

GROWING MATTERS

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*Proudly serving northern gardeners
since 1982*

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News Briefs

The nursery office will be closed from December 17th-January 4th but there will be responses to your inquiries during that time frame.

Our 2019 Reference Guide, Price List and Order Form are available online. Use the password: xxxxxxxxxx to access protected files.

From the President

It has been a year of stable sales for our company. We thank all of our loyal customers who have supported us to make it a satisfactory year. Some of our sales have been affected by a retraction from ash due to the EAB threat as well as insufficient supplies of alternative trees. The summer weather wasn't kind to us with long periods of drought during the months of July and August and then wet cool weather during September and early October. Tree growth in the field was excellent due to our efforts with irrigation and this fall's bareroot tree harvest went well and grading is now completed.

We have made a number of improvements to our facilities including added storage space for zone 4 plant stock and for storing perennials and propagation stock. A contractor is working now on a reservoir expansion which will give us 20% more capacity for container watering. New permanent deer and rabbit fencing has been installed at two of our farms. We are using a 2" x 2" mesh fence with treated wood posts. The deer problem has grown as they have become an urban animal, preferring protected areas where hunting is limited. Compounding the problem is our expanded propagation of fruiting apples and flowering crabapples which as young trees are like "candy" to the deer and rabbit populations.

Changes in the nursery industry never stop and this year we have seen two closures and one ownership change that affects some of our cooperators and suppliers. Boughen Nurseries in Valley River, one of Manitoba's pioneer nurseries in zone 2, was a third generation company noted for its fruit trees and plant improvement. Similarly, Lawyer Nurseries in Montana was noted for its work with seed and seedling production while Carlton Nurseries of Dayton, OR., a loyal cooperator, has now become part of the Bailey Nurseries family of companies. Staffing changes are not easy and as we bid adieu to Pete Van Vliet at the end of January we thank him for his efforts in sales and appreciate the relationships he has built with many of you. He will be missed and we will be looking for a replacement. If you are aware of suitable candidates please let us know.

We have published this company newsletter for 21 years and post it to our website where current and former issues are easily viewed. It has often been a challenge to write good stories while keeping to the quarterly issue dates. The newsletter faces the rising cost of postage, disruption in postal service, and with the widening availability of high speed internet we foresee that the paper copy will be increasingly displaced by email. With this issue we are asking you to tell us which format you prefer for your future delivery of the newsletter.

In closing, the Ronald family and staff wish you all the very best through the holiday season and New Year. The gospel of Luke 2:11 proclaims the birth of the saviour "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. May you enjoy this season when He is remembered.

Wilbert Ronald



Out of the Ashes

By Andrew Ronald

A little over a year after Emerald Ash Borer was first detected in downtown Winnipeg, the fallout from this discovery continues to play out in Western Canada's nursery industry.

Green ash and Black ash make up a significant part of the native deciduous forest in southern Manitoba. Winnipeg, like many other Prairie cities, relied heavily on ash for street plantings because of the species' toughness and adaptability to a range of urban conditions. Nursery growers had been willing to produce these trees because of their quick cycle time, suitable crowns, and ease of transplanting. Consequently, the *Fraxinus* genus accounts for over 1/3 of the boulevard and park plantings in Winnipeg and an even higher percentage in other Prairie cities. Ash also has been extensively used in prairie shelterbelts.

As cities reduce or eliminate ash from planting plans, nurseries are puzzling over what trees will take the place of ash in the marketplace. One thing seems to be clear and that is that the shift away from ash will positively impact a number of tree species as diversity is increasingly top-of-mind in planning landscapes.

Prairie winters continue to be the most significant limiting factor to broadening our choices in trees. As nurseries move to other species they must remember the importance of locally adapted seed sources, hardy rootstocks and northern zone cultivars. One must use a northern source for trees such as oaks, hackberry, basswood, silver and sugar maples. It is not possible to move stock of native tree species originating in zones 5 and 6 into zones 2 and 3. Jeffries Nurseries has worked diligently over the last 35 years to refine our seed sources and rootstock sourcing so that we are using northern limit sources wherever possible.

The old proverb, "necessity is the mother of invention", likely applies to this situation as well. The loss of ash sales is forcing nurseries to evaluate old and new opportunities for expanding tree diversity. Jeffries Nurseries is testing new trees being developed in other regions for their suitability in zone 3. As well, we continue to work on developing seedling sources and cultivars for species not currently used in the prairie region.

