

Branching Out

April, 2008

The Skinny on a Trend in the Landscape

From time to time, landscapers are faced with the challenge of what to plant in a very small space. Skinny plants have become quite popular in filling this need.

Fine Line Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula* 'Ron Williams'), a cross between Columnar and Fernleaf Buckthorns, is a great choice for tough locations. The narrow serrated leaves turn yellow in the fall. A friend of mine has Helmond Pillar Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* 'Helmond Pillar') in his garden in a location that is protected from the afternoon sun. Stovepipe Yew (*Taxus x media* 'Stovepipe'), Green Tower Boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Monrue') and Sky Pencil Holly (*Ilex crenata* 'Sky Pencil') all work as accent plants and are useful for screening in narrow areas. Sky Pencil Holly isn't as adaptable as Stovepipe Yew and Green Tower Boxwood. Landscapers tell me that it does best in areas that are well protected on the east side of the house.

There are also several deciduous trees to select from for narrow sites. Crimson Sentry Maple (*Acer platanoides* 'Crimson Sentry') is the columnar form of Crimson King with the same purple foliage. The dark green foliage of the Crimson Spire Oak (*Quercus alba x robur* 'Crimschmidt') turns red in the fall. My favorite columnar oak is Regal Prince (*Quercus robur x bicolor* 'Long'). I love the glossy green foliage. It has yellow fall color. Amanogawa Cherry (*Prunus serrulata* 'Amanogawa') has fragrant spring flowers and yellow-orange fall foliage. Shawnee Brave Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum* 'Mickelson'), a deciduous conifer, is a good choice for wet locations.

Some of my favorite plants are the columnar spruce. Blue Totem Spruce (*Picea pungens* var. *glauca* 'Blue Totem') is a great accent plant with its bright blue needles. Cupressina Norway (*Picea abies* 'Cupressina') is a pretty tough spruce. I have one on the southwest corner of my house, planted on top of rocks I couldn't dig out that is absolutely thriving. It has deep green needles. Similar in form and needle color is Wellspire Spruce (*Picea mariana* 'Wellspire'). For a more graceful form, try Riverside Serbian Spruce (*Picea omorika* 'Riverside'). The slightly arching branches have green needles with blue undersides.

A few books on the subject have made it to my bookcase at work; this is where my favorite books end up. They are Small Space Gardening by Melinda Myers, Small Gardens – A Creative Approach to Garden Design edited by Alan Toogood, and Small Spaces Beautiful Gardens by Keith Davitt.

Susan Mertz, Kokopelli Nursery

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Greetings from our new President!

A funny thing happened recently, you folks weren't paying any attention and I wound up president of your Kansas Nursery and Landscape Association for 2008. At least I knew this was going to happen – I also belong to a hobby club, a group of garden railroad fanatics. At our last meeting, I stepped out for a minute, and when I came back, I found they had made me co-president...

I thought it proper that I spend a little time introducing myself. I have been in the Green Industry for over 30 years, in a wide variety of employment. I currently work as the retail Nursery Manager at Sunrise Garden Center in Lawrence, Ks. This will be my 12th spring at Sunrise. It has been an enjoyable time here, I don't have to dig any holes, I ball only a few trees, and we finally have a forklift to manage the heavy stuff. These sorts of thing are a real blessing for a fellow who, one day at a time, is turning into an old fart....

I consider myself a very lucky man. I truly enjoy my work. I find the people I do business with at least mostly tolerable, and many of them are downright enjoyable. I still have most of the passion for plants that got me into this business years ago. I don't think I could say that if I had been working on the line at the widget factory.

I am truly honored to find myself in the position of president this year. It has already given me the opportunity to speak with many of you. I am trying to contact by telephone as many of our members as I can, seeking feedback, comments, and helpful suggestions so that our Association can try to meet our needs. This has been a real pleasant experience for me – I think our industry is comprised of a really great group of people who all seem to share that passion for plants that gives us common ground.

In my discussions with you so far, I begin to see more clearly the challenges that our Association has to deal with. There are the demographics – there are a lot of us in the east, not so many to the west. Our Association includes growers, wholesalers, retailers, landscapers, allied industry people – a pretty broad spectrum. I am also beginning to see that many of our members, if not the majority, are truly small businesses – Home Depot has not yet seen fit to join us.

These observations are probably quite obvious to many of you, but I have just recently found myself in a position to give them some thought. They do define and limit what our Association can and cannot do for us.

Well, what indeed can you expect from the Association this year?

I want you all to know, first of all, that you have a pretty darn good board of directors working for you. We have been having some very active discussion amongst ourselves and I think these people are going to do some good things for the Association in the next few years. I've even found some willing people to nominate to the board in the future (although they don't know it yet) so that it can continue to do good work.

