



NEWS FROM

# SUMMER HILL

Winter/Spring 2002

## ALASKA AGAIN

Last summer, Ann and I drove to Alaska for the second time. On this trip we not only drove up the Dalton Highway to Prudoe Bay, but we also traveled the only other road in North America that goes north of the Arctic Circle. The Dempster Highway in the Northwest Territories of Canada ends at the town of Inuvik - in the summer that is. In the winter, the frozen rivers are used as highways to get to settlements further North.

The reason we wanted to go to Alaska again was many fold. We both had a terrific time the first trip there, we really love the country, and we wanted to see some of the areas we did not visit on the first trip. Also, we wanted to see if it is as large as we remembered. We received an answer to that question on the way up while still in the lower forty-eight. The woman who owned the cabin we stayed in one night asked where we were heading. When we told her we were going to Alaska, she said, "I went up there two years ago and before I left I thought everything around here was so big, but when I came back from Alaska, everything here looked so small". This was in East Glacier right next to Glacier National Park in western Montana! Everything there is big - but Alaska is immense.

This time, instead of following the Alaska Highway through British Columbia, we went out to Prince Rupert on the Pacific Coast and then up the Cassiar Highway. This is where we first saw bears and started counting them. During the entire trip, we observed twenty-four bears, most of them either from the car or a safe distance over the tundra. However, we did almost bump into one on a trail near the Copper River. Twenty feet away

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## This Was Winter?

### OPEN HOUSE AT SUMMER HILL SUMMER 2002

Everyone seemed to enjoy our open house two years ago so we are planning another this year. The date has not been set yet as we are still checking when state associations are having their summer meetings. We are planning to have it at the end of July or beginning of August.

There will be walking tours of the nursery including the new stock block area. We are also planning two or three interesting lectures, as well as Mike talking about some of our new plants. Ann and Mike's expanding garden will be open, along with his conservatory.

Mike's famous clam chowder, barbeque steak and chicken sandwiches and other savory treats will be the fare - and this year we won't forget the water-melons!

Hope you can make it. We will send invitations in late June. (If you don't receive one by July 1st give us a call.)



Like everyone reading this, I am amazed at the winter we have had so far. I'm writing this on February 21, only four weeks from the start of spring, and so far the lowest temperature we have seen at the main nursery office is +9°. We've only had that type of temperature for four or five nights, and for the most part, temperatures at night have stayed in the mid 20's or above. Daytime temperatures have been in the 40's and up into the 50's on a few days. It's been a January thaw starting in December and going on at least up until today. Our fear, of course, is that winter will come late with low temperatures, snow and ice in March and early April. By the time you are reading this, you may know if that fear is justified, but so far this has been a wonderful South Carolina-type winter.

The plant material in the quonsets looks very good. The only sign of things breaking dormancy is Hamamelis, which normally would be blooming at this time of year in any case. We are hoping we will have some colder weather to hold the plant material in the state that it is right now, which would be ideal for shipping. We have had very little rain and practically no snow here in Southern Connecticut, so we are hoping for a wet spring not only to fill our ponds but also ease water restrictions which are starting to be imposed in some of the areas we ship to.

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## **Alaska** continued from pg 1

from us, around a corner, was a black bear which deserted the trail faster than we could even move. Fortunately, it was a black bear, for if it had been a grizzly, I might not be writing this.

Besides wildlife on the Cassiar Highway, we started seeing wild lupine. It's unbelievable how much lupine grows along the roadsides up there, deep purple or blue flowers with little white tips. It is a gorgeous plant and in large masses is spectacular along with many other wildflowers that were in bloom in late June.

After we hit the Alaska Highway, our first stop was in Whitehorse where we found one of the best restaurants we have ever been in. If you are ever stuck for a night in Whitehorse, make sure you find Georgio's. - you can't believe the food. From there we headed to Valdez where we took a ferry to Cordova on the edge of the Copper River Delta. While on the ferry, we had a long conversation with a representative of Alaska Senator Mc Cluskie, who was on a fact finding trip for the Senator. We discussed oil drilling in Anwar, and needless to say, he was all for it and gave us many, many reasons why it would be a good thing for Alaska as well as the US. In Cordova, we talked to the mayor of the town. She said the drilling would be a good thing; however, she was emphatic that it had to be done right this time. Cordova had been impacted rather dramatically by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

While in Cordova, we spent a lot of time touring the Copper River Delta and found a very interesting group of plants in a wet area for about half a mile along one of the roads - Myrica gale covered each side of the road. There was a great deal of variability with the plants, some growing not more than eighteen inches tall and others up maybe three to four feet. What really fascinated me was that a large portion of them had purplish leaves. I took some cuttings and sent them back to the nursery. We now have some rooted cuttings of what I intent to call Myrica gale 'Copper River' if they do well down here. The Copper River Delta, being near the ocean, has a climate similar to New England except for day length. The lupine in parts of the Delta covered

acres in certain spots. The whole area was indescribably beautiful.

