearty Sequoia cones. Finding such a host may thus be impossible. However, in today’s economic market, further global transport of Cupressaceae is unavoidable. As more introduced species mature into cone-bearing individuals, and as the sheer number of imports increases, the risk of *Megastigmus* species managing to survive importation, find suitable hosts, and establish populations inevitably grows, despite the efforts of import regulation bodies.

Increased risk or not, a project of this magnitude poses a true dilemma. Though one could never feasibly determine that *Megastigmus* is absent in North America’s Cupressaceae, even getting an idea of its potential presence in the 33 native, 5 introduced, and many other species which are here as ornamentals, is a large task! In the summer of 2011, I came onboard the project as a summer student. I contacted arboretums, seed orchards, and colleagues from all over North America requesting that they send us Cupressaceae cones in hopes of performing an ample survey of the family, both geographically and taxonomically. We processed over 51,000 seeds in the summer and fall of 2011 from 34 species sampled in 35 locations over 2 sampling periods.

In case you’re curious, yes, 51,000 seeds are a lot! The cones we received were first inspected for emergence holes and then each seed was removed. Some cones are

essentially wood, which makes it very difficult to extract seeds. In several instances, a blade had to be used to carefully cut the cone apart to uncover the seeds. On the opposite spectrum, fleshy juniper berries could be separated with my thumbnails. This was a welcome relief until I discovered that repeating this for hours causes some inflammation, which makes typing and texting a very painful experience! X-raying the seeds then reveals larva or nymph (more developed embryo) presence and also if the seed is viable. Seeds which were identified as potentially infested on the x-rays were picked from the samples and put in rearing in emergence boxes in the Great Lakes Forestry Centre insectarium in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. Reading x-rays can be challenging, particularly for smaller seeds. A conservative approach was taken, and seeds were picked out even when there was only the smallest indication of a possible infestation. Quite quickly, I determined that reading is quite an obscure word for counting 51,000 seeds and determining if they are infested, or viable, or not.



*Wasp bore hole in Cupressus seed*



*Megastigmus schimitschelic on Cedrus cone*

When no emergence had occurred by mid-July 2012, we decided to dissect the seeds suspected to be infested from each sample to investigate larval presence. All larvae found were put in alcohol and sent to a colleague in France who used phylogenetic markers to attempt to identify them for us. In total, we confirmed seed infestation in 4 species of Cupressaceae. Infested seeds of *Chamaecyparis*

*obtusa* were found in cones from the Arnold Arboretum (28/345 seeds infested) and the Morris Arboretum (359/1842). In Japan, seeds of *Chamaecyparis obtusa* are infested by *Megastigmus chamaecyparidis* and *Megastigmus cryptomeriae*, but, to our knowledge, these *Megastigmus* species have never been recorded in North America. *Chamaecyparis thyoidea* seeds collected at the University of North Carolina Botanical Garden were found to be infested (3/251). Infestation is likely due to *Megastigmus thyoidea*, as the Garden is near to the site where *Megastigmus thyoidea* infested seeds were first collected. Seed infestation in *Cryptomeria japonica* collected at the Morris Arboretum at the University of Pennsylvania was also confirmed (29/413). *Cryptomeria japonica* seeds are known to be infested by *Megastigmus cryptomeriae* in Japan, China, and Taiwan, but this species has never been recorded in North America. Finally, *Juniperus communis* or *horizontalis* berries collected by Ward Strong at the Shorts Creek Canyon in British Columbia contained one infested seed out of 664 sampled. Furthermore, we also collected a

number of insects which had emerged from the cones during shipping. Twenty-three insects emerged during shipment of cones of *Juniperus communis* or *horizontalis* from Shorts Creek Canyon, and one emerged from a *Thuja plicata* cone sent from the Saanich Forestry Centre. We will have to wait to confirm the identity of all of these insects to see if they are *Megastigmus*, but for some of the host species, finding a seed chalcid in their seeds is a novel finding of its own.