I hope to get the newsletter coming to you all on a little more frequent basis. You folks gave me a soapbox, I may choose to stand on it. As I write this today, part of my mind is thinking about the 3 semi's I will have to unload on Monday. But I do plan on more articles in the newsletter. Submissions, opinions, and crank letters from you would be welcome as well.

Greeting from our new President....continued

We are making some effort to attend to the basic business of the Association. Dues notices for 2008 have been sent out separately from the newsletter. These notices went out to all 2007 dues paid members, as well as former members who kinda fell through the cracks and we hadn't heard from for a few years. We hope to generate good support for the Association. One change was made this year that may provoke some comment. Certified members, those who have passed the Association's exam, are being asked to pay annual dues of \$20, in addition to membership dues. This is not a new policy, but had not been made so clear lately.

Let me talk just a little bit about this. Our certification program is one of the real strengths of our Association. Passing that exam is quite an accomplishment, a recognition that one has met the standards of experience and knowledge of one's peers in this industry. You know, in one sense I don't think this business has changed all that much since I got into it, anybody with a pickup truck, a shovel and a lawnmower can call themselves a nurseryman. I would like to see our certification program come to mean more to the general public. One thing we are going to start doing is posting our certified members on the KNLA web site. This is admittedly, a small step, but it is a start. But you gotta pony up your \$20 annually to get listed. We are also talking about an annual requirement of Continuing Education credits, after the fashion of the Kansas Arborist's Association, to remain certified. Much work will need to be done before this is implemented. Even more importantly, we need to work harder to present ourselves to the public as the professionals that we are. I'm thinking big gaudy banners we can hang from our places of business...

Association activities for this year:

We are looking very hard at reviving plans for a summer field trip to St. Louis. We will let you know as soon as possible what we've come up with so that you have adequate time to fit it into your summer schedule. And, I am working on a fall program as well. Most of the people I've talked with have found the field days and seminars to be useful experiences. Please let us know if there are any particular activities, topics, places or events that would be of interest to you as members.

Indeed, we as board members solicit your comments and input so that your Association is of use and interest to you. If you don't watch out, I'm gonna take you all on a tour of backyard garden railroads....

Brian Boyce
President, KNLA



Congratulations on becoming Certified!

***Sue Oxendine, City of Wichita**

Sue successfully completed the KNLA Certified Nurseryman's Exam
in January at the WESTERN.

Dormant Oils: Are They Useful For Controlling Arthropod Pests?

The use of dormant oils is oftentimes considered a pest management tactic to control insects and mites that survive the winter in an overwintering life-stage, which may include eggs or mature females. Instead of waiting until spring to start control measures, applying dormant oils may be helpful in reducing costs associated with pesticide use and labor later in the season. The advantages of dormant oils include a wide range of activity against most species of mites and scales—even the eggs; minimal potential for resistance developing in insect and/or mite pest populations; less harmful to beneficial insects and predatory mites than other pest control materials with long-residual activity; and relatively “safe” to humans and other mammals. Disadvantages of dormant oils include potential phytotoxicity during the growing season and minimal residual activity or less persistence.

Dormant oils, which are typically derived from paraffinic crude oil, are the heaviest of the petroleum oil sprays and have a low unsulfonated residue (UR). The unsulfonated residue is an assessment of the phytotoxic compounds remaining after distillation and refining. A high UR (>92%) indicates a highly refined product with less potential for phytotoxicity. Dormant oils generally have a UR value <92%.

Dormant oil applications are commonly directed at killing overwintering pests including mites and scales, before they become active in the spring and are capable of causing plant injury. Applications are performed during winter in order to minimize phytotoxicity to ornamental plants. A 2% to 4% rate is generally used in late fall to early spring. Dormant oils are contact materials that either suffocate, by blocking the breathing pores (spiracles), or directly penetrate and disrupt cell membranes of exposed insect and mite pests. Dormant oils have minimal residual activity once the material dries, so thorough coverage is essential.

Dormant oils are applied to all plant parts, which indicates that the overwintering stage of the insect or mite pest must be located on the plant. However, not all insect and mite pests overwinter on plants. For example, dormant oil applications are not effective against twospotted spider mite (*Tetranychus urticae*) because this mite overwinters as a female in plant debris, mulch, or other non-plant protected places. In contrast, spruce spider mite (*Oligonychus ununguis*), overwinters in the egg stage on plants, primarily evergreens such as arborvitae, juniper, hemlock, and pine, which means that this mite species is susceptible to dormant oil sprays.

Dormant oils are effective in killing the overwintering stages of scales, especially first and second instars or nymphs (=crawlers). For example, Euonymus scale (*Unaspis euonymi*) overwinters as second instar nymphs or mature females; both life stages are vulnerable to dormant oil applications. However, certain scales that overwinter as eggs, such as oystershell scale (*Lepidosaphes ulmi*) and pine needle scale (*Chionaspis pinifoliae*) are more tolerant of dormant oil applications. The primary reason for this is that the eggs are generally stacked on top of each other, and the dormant oil may not penetrate and contact the bottom layer. As a result, additional insecticide applications are typically required after egg hatch.