From there, we went to Seward and Homer again and after a few other stops, we spent four days in Denali National Park. We were very fortunate this trip for we saw Mt McKinley, or Denali as it is known up there, from both the South and North sides, and saw dozens of varieties of wildflowers in the tundra. We also had quite an experience at one point. We were on a hike with a guide and crossed a long area of wet tundra that was covered with dwarf willows, dwarf birch and sphagnum moss intertwined. Each step resulted in sinking down between a foot to eighteen inches. That was the hardest walking I have ever done. After about half a mile of this, we were all glad to get back to higher land. It was a perfect area for bear and caribou but certainly not for humans.

After Denali and a short stop in Fairbanks to visit the University of Alaska's museum and botanical garden, we headed up the Dalton Highway to Deadhorse which is the "town" you stay in ten miles from the Arctic Ocean at Prudoe Bay. The area up there is unbelievably immense. While staying in Deadhorse, they mentioned that a caribou herd had gone right through the "town" and oil fields three days before. They also mentioned we should not leave the "hotel" at night because there were so many grizzlies around after dark. As we drove along on the Dalton Highway, we didn't see any lupine, but the roadsides were covered with fireweed. A good bit of it was dwarf fireweed which has the same pink flower of normal fireweed but doesn't grow much over eighteen inches tall. The Brooks Range is covered with many types of wildflowers growing out of the tundra.

On the way back we stopped at Wiseman, which is a little town off the Dalton Highway about fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle. It is a town of thirty-four people, and we had the chance to talk to a young man who lived there and makes his living by trapping. He needed to kill two moose every winter for his family to live on. We asked him about school for his kids. He said they did have a school, and last winter the teacher was a young lady from Chicago. I asked if she was coming

back for another winter - he smiled and said he didn't think so. We both understood why. He had a splendid garden - tomatoes, squash and other vegetables under poly igloos. Twenty-four hours of daylight really makes things grow if kept warm enough. It was sort of like going back to the early 1900's to visit Wiseman.

The Dempster Highway, which starts near Dawson Creek, Yukon Territory, like the Dalton Highway is approximately four hundred miles of gravel road. We were told that if you like the Dalton Highway you will love the Dempster, and it truly is a spectacular road. We saw quite a bit of wildlife, primarily bear, moose, dahl sheep and a lot of waterfowl. Once again, in many places the roadside was covered with masses of pink fireweed - mile after mile of it.

After returning from Inuvik down the Dempster, we headed back down to Whitehorse, had another good meal at Georgio's and another spectacular trip down the Alaska Highway. This time we saw far more wildlife than we did on the first trip - dahl sheep, stone sheep, caribou, bear and even buffalo at one spot. We also saw elk and deer. As we were going through the truly spectacular mountains near Muncho Lake, I said to Ann that we have to do this one more time.

As you can imagine, if you read all this, I could talk for hours about Alaska and Western Canada. If you plan to drive up there or fly up and rent a car and have any questions, please give me a call.

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## **Winter** continued from pg 1

In our area, both the native laurel and native dogwoods are heavily budded, so with a good amount of bloom for homeowners to see in the natural landscape, hopefully, sales for both these items should be good. With the warm winter, most plants that set buds in the fall should have a good blooming period this spring and that, hopefully, should increase sales on almost all spring blooming plant material.

Of course, none of us can foresee what the spring will bring, but in our business we have to be optimistic. We wish you all a very successful spring and summer season.

## Birds and Berries

For years now, we have been growing *Ilex verticillata* - we started long before the native plant craze. In fact, most of our customers didn't know *Ilex verticillata* when we first started to sell it. There are now numerous varieties of Winterberry for sale and we are growing several of them.

'Red Sprite' is one I started growing under the name of 'Compacta', having received the first plants from Lud Hoffman. It grows to about 6 to 7 feet tall and is not as compact as we would like. I find 'Kennebago', which we introduced a few years ago, much better in that respect as it stays much, much lower. 'Red Sprite' berries quite well, however, and I planted some in back of our house but was very disappointed to see the birds took the berries almost as soon as they turned red. Since then, I've been observing different varieties of *Ilex verticillata*, trying to see which one holds its berries the longest during the winter - this is the facet that makes the plant so attractive to us.