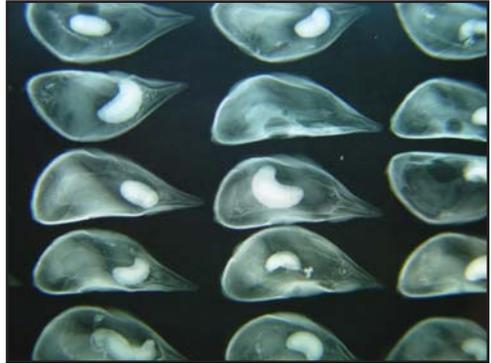
But wait! There's more!  
*Megastigmus* can remain in diapause for several years if the conditions are not optimal for emergence. Thus, collection for this project will hopefully extend over three years.

The 2012 collection campaign began in October 2012. If you have any pertinent information regarding this project, or have Cupressaceae species you would have us sample, please contact Dr. Jean-Noel Candau at Jean-Noel.Candau@nrcan.gc.ca. For more information on the project, please visit the project blog at: <http://megastigmuscupressaceae.wordpress.com>.

We would like to extend an extremely large "thank you" to all of our collectors for the 2011 collection campaign: Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Cornell Plantations, Beaver Creek Seed Orchard, Dorena Genetic Resource Centre, University of Guelph Arboretum, Huntington Botanical Gardens, JC Raulston Arboretum, Morris Arboretum, North Carolina Botanical Gardens, New York Botanical Garden, Pancake Bay Provincial Park, Sannich Forestry Centre, Natural Resources Canada National Tree Seed Centre, University of California at Berkeley Arboretum, University of California at Davis Arboretum, University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum, and Ward Strong of the Kalmalka Forestry Centre. This project would have been impossible without all of your hard work, and the trees of course!

Turgeon, J.J., Kamijo, K., and DeBarr, G. (1997) A new species of *Megastigmus* Dalman (Hymenoptera: Torymidae) reared from seeds of Atlantic white cedar (Cupressaceae), with notes on infestation rates. *Proceedings of the Entomological Society of Washington*, 99: 608-613.

This study is funded by the Strategic Project Grants Program of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Programme Blanc International de l'Agence Nationale de Recherche (France) under the "*Megastigmus* and Conifers: the Biology of Invasion" (MACBI Project).



*X-rays of Pseudotsuga menziesii seeds with wasp larvae.*

# The Hibbard Broom, the “VW Bug” Broom and ‘Wilson Park,’ Three Broom Stories

By Doug Wilson

## The Hibbard Broom

*(In answer to this Editor’s question upon seeing the Hibbard Broom or whether or not it beat out the Merrell Broom in size, Doug Wilson wrote the following account.)*

I don’t know about Hibbard winning over the Merrell Broom in Michigan’s Hidden Lake Gardens’ Harper Collection of Dwarf and Rare Conifers. Merrell certainly has a better home where it can be enjoyed by many.

I’ll try to keep this short. I drive 22 miles each way to perform my Oregon Garden conifer garden tasks. I choose to use a secondary route because it lacks traffic, is relaxing and gets me in a good mood to tackle projects. This 125’ doug-fir is on my route. I first noticed it about six years ago when my wife and I were attending an evening summer event at the garden and she was driving. I scared the hell out of her when I screamed: “Stop!” The size of this monster blew me away and, to be sure, it was my first broom discovery.

The next day I interviewed two nearby farmers, and, indeed, they were aware of its existence, but had no knowledge of anyone collecting scions. Locals theorized it had been hit by lightning. Several months later I was heading up our first ACS conifer garden work day and got Don Howse and his partnered nursery, R&R, to have a look at it.

They were enthusiastic, but reminded me that doug-fir brooms tend to be of little commercial value, and collection and propagation were more likely to be an exercise in conifer-related fun and little appreciated outside of circles of the initiated. In late January of that year a friend, Nick Gehrig, and I (after receiving



*Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Hibbard Broom)

permission from the landowner) proceeded to shoot quite a few shot-gun shells containing ball loads into the tree. A very few pieces fell that day. However, after a windy night, I returned and picked up a large trash-bag full of tightly congested foliage. I turned these over to Don and later learned that three flats had been grafted, and the take was over 90%.