A concern when using dormant oils is the potential for plant injury or phytotoxicity. Some plants, such as arborvitae, beech, redbud, and certain maples (Japanese, red, sugar, and amur), may be harmed by dormant oil sprays. Furthermore, the needles of Colorado blue spruce may be discolored or change from blue to green as a result of a dormant oil application. Phytotoxicity is usually a problem when higher rates (>4%) are used and/or when applications are performed in early fall before dormancy or in late spring at bud-break. Problems with phytotoxicity are less likely to occur when applications are made in early November through February—when most plants are completely dormant. To avoid phytotoxicity it is important to make sure the spray solution is continually agitated. Also, never apply dormant oils when there is a possibility of freezing. Dormant oils should be applied to deciduous plants when the ambient air temperature will stay above freezing for at least 24 hours. Evergreens are more susceptible to damage than deciduous plants, so it is best to apply dormant oils when temperatures remain above 40°F over a 24-hour period. In addition, dormant oils should never be applied to plants that are stressed since

Dormant Oils: Are They Useful For Controlling Arthropod Pests....continued

stressed plants are more susceptible to phytotoxicity. Lack of moisture, extreme temperatures, sudden drastic changes in the ambient air temperatures after spraying, prolonged windy conditions, or disease or insect infestations may predispose plants to phytotoxicity.

There is a general “dogma” that insect and mite pest populations will not develop resistance to dormant oils. However, this is not true—remember, insect and mite pests don’t read entomology books! For example, a Christmas tree plantation of Scots pines was sprayed with dormant oils for more than 10 years in succession to control pine needle scale. Eventually, the scale population became more and more difficult to control. What happened? It was discovered that the scale covers were thicker than “normal,” which made it harder for the dormant oil to penetrate the outer covering and kill the eggs.

Preventative dormant oil applications can save time and money (\$\$\$) later when dealing with insect and mite pests. Insecticide and miticide treatments may not be necessary, or the number of applications may be reduced, which preserves the natural enemies of mites and scales, including predators and parasitoids that provide “free” control or regulation of these pests.

Raymond A. Cloyd

*Associate Professor and Extension Specialist in Ornamental Entomology/Integrated Pest Management
Department of Entomology, Kansas State University*

Container Recycling Program

At the WESTERN, there was talk of starting a container recycling program in the Kansas City area. Hort NetWORK and Johnson County Extension have expressed interest in combining efforts with the KNLA, landscape companies, nurseries and growers. Although there are a few landscapers, nurseries and growers working together to reuse empty containers, there are 1,000’s that end up in the landfills every year. Future issues of KNLA’s newsletter will have information on how you and your company can help make this recycling program happen. If you are ready to get involved now, please email me at smertz@kokopellinursery.com.

Susan Mertz, Kokopelli Nursery



We're on the web:

www.kansasnla.org

Going back to B&B...

When the weather finally broke early in March, I started re-balling over-wintered stock. Sunrise is not a big operation by any means, but I had a hundred or so trees to get out of the (finally) thawed mulch and get new burlap on. And, because we are not a big operation, that was me out there tipping trees, pulling burlap, and pinning 'em up until my thumb was good and sore.

I like doing this work, it gives me a real sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. I get a real good look at the stock, I can see if it's properly vigorous, and I can sell those trees with the greatest confidence that, if the customer will only remember to water them this summer, they will grow and thrive.

I realize that lots of you folks work with a great deal of B&B stock, particularly the growers to wholesalers to landscapers business. But for many of us small independents, this is not so much the case. I have watched the industry, as represented by smaller retailers like myself, over the years go from spring bare root and B&B sales to a heavy reliance on can stock – well, we call them containers now, but somewhere in the tool shed is an old pair of can cutters, and I do know how to properly use them. Container stock gave us so many advantages, in ease of handling, reduced weight and freight, in extending our selling season. Yet we are all aware of the problems with this stock – it takes a LOT of watering, establishment in the landscape can be tricky if the soil interface is quite different, and root girdling is a real problem. So, although the majority of my inventory is in containers, the past few years I have been getting in more and more B&B.

After the first few truck deliveries came in this spring, I realized that I had a LOT of B&B around the nursery yard. It was the only way to get the diversity of inventory that I wanted to offer my customers. I get 2" caliper stock and under – I don't wrassle 500 pound balls anymore. We've got a skid loader with forks so its pretty easy to move, and once we get it into the mulch beds it is real easy to care for. Root growth can be phenomenal in one season, and I don't have to worry about girdling roots. Customers are a little bit leary of this stock, they think everything grows in pots – we have done too good a job selling container stock for too many years! But when they see the root mass, well, they know they're getting a quality product.