So far, it appears that the *Ilex verticillata-serrata* cross 'Sparkleberry' holds its berries as well as any, if not better than all. I did a little experiment last winter with the help of a friend in Essex. She had placed branches from native *Ilex verticillata* in a window box on her deck. She mentioned to Ann that robins were eating them as fast as she put them there. (These, I believe, must be the Canadian race of robins that winter in southern New England as opposed to "our" robins which nest in this area and winter much further South.) I gave her a branch of 'Sparkleberry' and asked her to put it in with the other branches of *verticillata* that she had on the porch. After several weeks, she said the 'Sparkleberry' berries were all still there and untouched, but there was hardly a berry left on the other *Ilex verticillata*. If any of you have thoughts on this subject, I would be very interested.

## Hamamelis

I started to write about some of the *Hamamelis* we are growing, but I still have to sort out in my mind what I really think about each variety. They are flowering right now but most of our plants are small so I'm not sure what I think about all of them. I can say at the moment though, that this year has been a spectacular year for the three 'Arnold Promise' we have in our yard. One is 12 to 15 feet tall and is spectacular at the time I write this. I want to take a look at Nick Nichou's 'Sunburst' next week. Next to 'Arnold Promise', I would say that is my favorite variety - large flowers and I feel it is far superior to any of the other yellows I have seen, with the exception of 'Arnold Promise'.

We have planted all our varieties but they are not large enough to really evaluate. However, from what I've seen of our production plants, I would have to say that 'Diane' is definitely going to be the best red we are growing, and 'Jelena' is probably going to be the best of the orange types, although I'm beginning to think a lot of 'Ruby Glow'. We should have a good selection in a year or two. Hopefully, our customers will take them in the fall so as to have a good display early in the spring to get their customers in the mood for spring planting.

## Cary Award

In case you don't already know, this year's Cary Award plants are:

*Heptacodium miconioides*  
Seven Suns Flower

*Rhododendron yakusimanum* 'Ken Janek'  
Ken Janek Yak Rhododendron

*Cornus kousa* (and cultivars)  
Kousa Dogwood

## Voodoo Lily

Many years ago, my friend, Peter Tabol, gave me three bulbs of what turned out to be *Sauromatum venosum*, Voodoo Lily. As the years passed, these multiplied, but it took me quite a while to find out exactly what the correct botanical name was. An article in one of the trade magazines, combined with a picture, gave me the information I needed.

These Voodoo Lilies grow from a bulb that is hardy, with some mulching, in Zone 6 and perhaps in Zone 5B. In spring, flowers emerge which are approximately 12 to 18 inches tall, patterned, and rather weird looking - purple with yellow spots. These peel back rather like a snake skin. After flowering, the single stem (occasionally two or three) arises from the bulb. The stem is blotched with green and black dots, and a handlike leaf forms on the top. A group of these planted together makes a rather spectacular sight.

One drawback of the plant is that since it is pollinated by flies the flowers have a stench that is somewhat like rotting flesh - the odor lasts about a day or two. Therefore, it is best planted somewhere away from close human habitation.

Although it appears to be hardy, I dig at least some of our bulbs in the fall and store them in a cold storage each winter just to make sure that we have surviving stock. The plant propagates itself mainly from small bulblets that are formed around the top of the large bulb, as well as from seeds. We also have them volunteering here and there around our yard at this time.

Voodoo Lily is a novelty plant for the avid gardener. We are selling the bulbs now. Try a few - they are really fascinating.

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# BAMBOO

For several years now, John Nassif has been after me to grow some bamboo here at Summer Hill. I've resisted the temptation up until a couple of years ago when I heard a lecture given by Susanne Lucas at the Plant Propagators meeting in Falmouth, Massachusetts. She gave an excellent presentation regarding bamboo. After that, and a visit to her bamboo garden in Plymouth, I was hooked. We are now growing several varieties of bamboo and listed them for the first time last summer, although we had very small quantities available.

I find bamboo a fascinating plant to grow in the nursery and also quite a challenge. The propagation of bamboo is slow and difficult. Dividing clumps of some varieties seems equal to cutting through tangled barb wire and chopping through cable in others. The wood of the rhizomes on mature plants is very, very hard. When I first decided to grow bamboo, I was astounded at the high price of lining out stock and finished plants, but after trying to propagate some of these varieties, I realize why the prices are so high.