About two years later I was invited to Randy and Rita Osters' nursery to pick up 20 one gallon grafts. I handed a few off to friends and sold the remainder in the Oregon Garden center store for \$35.00 each as a fund raiser for our phase II conifer project. I planted one in my front yard and 2 in the Oregon Garden.

One of the conifer garden plantings bit the dust this summer. The other, however, is thriving and has decided to grow in an extremely fastigiated habit, sporting bright silver needles. I'll be taking cuttings on this 7' by 18" mutation this winter.

The one in my yard, a globe shape, grew a single cone in spring of 2011 which of course got me a bit excited. But nothing this year.

Oh yes, the name "Hibbard" is derived from the country lane it grows near. I believe Hibbard is the name of the pioneering farm family in that area. I've found no surviving Hibbards.

Since my induction into BHI (broom hunters international), I've found two additional significant brooms. One is a *Picea engelmannii* called 'Wilson Park' after the downtown Salem, Oregon park where it was found, and a *Cryptomeria japonica* broom, the size of a Volkswagen Beetle, scions from which I hope to collect this winter.

## The "VW Bug" Broom

Imagine a VW Bug stuck to the side of a tree trunk and you have an approximate perspective for size and shape. I approached the homeowners early last summer. Their intention was to have an arborist remove the strange growth. I groveled and begged on the door step of the homeowners for a stay of execution. They regard it as an offensive anomaly on their *Cryptomeria japonica*. It can be a hard sell to let the uninitiated know they may have something unique growing alongside their hybrid roses, but that its commercial value will unlikely be realized, at least



*Cryptomeria japonica* witch's broom  
Photo by Brian Jacob



Photo by Brent Markus

anytime soon. I drive by the witch's broom several times a week with my fingers crossed. So far so good.

### *Picea engelmannii* 'Wilson Park'

The witch's broom looked to me like a fairly large bird's nest, or perhaps a squirrel cache. I removed the entire broom with a pole pruner and, since I knew Rare Tree Nursery had a good supply of spruce understocks, I handed it off to them. They grafted three flats, most of which have survived and have grown

well past the first year. I took one to the Western Region meeting in Petaluma, and it sold at auction for \$150. It now grows in Ken Jordan's wonderful collection in Roseburg, Oregon. I picked up four more yesterday to hand off to a few local people who will enjoy growing a dwarf conifer which originated in our own downtown park. It was adjacent to the Oregon state capitol building. The name commemorates the park and has no connection to my name. It is listed in Conifer Kingdom's sales catalog, and Brent Markus tells me he intends to correct the spelling of this miniature Engelmann spruce.

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# The Bezie and Michael Larned Garden for the 2013 National Meeting

Text and photos by Michael Larned

**B**ezie and I and two infant daughters moved into our five + acre property in the Mianus River Valley in southwestern Connecticut on April Fool's Day 1977. The ca.1797 Cape Cod vernacular farmhouse was surrounded by a small yard with minimal gardens; amenities included an old swimming pool and a tennis court. Other than a long abandoned victory garden, we were confronted with a blank slate of overgrown field, woodland and rock outcroppings.

Our interest in gardening increased as our children grew and moved away. Each project became more ambitious than the last, as we pushed back a jungle of invasive vines, winged euonymus and dead ash trees. This part of Connecticut is blessed, or cursed, depending upon one's point of view, with an abundance of rock formations and their inevitable spawn. Digging in our soils, one is frequently confronted with two rocks for every dirt. We had no plan, but we followed the natural topography and let nature suggest what should go where.

During the summer of 1998 I attended the conifers course at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania, taught at the time by Bill Thomas and Dr. Richard Bitner. Bezie and I had used conifers in the landscape here and there over the years. Little did I know this "classroom" experience would infect me with a latent, yet robust, case of Addicted Conifer Syndrome. Emergent in the back of my mind was the germ of an idea for a future project... a rock garden environment for conifers and alpines.