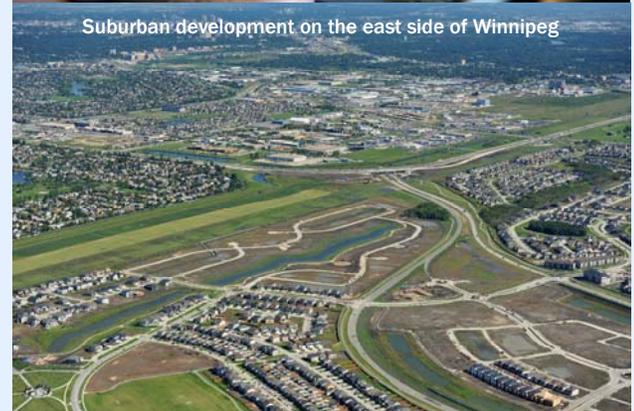
The mix of trees that will be used in future landscapes will also be influenced by other considerations. Boulevards and yards in many newer neighborhoods do not have as much room for the traditional larger shade trees (elm, basswood, silver maple, etc). Smaller statured trees (flowering crabapples, flowering cherries, hawthorns, Amur and Tatarian maples, mountain ash, tree lilacs) are going to be a better physical fit in these locations as well as smaller columnar trees.

Another factor that will take time and further testing to figure out is the impact of planting sites on establishment of some of these alternative species. Ash was adaptable to a range of soil conditions and survived even in tough urban locations. We should not assume that other species will prove to be as flexible.

In future quarterly newsletter articles, I will highlight specific tree species that we think have the potential to rise "out of the ashes" and increase in prominence in the prairie landscape.



Emerald Ash Borer adult beside D-shaped exit hole in ash log



Suburban development on the east side of Winnipeg



Linden will be a major part of the diversity solution in zone 3

Columnar trees for the Prairies

By Wilbert Ronald



'Guardian' Aspen

Swedish Aspen



Sundancer Hybrid Poplar



Form and spring flowers of 'Emerald Spire'

Tree breeders have been working hard to develop new columnar trees to replace the once popular Columnar Swedish aspen. Our search began with a quest for disease resistance within the aspen family and the newly released 'Guardian' aspen, has shown good resistance to Bronze Leaf Disease (see adjacent photo). 'Guardian' is a complex hybrid of the Swedish aspen and shows many of the characteristics of its parent including dark green foliage, columnar growth form, male seedless character and superb hardiness. It is becoming better known in the trade and is readily available as an alternative choice for gardeners who have a wish to have a tree similar to Columnar Swedish aspen. It is available in a range of sizes at prairie nurseries and garden centres and there is no other substitute with proven disease resistance.

'Sundancer' hybrid poplar, a recent introduction from the former PFRA Tree Nursery in Saskatchewan has been growing in popularity as its features have become known. While a member of the *Populus* genus, 'Sundancer' is more closely related to the cottonwood but has a totally different crown structure. It propagates well from hardwood stem cuttings, shows rapid growth, excellent leaf rust, stem canker resistance and is not susceptible to the BLD affecting Columnar Swedish aspen. It is capable of growth up to 6' (2 m) per year as a young established tree and trees have reached 70' (18 m) at 18 years of age in nursery plantings. The rapid growth rate and ultimate height dictates that this tree is most suited to larger acreages, parks and farms. It is widely available as smaller bare root or container grown plant and the trees lower price point makes it suited for shelter and screen plantings.

A new columnar birch tree known as 'Parkland Pillar', in honour of Alberta's Parkland Nursery and Landscaping in Red Deer, has become a popular accent tree in the last five years. It has grown to a height of 30' (8 m) and width of 6' (2 m) in 8 years in prairie landscapes. It is a mid sized tree with striking golden fall colour, white bark and healthy green foliage. Gardeners must remember it is in the birch family and requires adequate moisture to grow well. It is recommended to use this Asiatic birch with care in suitable planting sites and to mulch it well to keep the roots cool and moist. Birch trees are generally susceptible to bronze birch borer and leaf miners and require moisture in periods of drought. Good gardening practices will help you to enjoy this striking columnar tree and while we do not regard it as an exceptionally long-lived tree there is no reason why it cannot prove a valued accent tree.

Recently, dramatic progress has been made in the breeding of a new group of columnar flowering crabapples and gardeners now have several choices to draw from in various forms and foliage colours. These trees trace to early breeding work by Dr. David Lane of the Summerland Research Centre who crossed the 'Thunderchild' cultivar with columnar spur type fruit apples. This has led to a "growing family" of small columnar trees which are suited to landscape use and are part of the "Spire" series. Three cultivars are named and available with a fourth to follow in the 2020 growing season. They include 'Purple Spire', the oldest cultivar with purple foliage and 'Emerald Spire', the green silver foliated cultivar developed from 'Purple Spire'. Both are dense columnar trees and have moderate flowering with fruit about 1 1/2" (3 cm) in diameter. The 'Thunderchild' parentage lends excellent fireblight resistance and hardiness to this group of trees. The most recent columnar "Spire" introduction is the 'Green Wall' cultivar with its dense dark green foliage, showy white spring flowers and smaller bright red fruit which is retained into winter, a great advancement for the gardener who is worried about fruit drop.