Being a neophyte in bamboo production, I must say a good bit of the information I give you has been gleaned from other sources. However, we have been growing bamboo now for three years and some of the comments I make will be my own.

To start with, for those who know next to nothing about bamboo, an explanation of a few terms should be in order. Bamboo spreads basically by rhizomes, underground. From the rhizomes, shoots emerge - these are called culms while still alive. After they are cut off and dried, they become canes.

The culm is generally hollow except at nodes, which are the rings around many bamboo culms - this is also where branches form. On Phyllostachys forms, there is a groove on the side of the cane called a sulcus, which in some varieties is a different color than the rest of the culm and which makes some of the bamboos very attractive. Although most of the bamboos we grow are spread by rhizomes and unless they are in a large area planted for ground covers, methods have to be taken to contain the plant from spreading too rapidly. There are, however, clump type bamboos which do not have running-type rhizomes but rather just spread by the clump expanding.

Let me talk first about the clump bamboos we are growing.

## **Clump Type Bamboo Fargesia**

Fargesia, in general, are a clump-type bamboo. They do not have running rhizomes and will not spread, although the clump will get larger with time. Just about all the Fargesias require some shade. They will not thrive in full, hot sunlight, although F. Robusta and F. dracocephala will tolerate more sun than the others. A good garden soil that stays moist but with good drainage is what they require. Fargesias will stay evergreen through the winter although some species tend to have good bit of leaf curl during colder periods, as well as dry periods in the summer. Because they do not spread rapidly, these are some of the most popular bamboos; how-

ever, they do not have the striking individual culms that Phyllostachys and some of the other genera.

Fargesia dracocephala This species is not as well known as F. murielae or F. nitida. It has almost the same upright habit as F. murielae. Although not quite as hardy (-10°F+/-) the fact that it tolerates dry conditions and full sun makes it more valuable for many locations. It may well turn out to be my favorite Fargesia.

Fargesia murielae, Umbrella Bamboo The evergreen foliage is pea green, and it has a graceful weeping habit. Fargesia murielae has been blooming in Europe and the United States throughout the 1990's. Once the plant blooms, it dies; however, seedlings of these plants should not flower and die for approximately another 100 years. Our plants are seedlings of a new generation, and no one reading this will be around to see these plants flower. It's height can be 12 feet, usually less, with hardiness of -20°F.

Fargesia nitida 'Nymphenburg', Fountain Bamboo The leaves are evergreen and the culms are purple when in some sun. However, F. nitida varieties need partial shade especially during mid-day. It is more upright than F. murielae. Its height will be 12 feet with hardiness of -20°F

We are growing other forms of Fargesia nitida but will not have them available for several years.

## **Midsized, Low Growing and Ground Cover Bamboo**

Although there is quite a bit of variation and leaf size among the following plants, some of them are particularly interesting because of variegated leaves. Some, especially the Pleioblastus forms, are used as ground cover, and Pleioblastus distichus can be used on banks and other hard to mow areas in place of lawn. Most of these types are best cut off right to ground level each spring. The new culms and leaves coming up will be more desirable than keeping ones that survived through the winter.

Indocalamus tessellatus This has very large leaves, up to 24" long, and spreads slowly by rhizomes. Its height is 3-4 feet and hardiness is -5°F.

Pleioblastus distichus, Dwarf Fernleaf Bamboo has small green leaves - makes an excellent ground cover and spreads rapidly. It can be mowed before growth starts in the spring to keep it low growing and rid it of winter damaged leaves. It's a very nice, clean looking plant. Its height can be 2 feet or less and hardiness is 0°F (root hardiness much lower).

Pleioblastus variegatus, Dwarf White Stripe The white on green veined leaves is an outstanding combination - a very attractive, low growing plant. It spreads more slowly than P. distichus and can be used as a ground cover or edging plant. The top may die to the ground in winter, and it is best to mow to the ground before new growth starts. The height is 2 1/2 to 4 feet, and its hardiness is 10°F (roots much harder - since it should be mowed to the ground, this is most important).

Sasa kurilensis simofuri This mid sized bamboo has fine white striped variegation. It should have partial shade - can burn in full sun. Its height can be 6 feet and hardiness is 0°F.

Sasa veitchii The green leaves turn cream color at the edges in the winter. It can be cut back or mowed to keep it low and improve its appearance in the summer. It will spread rapidly, making an excellent ground cover. Its height is 2-5 feet (usually less), and the hardiness is 5°F (roots much lower).