The opportunity to build such a garden did not present itself until we had cleared "Mole Mountain" during the winter of 2001/02. Our daughters named this huge rock formation when they played there as children. During the mild winter we stripped it of topsoil and wonderful lichen-coated boulders in preparation for both a wildflower garden and a xeriscape. Little thought had been given to the ultimate disposition of the resulting 300 cubic yards of rock and screened topsoil, now temporarily stored nearby.

Not having any experience building rock gardens I first consulted with North American Rock Garden Society member Lori Chips of Oliver Nurseries in Fairfield, Connecticut. She was generous with her time and wisdom and further suggested H. Lincoln Foster's classic work on the subject, *Rock Gardening, A Guide to Growing Alpines and Other Wildflowers in the American Garden*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1968). I became convinced that the newly revealed space adjacent to the steep and irregular south face of "Mole Mountain" would provide the perfect setting to use up our new supply of stone and soil. This site benefited from good drainage and full sun from morning through mid-afternoon. Best of all, it was shaded from the desiccating effects of late afternoon sun.

In March of 2002 I attended a Gordon Hayward lecture and purchased his book, *Stone in the Garden*, (W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2001). In the meantime, ACS continued to germinate. In the fall of 2002 I contacted two friends who would prove invaluable to the process: Manuel Pinho with his excavation equipment and Michael P. Harvey, a garden designer who shared our growing passion for rocks and conifers. Manuel had helped us clear “Mole Mountain” and had presciently used his excavator to carefully lay out the more promising rocks in an easily accessible row along the nearby property line. Both Michael and I were familiar with Gordon Hayward’s lectures and books on the use of rocks in the landscape, but neither of us had embarked on a project quite like this. I had but a tentative plan in mind; we swallowed our inhibitions and proceeded to move rock. The initial task was to construct a natural looking retaining wall of large boulders between the south side of Mole Mountain and the pile of sifted soil which would become the conifer/alpine berm. The process reminded me of a jukebox selecting records. Manuel would run his machine up and down the line of rocks until we selected the next likely candidate, carefully lift it from the ground with a sling and bring it to the “planting” location. Michael Harvey and I would carefully rotate the suspended specimen and select top, bottom, exposed side and chalk mark for buried depth. Manuel, mindful of his hourly rate, would suggest the orientation when we were stymied. Manuel would then set the rock down, dig the hole to accommodate up to one



*The construction begins.*



*The plants begin to be installed.*

third to one half the depth of the rock and “plant it”. The first phase was done in a day.

Several weeks passed before we could schedule the next session. I was grateful for the pause, being uncertain how to proceed. We now had a nice rock-lined approach to a huge berm of screened topsoil, some three feet high, seventy feet long by 30 feet wide.

Early one misty, late fall morning, I was standing on top of the berm observing the precipitous and irregular south side of Mole Mountain when the inspiration struck to create two berms by digging a

long, curving trench, below the original grade, from one end of the berm to the other. Lined with parallel retaining walls separated by a gravel path, this design would provide a raised stage for plants. The lowered aspect of the gravel path would also accentuate the height of Mole Mountain. The curve in the path would provide every possible exposure for wall-growing plants. Manuel carved the trench with his excavator and suggested the bottom should be lined with eight inches of trap rock for drainage and as a base for the parallel stonewalls.

Some years prior, we had employed masons to construct walls and walkways elsewhere on the property. In the spring of 2003, Joe Marino was glad to hear from us again and expressed interest in experimenting with something outside of his experience: H. Lincoln Foster's method of building planted walls for raised beds. This technique involves the use of a soil mix instead of mortar between courses of stones. The soil mix becomes the growing medium for plant material incorporated into the wall as it is being built. We employed a mix of equal parts Coast of Maine compost and peat, 3/8-inch native stone gravel and topsoil from the berm. The flat stones for the wall were purchased from a local supplier. Beazie and I followed the masons and planted alpinines in the soil-mix filled gaps between stones. The masons, who were trained to fit stones with close tolerances, soon caught on; we had to restrain them from creating too many planting gaps. When the walls were complete, we spread a five-inch layer of 3/8" native stone gravel on the path between them. The final step involved sculpting the two earthen berms into their final planting contours and incorporating the remaining rocks into the scheme. Construction took four days.