Of course, we have to put up with the nonsense you can see in the picture. I expect lots of unwanted dirt on B&B, I understand how it came to be there. Part of the work involved in preparing this stock for retail sale and planting is to knock all that extra weight off. This is a fairly well-known problem, the Kansas Forestry staff have been doing a great job of spreading the word in local seminars all over the state, we read about it in trade publications, so end-users are mostly aware of it. I think it's about time the growers got the message as well...

Going back to B&B....continued



"I can't talk now, my mouth is full of balling nails..."

I find it interesting and a little curious that this centuries-old technique of transplanting trees has once again become a significant part of my work. I figured out a long time ago that balling trees wasn't so bad, except for all the dirt that got in the way...

I've heard and read that in some areas of the country, nurseries are seeing a resurgence in bare root sales. My goodness, it has been a long, long time since I dealt in bare root. I am having enough problems educating customers as it is, I don't think I have it in me to teach a whole new generation about bare root.

As I sit on a pickle bucket, catch my breath, and suck my thumb, invariably I think of John Crum, a Lawrence nurseryman who taught me the business of B&B trees over 30 years ago. John was such a sweet, wonderful man. He was tall, well over 6 foot, and quite thin. He used a little short-handled balling spade to work with, and I can still see him folding up like a jack knife when he was digging. John just loved trees, and he shared his love and appreciation for trees with me quite freely. He left a legacy of hundreds of trees growing in Lawrence. I hope some of my B&B trees can share in that legacy.

Brian Boyce, President, KNLA

KNLA Clothing Order Form

KNLA has new, clothing items for sale. Each item has been embroidered with the recently revised, KNLA color logo. With the exception of the hats, sizes range from Medium to XL. *Shipping is \$3 per item.*

- Hats (khaki) \$10.00
- T-shirts
- short sleeve (light green or tan) \$10.00
- long sleeve (hunter green or brown) \$15.00
- Polo Shirt (navy) \$20.00

Ship order to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Item Requested: _____

Quantity: _____ Size _____

Billing:

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

(please add \$3 per item for shipping)

Check _____ Money Order _____

Visa/Master/Discover Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Make checks payable and return to: KNLA, 1604 Beechwood Ter., Manhattan, KS 66502

Pride of Kansas

2008 Plants of the Year

Tree of the Year

Caddo Maple (*Acer saccharum Caddo*) was selected as the tree of the year for Kansas. It was selected because of its superior performance of heat, wind and drought tolerance. Caddo Maple has a much thicker leaf that results in much less leaf tattering and scorch. 'Autumn Splendor' and 'John Pair' are two maple selections released by K-State's John Pair Horticulture Research Center in Wichita. These trees are best suited for the Great Plains and are less tolerant of saturated soils. 'Autumn Splendor' was also selected for its beautiful red/orange fall color and rapid growth rate. This tree will mature with a height of 45' and a 40' spread. 'John Pair' will mature to a height and spread of 40' and will always possess a red fall color.



'John C Pair' Caddo Maple

Shrub of the Year

Leatherleaf Viburnum (*Viburnum rhytidophyllum*) has been selected as the shrub of the year. An outstanding specimen or large boarder shrub, this plant gives weight and stature to the landscape. Leatherleaf will grow to 8-10 feet tall with a similar spread. The long oval leaves have deep veins and a dark green leathery appearance. This shrub will hold its leaves through most of the winter in Kansas and is dense enough to make a thick background. Leatherleaf does best in sun to partial sun but will tolerate most shady locations also. In the spring, Leatherleaf produces a cream colored flower head that ranges from 4 -8 inches in diameter and will form a drupe fruit that turns from red to black.



Perennial of the Year

'Karl Foerster' Feather Reed Grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora 'Karl Foerster'*) has been selected as the perennial of the year for its outstanding plume features and hardiness in just about every location. Feather Reed Grass is considered a cool season grass and will be the first to 'green-up' in the spring and the last to go dormant in the fall. This outstanding perennial grass has a narrow upright growing habit, with a height of 4-5' and a spread of 2-3'. Midsummer the plant grows showy, narrow, spiked blooms that start out pink and turn golden tan in the late summer. This plant looks great in mass plantings, adds lots of texture to the landscape and works well with other plants as a contrast.



'John C Pair' Caddo Maple



Kansas Nursery & Landscape
Association

1604 Beechwood Ter
Manhattan, KS 66502



Upcoming Event

Summer 2008 KNLA Summer Conference

More information coming soon.

Summer 2008 KNLA Certified Nurseryman's Exam

Time and location TBA. Contact Patricia at 785-313-3973 or email kansasnla@sbcglobal to register.