Sasaella masamuneana albostrata This has beautiful variegated leaves in spring. The new growth is mostly green in late summer. It should be cut to the ground in early spring to accent the new leaves which have striking variegation. Its height is 2-6 feet and hardiness is 0°F.

Shibataea kumasaca This very full plant makes a good hedge - will spread, but slowly. It may die to the ground in severe winters. The maximum height is 7 feet, usually less, and hardiness is -5°F.

### Large, Hardy Bamboo - Phyllostachys

Phyllostachys is a large genus of bamboo with approximately seventy-five species. Many of them are quite hardy and can be grown in New England. They are the tallest of the bamboos we are growing - most of them can reach a height of over 25 feet in a mature planting. The plants we are selling are basically between 4 and 7 feet tall and should produce culms in a year or two that would double that height. They spread by rhizomes but the rhizomes, in most cases, are quite close to the surface of the ground. A trench dug 2 to 3 feet deep lined with 60 mil black poly is said to control the rhizomes of Phyllostachys. Another method of control would be to dig a 8 to 12 inch wide trench around the planting, fill it in with sand, sawdust or some other soft material. This material could be penetrated easily to cut and lift out of the ground any rhizomes and rhizome parts that have extended beyond the trench each year. However, if plenty of area is available, the culms can be thinned, and the branches cut off up to a predetermined height. Especially with the multicolored culms, a spectacular planting affect can be achieved. Phyllostachys is also very good for screens, as will be mentioned below. The varieties we are growing at this time are:

Phyllostachys aureosulcata, Yellow Groove Bamboo  
Height: 26 feet Hardiness: -15°F.

This is an excellent variety. The culms are dark green but have a yellow sulcus which makes them very attractive, especially if the branches are cut off to a reasonable height. Some of the culms will start by growing with a zig-zag pattern which adds to the interest of this plant. When they grow a couple of feet, however, the culm becomes straight and vertical.

Phyllostachys aureosulcata spectabilis.  
Height: 26 feet Hardiness: -15°F.

This is the reverse of P. aureosulcata in that it has bright yellow culms with a green groove. This is a very vigorous form, and it is definitely a spectacular plant.

Phyllostachys bissetii, David Basset Bamboo  
Height: 20 feet Hardiness: -10°F.

A bit smaller than most Phyllostachys, it forms a dense thicket - excellent for screening hedges. It has dark green culms.

Phyllostachys decora, Beautiful Bamboo  
Height: 24 feet Hardiness:-5°F.

This has very straight, upright green culms with drooping foliage and will tolerate hot and dry conditions. Also, the leaf blade that surrounds the culm when it first emerges has purple to pale green stripes and accents. This is quite beautiful and gives this bamboo its common name.

Phyllostachys nigra, Black Bamboo  
Height: 25 feet plus Hardiness: 0°F.

This is the first Phyllostachys we worked with. The literature says the new culms come up green, and after a relatively long period of time, turn black. In our experience here, they turn dark purple to black quite rapidly and are quite striking against the green foliage of the plant. Like many of the other Phyllostachys, the culms can be thinned and branches cut off. The remaining culms produce a very interesting effect as you look through them. Also, the tops of this bamboo, as well as others, can be cut off to produce more tree-shaped forms rather than tall, wispy bamboo culms.

Phyllostachys nuda, Hardy Bamboo  
Height: 25 feet plus Hardiness: -15°F (perhaps lower).

Probably the most common of the large bamboos in this area, I know of three very large plantings within ten miles of the nursery. The culms are green but with a white ring around the nodes. This variety is very hardy, perhaps the most hardy form that we've encountered. It is extremely vigorous, and if you want a bamboo to make a rapid screen that grows quite tall, this might well be your choice.

We are starting to grow many other varieties of bamboo but have none for sale at this time. I will be writing a lot more about bamboo before they are ready.

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## New Plants

Once again, Betty has given me a list of varieties we have added to our price list that I have not written about either in The Plants We Grow or any of our winter newsletters. Some of these are plants that I have just overlooked, others are completely new to us and some are slightly different varieties of plants that we have been growing for years. I don't have room to write about all of them but will mention a few of the more important ones. If you have comments on any of these varieties, I would be very glad to hear from you - my knowledge on some of the new shrubs is limited so I'm always looking for more information.