Over the intervening ten years we have continued to plant conifers and alpinines supplemented by grasses and miniature woodies as we experiment with many colors, forms and textures. I have found the sheltered location to be ideal for acclimating young or new acquisitions. More often than not a new acquisition will be up-potted using some of the indigenous soil and temporarily "plugged in" to a berm, to be decanted and planted in a more permanent location a year or two

later. It has been a joy to observe the residents as they mature, and it is becoming a challenge to keep their exuberance within bounds. But that's a different story.



*Our Conifer Garden today*

# *Abies pinsapo*

Text and photos by Luis Baste

In vol. 29, n° 3 of the summer 2012 *Conifer Quarterly*, Tom Cox wrote a story, (in which I was involved ) about his trip to Grazalema National Park So, I am taking advantage of his storytelling to complete the story with my novice experience of *Abies pinsapo* at my Mediterranean seaside climate.

From the Tom Cox story, I learned that, in Morocco and Algeria, a variety of pinsapos are growing.

For sure I'll do my best to get them and enlarge my *pinsapo* corner. Experience tells me that the coolness and precipitation in my pinetum are close to that of the Mediterranean Sea and thus do not limit the natural growth of *Abies pinsapo*.



## **Pinsapos in a Mediterranean landscape**

I started my pinetum in early 1998, in the area of the Montseny mountains, (a National Park since 1906), where wild fir are still growing. The park is close to Barcelona, approximately only 40 miles away. From the outset, I decided that I wanted to focus my pinetum solely on dwarf conifers, as they were my ideal choice of subject matter.



*My Pinsapo Corner*

The earth and soil conditions in the area I chose are ideal for dwarf conifers. It is based in granite, contains acid and has extremely good drainage.

The ground water in this area has a pH of 8.5, which is also excellent for conifers. The altitude is 850 metres (2.600 ft).

The average annual minimum temperature in winter is 20F with snow and a maximum of 86F (USDA Zone 8b/9a), perfect for my new children to grow slowly and strongly!

From spring through to fall, the conifers grow extremely well, enjoying the long daylight hours in summer and the refreshing spring water from my new sprinkler system, which quenches their young, thirsty appetites for water.

The total number of conifers comprises 39 plants.

### ***Abies pinsapo* paradise !!!**

I discovered *Abies pinsapo* in 2001, when I wrote to the tree curator of the National Park in Grazalema.

He was very surprised when I asked him to prepare a 45/50" *pinsapo* in a pot for me; he was even more astonished when I told him that I was coming from Barcelona, approximately 500 miles away from the Grazalema Park, requesting one of his babies from his nursery!!

He said me: "We don't sell *Abies pinsapo*. We take care of them and nurture them like children so that they grow up properly !" But finally...I got a present from him: a baby *Abies pinsapo* 'Pyramidata', a dark green.

Now ten years later after receiving my first *Pinsapo* child, she has grown to 6.4m ( 18' ) in height, but is still too young to bear cones. Her foliage is dark green, extremely attractive to me, and her visitor friends.

I recently sent a photograph of the baby to the Grazalema National Park curator. He was astonished and amazed that his baby could thrive so well in the Mediterranean coastal climate; this is for sure a confirmation of her tolerant nature.

In 2004, I received some news from the Grazalema National Park curator, telling me: "An *Abies pinsapo* 'Glaucu' cultivar was born and has developed nicely." He asked me, if I would accept the "big brother". Of course, I would add this "brother" to my garden. So, now I have two *Abies pinsapo* from Grazalema National Park. At the same time I got an *Abies pinsapo* 'Aurea' from a nursery close to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, in the vicinity of the village of Ronda. It's a yellow-needled, slow growing form of Spanish fir. For me, all are standout plants.