[Article continues on following page](#)

Columnar trees for the Prairies (continued)

By Wilbert Ronald

Next year, the shiny dark purple foliated 'Indigo Spire' is set for introduction and it likewise has smaller fruit and excellent disease resistance and winter hardiness. These trees have reached a spread of 6' (2 m) and height of 20' (6 m) at 20 years of age. The only downside to the columnar crabapples has been browsing deer who may eat low-hanging foliage and fruit. This would not be a problem in most cities but could be a problem on rural acreages and farms.

One other columnar tree that deserves mention is the upright forms of pea shrubs (*Caragana* hybrids). Selected in North Dakota, 'Green Spires' is the newest pea shrub cultivar. Specimens have matured at 6' (2 m) wide and 12' (4 m) tall at 12 years of age. It has beautiful golden yellow flowers which are sterile and the tree has dense green foliage. 'Sutherland' is an older cultivar developed in Saskatchewan, and is presently more widely used than 'Green Spires'. Both of these cultivars are tough trees and have a place in the prairie landscape.

Columnar trees have an important role as accent and screening plants for the prairie landscape. Although the day may be past for the Columnar Swedish aspen, newer alternatives offer good choices for height, flowering and foliage colour. Choose wisely and you will not be disappointed.



Form and foliage of 'Green Spires' Caragana

VISIT OUR BOOTH AT THE WINTER TRADESHOWS

• NDNGLA / NDUCEFA CONVENTION & TRADE SHOW

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

JANUARY 28TH - 30TH, 2019

• LANDSCAPE MANITOBA GROW DAY

WINNIPEG, MB.

FEBRUARY 13TH, 2019

The history of Hahs Cranberry

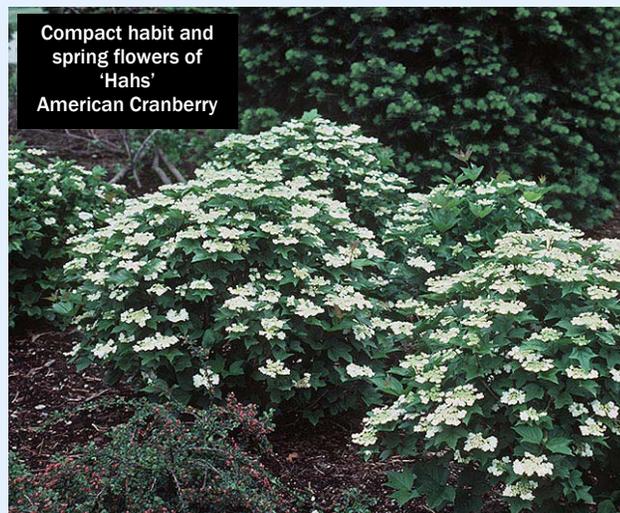
By Philip Ronald

Most of us are well aware of the outstanding ornamental features of Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*): flat-topped collections of white spring flowers, attractive 3-lobed foliage that turns red in the fall and clusters of edible, red berries that persist through the winter months. However, what often excludes this species from today's residential landscapes is its large mature size of 10-12' (3-4 meters). Certainly a dwarf cultivar would be welcome!

In the early 1900's, A.E. Morgan led a group of naturalists who collected seed from native highbush cranberry plants in the northern United States and Canada. By the year 1915, 3300 unique plants had been assembled for an evaluation planting in Massachusetts. Three of the best selections were released to the nursery trade in 1922. They were named 'Andrews', 'Hahs', and 'Wentworth'.

The cultivar 'Hahs' was named after Roy Hahs, one of Morgan's field collectors. An upright, rounded shrub, this selection is slower growing and ultimately shorter than the species, growing to only 6 feet (2 meters). Although its foliage and flowers are typical of the species, the edible red fruit is larger than other *trilobum* cultivars.

Jeffries Nurseries has been propagating 'Hahs' for several years and are pleased to offer this compact cultivar to our customers in 2 gallon containers for spring 2019. This unique selection of American cranberry is sure to be valued by prairie landscapers for its excellent flowering and fruit display on a smaller, more compact plant.



Compact habit and spring flowers of 'Hahs' American Cranberry