Andromeda polifolia var. glaucophylla 'Breton Blue' A number of years ago Tom Dilatush told me that we have to put a name on some of our plant discoveries in order to get people to buy them. We have been growing a form of Andromeda polifolia that I found in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. It has excellent blue foliage, as I'm sure most of you are aware. In thinking of Tom and the fact that 'Breton Blue' seems to make a good name, telling where the plant came from and the color of its foliage, I decided to name it thus. However, it is the same plant we have been selling for years as Andromeda polifolia var. glaucophylla.

## Four Good Azaleas

A number of years ago, a mail order nursery asked us to grow four deciduous azaleas for them and we agreed to do so. All four are Weston Nurseries introductions and are excellent summer flowering, deciduous azaleas. We now have them available for all our customers in one and two gallon containers.

Lemon Drop This azalea blooms in mid-July. The buds are a light pink color and open to pale yellow. It is slightly fragrant with a lemon scent; hence, its name. The leaves are small and are a dusty, blue-green color with an excellent pinkish-red fall coloring - a nice little upright growing plant.

Lollipop This one blooms approximately mid-June. The flowers are pink with a yellow flare, extremely fragrant. The plant habit is wider than 'Lemon Drop', green foliage in the summer turning a reddish-orange color in the fall.

Parade Dark pink flowers, an orange eye, blooming in July, plus a vanilla fragrance makes this a very nice, upright growing deciduous azalea. The foliage color in the fall is bronze.

Weston's Innocence Very fragrant, small white blossoms in late June, this is a very vigorous growing plant with upright branches. The fall foliage is a bronze-burgundy color.

All the azaleas mentioned above are mildew resistant and are quite hardy, surviving temperatures of 20 below or lower. As I've said in the past, we can thank Weston Nurseries for introducing many fine new plants. These four, along with Azalea Pink 'N Sweet, are some of the best of the summer flowering forms of Azalea they have introduced.

Azalea viscosum 'Montana' I've written extensively about Azalea viscosum in the past, Swamp Honeysuckle or Swamp Azalea are the common names. It is an excellent summer blooming, fragrant, native azalea. 'Montana' is a form that stays much lower than the typical form which can get from 5 to 8 feet tall or perhaps even more in deep forest conditions. 'Montana' tends to grow only about 3 to 4 feet tall which makes it more valuable for most situations.

Betula michauxii, Dwarf Birch This is a plant of the far North. I can't find it listed in any of the literature. It was given to me by Tom Dilatush many years ago. I doubt if it will ever grow much over 18 inches tall. It has a small leaf and makes an interesting ground cover for a native planting, especially in moist areas. I believe it is very similar to Betula nana which I do find in the literature. Some of the boggy areas and tundra of Alaska and northern Canada are covered with this type of plant and I did see a row of B. michauxii in the University of Alaska's Botanical Garden in Fairbanks. It is an interesting plant to offer avid gardeners and plant collectors.

Acer japonica 'Branford Beauty' Many years ago, Nick Nickou collected a couple of seedlings from under a tree of Acer japonica in Ernie Egen's garden. One turned out to be a normal Acer japonica, but the other has turned out to be a more desirable tree. The one that Nick named 'Branford Beauty' is probably 12 feet across but no more than 5 feet high. He has it on top of a stone wall so it is a little hard to figure out exactly what the dimensions are. It, however, is a low spreading plant with typical Acer japonica foliage, very graceful looking and with excellent fall color.

Berberis thunbergii We have added three new barberries to our collection, all quite different. 'Bagatelle' is similar to 'Crimson Pygmy', however, much, much slower growing. It will probably grow about one-third as fast as 'Crimson Pygmy', (and I'm talking about the true 'Crimson Pygmy', not the "Pygmy" that you might find in the trade). Unfortunately, the color is not quite as good as 'Pygmy', but the plant habit is much better.

'Green Pygmy' is one that we found here at Summer Hill. It is a sport of 'Crimson Pygmy' but has green foliage and grows much slower than the normal 'Crimson Pygmy'. It probably grows even slower than 'Bagatelle', forming a very tight little green mound.

'Royal Cloak' is one that we bought from another nursery and has fantastic deep purple leaves. The leaves are quite large for a barberry, and the plant itself grows to a large size. This is not a dwarf plant. This deep purplish-red foliage, if planted along with some of the golden type Chamaecyparis, and perhaps Blue Spruce, could make a spectacular combination of colors in the garden.

Buxus sempervirens 'Variegata' We are not sure exactly which strain of B. sempervirens this is. It was collected from one of our employees' mother's garden. Small leaves on a relatively slow growing box, the leaf margins are light yellow. It makes quite a spectacular little plant - a slow and tight growing form of boxwood.