A corner in my pinetum is filling with *Abies pinsapo* cultivars. The rest of my collection contains 36 rare, dwarf conifers. It is my hope that they can grant me seeds so that I can develop even more trees.

*Abies pinsapo* 'Aurea'



# 2013 National Meeting Hudson River Valley

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

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

Contact chairmen: Walter Cullerton, (215) 598-1250, [oxfordwalt@aol.com](mailto:oxfordwalt@aol.com)  
Frank Goodhart, (908) 604-0215, [frankgoodhart@fvonline.net](mailto:frankgoodhart@fvonline.net)

## Publication Dates

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

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# 2012 NER Annual Meeting

Text and Photos by Sean Callahan

This year 102 members of the Northeastern Region convened on Massachusetts' South Shore, an area defined as south of Boston and before Cape Cod extends its crooked arm into the Atlantic, for its annual meeting September 14-15. The headquarters were in Rockland, Massachusetts at the Holiday Inn. This is the backyard - literally as well as figuratively - of *Coniferous Contemplations'* esteemed editor, Suzanne Mahoney and her always willing and ever patient husband, Mike, who planned the weekend event and then had everyone over for lunch in their garden on Saturday.

Friday night's dinner speaker was Brent Markus, the thirty-year old *wunderkind* landscape architect (Markus Specimen Trees, with practices in Chicago and Boston), nursery operator (Rare Tree Nursery [wholesale] and Conifer Kingdom [retail]) and Cornell University Ph. D candidate. (He didn't tell us about his One of Kind Cuff Links, LLC, which deals in luxury contemporary and antique cuff links, but that's for another presentation.)

Brent's illustrated talk focused on the importance of color and contrast in the conifer landscape and was amply illustrated by examples of completed projects which include many of the unique specimens he grows at his Oregon nursery and ships to his work sites in the Midwest and East. He also demonstrated that he is not averse to using *Acer palmatum* for counterpoint in his conifer-centric gardens and, not surprisingly, he is growing all types of Japanese maples for this purpose as well.

Saturday morning, under glowering skies, our bus departed for the first garden of the day, that of Mark and Vera Anderson in Hanover MA. Their New England farm-house-style home is located on a one-acre corner lot in the suburbs where Vera, a long time perennial lover, has recently become interested in conifers. In what she described as a work in progress, Vera and Mark have, in the past five years, gradually reshaped their back yard with specimen conifers as focal points but also as shielding borders to their neighbors' property. Unfortunately the sky opened up shortly after the buses arrived but the Anderson's newly constructed "house" (that is storage and work space) provided a convenient shelter from which to observe their handiwork.

A principal feature of the back yard was a koi pond inhabited by some lunkers which were 24 inches or more in length and a remarkably situated overhanging blue atlas cedar which defied gravity - or maintained



The central water feature of the Anderson garden has a Atlas blue cedar which appears to be fishing for carp.

its precarious position because its root ball was restrained by cleverly positioned dead men buried out of sight.

The rain stopped by the time the group reached the Duxbury garden of Rochelle Albin who, some 20 years ago, moved into this home in a glade at the bottom of a small wooded valley. She selectively cleared the native pine and understory plants, including plenty of poison ivy. Her nearly two-acre property still retains many of the mature natives, but now the winding paths she created take you through a woodland garden which not only sports an understory of hydrangea, laurel and rhododendron, but also contains mature specimens of such imports as western fir, Japanese pine and cedar.