Cercidiphyllum magnificum 'Pendulum' This can be a magnificent tree. For a number of years, we have been growing C. japonica 'Pendula' which tends to spread without too much growth going upward. C. magnificum 'Pendulum' tends to grow up and then arches with a weeping habit. Typical Cercidiphyllum leaves give it a very nice appearance. The leaves have a fascinating fragrance, especially in the fall as they turn color; and this plant does have excellent fall color. The tree needs quite a bit of room as I've read that it can eventually reach 50 feet tall, however, I believe 20 to 30 feet would be far more common. It's an excellent specimen tree for a focal point.

## Cornus kousa

Cornus kousa Varieties Over the past few years, we have been grafting and growing a few varieties of Cornus kousa

'Dwarf Pink' This is a relatively slow growing form of C. kousa. The mature size of a cutting grown plant would not be much more than 6 to 8 feet with, of course, pink flowers. Unfortunately, the plants we are growing at this point have been grafted, and they will get quite a bit larger than this. In the future, we will be growing rooted cuttings which will maintain the plant's dwarfness much better.

'Everbloom' is a name we have given to a selection of Cornus kousa that holds its bracts, in most years, well into September. This plant is a seedling I planted just to the south of our house, and all summer long I drive in the driveway looking at Cornus kousa in full bloom. We have grown some of these from cuttings, as well as grafts, and are still observing just how long the bracts last. They do not appear to last quite as long as the original plant, but they last much, much longer than the normal Cornus kousa. This is a very

fast growing variety and will make a good sized tree in a very short period of time.

'Gold Star' A good plant of 'Gold Star' is quite spectacular. Each leaf has a large splash of gold through the center of the leaf, rimmed with green. It's a very slow growing variety, and a three gallon container of 'Gold Star' will be a fraction of the size of 'Everbloom'. It does flower, but it's the variegated foliage that is its primary attribute. Peter Tabol has a fairly large one, and I did see it in fruit one time. The variegated foliage and the red fruit make quite a striking contrast.

'Rosea' This is a form that grows quite well and has a good pink flower. It may not be quite as dark pink as 'Satomi', but in growth habit and in flower, it is very similar.

'Satomi' This one seems to be the favorite of most of our customers, perhaps because it's best known in the trade - good bright pink flowers on a good growing vigorous tree. This is the standard pink as we know it in the trade as far as I'm concerned.

'Pendula' We are, at this point, growing three different varieties of pendulous *Cornus kousa*. We graft them on about a 5 foot standard, and the growth on 'Pendula' weeps straight down after a slight arch from the trunk. A few shoots will grow up so as to increase the height of the plant; but if you really want it to grow much taller than the understock, it is best to train some of these branches up mechanically. This strain flowers quite well and is indeed a gorgeous plant for a focal point.

'Elizabeth Lustgarten' This will make a wider growing pendulous tree than 'Pendula'. Its branches tend to form around a crown and then become pendulous.

'Lustgarten Weeping' is another form that we haven't had long enough to really observe that well. The flowers of 'Lustgarten Weeping' are supposed to be more evident than those of 'Elizabeth Lustgarten'.

'Wolf Eyes' and 'Snowboy' are two variegated forms that are quite slow growing and will probably not be available for a couple of years. 'Wolf Eyes' will probably turn out to be the better plant because it can stand far more sun than 'Snowboy'. 'Snowboy' needs a lot of shade, or the leaves burn terribly in the hot summer sun.

We have several other varieties of *Cornus kousa* that have been given to us as scions from some of our friends, but they are far too small for us to even talk about at this time.

*Itea virginica* 'Little Henry' and *Itea virginica* 'Merlot' Both of these varieties are similar, growing quite a bit slower than 'Henry's Garnet' but neither one, in our estimation, has quite as good color as 'Henry's Garnet'. Since 'Henry's Garnet' tops out at about 4 or 4 1/2 feet tall and both of these plants will, I assume, and according to Dirr, reach about the same height, I'm not sure they are really an improvement over 'Henry's Garnet'. However, they are slower growing and probably will be of some value for that reason.

*Magnolia soulangiana* 'Alexandrina' We gave up growing *Magnolia soulangiana* many years ago because it is slightly more root tender in the winter than *Magnolia stellata*. We felt that we had replaced it with *Magnolia x 'Ricki'*; however, there is quite a bit of difference. We bought some small plants of *M. soulangiana* 'Alexandrina' a few years

ago and find that with our new winter protection methods, it comes through the winter fine. It is a very vigorous form of *M. soulangiana* but with an excellent flower, rose-purple on the outside and white on the inside - a very beautiful thing. It is a very vigorous form of *M. soulangiana* and will make a large plant quite rapidly.