From the road, the house sitting at the back of the lot is barely seen through the tall pines and oaks which are interspersed with informal plantings of giant *Hosta*, oak leaf hydrangea and other shade lovers. As this roadside buffer thins



The Albin house is in a clearing in the woods reached by conifer lined paths.

out, closer to the house, Albin has planted specimen conifers such as *Pinus parviflora* 'Kinpo', *Abies larsiocarpa* 'Compacta,' and *Pinus strobus* 'Curly'- which led to a spirited discussion with some dissenters insisting that the cultivar was 'Torulosa.' Rochelle was attending the ACS international trip. Thus, such burning questions were never answered, but the group explored with abandon, discovering many trough gardens (some in old bathtubs!) stuffed with miniatures, including conifers. It was unfortunate we were unable to

meet the owner as the character of this landscape indicates a blithe spirit resides in the gardens here.

The next stop was under a shining sun (finally!) and a catered Tuscan *déjeuner chez* Mahoney in Hanover. Twenty-two years ago Suzanne and Mike built this Norman style (don't you dare say Tudor) home on two and a half acres of an old farm field. It helped that Mike was a professional carpenter, but as gardeners they were both amateurs. Sue went through a perennial phase and, by chance, picked up a dwarf conifer at one of Les Wymans' conifer promotions, and that led to joining ACS (where today she serves on the Board) and now is mother hen to over 400 conifers. "When all the herbaceous material has passed, we have beautiful blue, yellow, mauve and green sights from all our windows...talk about year round color!"

The many island beds, some which border the lot, others which wrap around it as it slopes to a pond and waterfall in the rear; demonstrate the benefits of active membership in ACS. A decade of attending national and regional meetings, auctions and tailgates have resulted in one of the most diverse displays of conifers and companion plants seen on these tours in many years. If the labels on the plants did not answer visitors' questions, Suzanne could, even to remembering from whom and when she acquired the specimen.

After a leisurely lunch under tent in the rear garden, we boarded buses for the final garden, that of Gerry and Rindy Bennett one street away.

While the Bennett's have been in the historic (1780) colonial house nearly 40 years, the garden had been largely perennials. Most ACS visitors were astonished to learn that this now conifer-centric garden, of over 200 specimens, many quite mature and in excellent health, was only seven years in the making. Gerry was quick to credit to John Gallant of Katsura Gardens (an ACS Corporate Member), a



*The conifers surrounding the Mahoney's Norman-style farmhouse are interplanted with deciduous companion plants to provide varied color in all seasons.*

15-acre nursery in nearby Plymouth, who was on hand to give members the dirt on the garden's redesign.

With three daughters and 11 of their 13 grandchildren within walking distance to their house, the Bennett's wanted to create a more colorful year round garden space for the family and found conifers to be a lower maintenance solution. Besides, Gerry wanted to spend more spare time with his early settlement American antique collection, most dating between 1690



*At the rear of the Bennett garden, which borders a wildlife sanctuary, is menagerie of classic and exotic conifer specimens largely assembled by John Gallant of Katsura Gardens*

and 1720. In a most remarkable garden folly ever seen by this observer, Bennett brought in craftsmen from the nearby historic Plimoth Plantation to build a one and a half story replica of a Post Medieval English style early colonial to house his collection.

The weather-boarded home (stained to look unpainted) stands in the middle of the back yard next to the swimming pool. The downstairs area serves as a changing area, conjuring up the incongruous image of Puritans in swim trunks. Yet, everything about this site exhibits exquisite taste, top quality materials and a decidedly personal design that includes hundreds of evergreens bordering the property and culminates in a densely planted conifer display in the rear.

After returning to the hotel and a brief social hour the silent auction was held where some donated plants found new owners. Dinner was served, the silent auction plants distributed in 20 minutes and the heady verbal auction commenced at which another 50 plants were bid up by the usual cast of raconteurs (John O'Brien, Ran Lydell, Jerry Kral and, in a welcome return to the podium, Bill Wells) who dispatched them all in record time of 45 minutes to many of the 203 attendees present.

This performance sets a benchmark for next year's gathering, which will also be a National Meeting and therefore include many people "from away" who will get to see how Nor'Easters throw a party.



*The ever popular Sunday morning tailgate drew crowds to the hotel parking lot. Brent Markus (blue hoodie), who spoke Friday night, brought several Japanese maple cultivars from his Rare Tree Nursery.*



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