*Magnolia grandiflora* This one would appear to be a fool's errand for anyone in New England; however, there are some varieties of *M. grandiflora* that are doing quite well. George Basdorfer gave me a clone years ago that, as far as I know, did not have a name but was growing in Norwalk, Connecticut. We grew the cuttings, and I had a fairly large plant growing on the south side of my house until the winter of 1980, which just about destroyed it. I had given a couple of plants to friends of mine nearer the shore in Madison, and their plants survived that winter and are quite spectacular at this time. We are starting to grow this one again under the name of *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Summer Hill'.

'Tulsa' is another variety we tried. I'm not sure where we got the original plants. I haven't planted one outside as yet but, theoretically, it's hardy as far north as Boston so this one is worth a try.

'Edith Bogue' is the third variety we are propagating. This is from cuttings that I've taken from a large plant that Nick Nichou has in Branford, Connecticut. It does extremely well for him, blooming every year, and from literature and what I've been told by people in the know, it is as hardy as any *M. grandiflora* available today.

All three varieties have large, shiny, evergreen leaves and spectacular large, white flowers. For people in mild areas, this is a plant that, with some protection from strong winter winds, is worth trying. It is not for everybody, but for the avid gardener it can be an extremely fine focal point. These are indeed magnificent plants.

*Potentilla tridentata* This is a wonderful little ground cover that very few people know. It has a shiny leaf, growing about 6 inches in height. In mid-summer it will have a white flower that stands up above the foliage. It can be used as an edging plant or, as I mentioned before, a ground cover. This, I believe, will be a Cary Award Plant in the near future and you should think about trying it. Everyone who sees it here thinks highly of it, but very few people know what the plant is or what it will do. Taxonomists are in the process of renaming it *Sibbaldiopsis tridentata*. I just don't know if I can go along with that.

*Sorbaria sorbifolia*, *Ural Falsespirea* This is a tough plant, one of the hardiest plants that I've run into. We saw a lot of this planted in Alaska so we know it can take extreme cold. It is an erect multi-stemmed shrub with foliage very similar to Mountain Ash; hence, its name. It can spread with suckers, but the spreading has not been very rapid in the places I've planted it. The white flowers are borne on the top of the plant, standing tall, very much like a giant astilbe - quite spectacular when in bloom in the early morning sunlight. It needs a lot of room as it can grow to 5 to 10 feet in height eventually. The largest ones I've seen have been more in the 4 to 5 foot range. It can be cut back to keep it in bounds if necessary. For northern New England and for a spot where a hardy plant is mandatory, this is an excellent shrub to use.

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## WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER 2002

### **New Plants** continued from pg 7

Syringa vulgaris For many years, we were unable to grow *Syringa vulgaris* varieties in containers. However, Roger McNelly, at our Rockland lot, has done a tremendous amount of experimenting and is now producing some very nice plants. We are growing good old common lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*, as well as *S. vulgaris* 'alba', and have recently started to produce many of the hybrids. At this point, I will mention flower colors that I feel are somewhat accurate although, once again, when we are dealing with flower colors one person's pink may be another person's mauve or lavender.

'Adelaide Dunbar' purple, double flower, very fragrant

'Albert Holden' deep violet, silver blush on reverse

'Bridal Memories' large single, creamy white

'Charles Joly' double magenta (purple-red), very fragrant

'Ludwig Spaeth' deep purple, single

'President Grevy' double, blue

'Sensation' maroon-red, single florets edged in white

'Sylvan's Beauty' large single, pink

We plan on planting a lilac garden behind our Alberta Spruce "forest" in back of our home this summer, and I will be able to speak a little bit more about all of these varieties in the near future.

### **Spring Pick-up Orders** **Please FAX or Phone**

This coming spring, if you would like to pick up a few plants from us that have not already been ordered, we would appreciate receiving a FAX of your request before 8 o'clock in the morning, or a phone call, letting us know what you would like. We will get back to you and let you know exactly what we have available. With all the varieties we are growing, it takes some time to check on availability (computers don't go out into the field and count). After April 20, if you want to come to the nursery and assemble an order from our surplus area, that is fine; but if you know the items you need, it is much better to call ahead for it could save you a trip if we don't have them available. In any case, if we can assemble the order in advance, it will save you quite a bit of time as we can load you as soon as you get here.

FAX: 203-421-5189

Phone: 203-421-3055