

Growing Matters

Minuet Lilac

March 2009

Volume 12 : Issue 1

Growing Matters is an informative newsletter for clients and associates of Jeffries Nurseries. It is published quarterly with the sole objective of assisting you in meeting the challenges of the nursery, garden centre and landscape industry.

Jeffries Nurseries Ltd.
P. O. Box 402
Portage la Prairie, MB.
R1N 3B7

Toll Free: 1-888-857-5288
Fax: (204) 857-2877
e-mail: jeffnurs@mts.net
www.jeffriesnurseries.com

Office Contacts

President

wilbert.ronald@jeffriesnurseries.com

Sales Manager

michel.touchette@jeffriesnurseries.com

Accounts/Inside Sales

shawna.ronald@jeffriesnurseries.com

Order Entry

rachel.giesbrecht@jeffriesnurseries.com

Research/Marketing

philip.ronald@jeffriesnurseries.com

Shipping/Inventory

liz.werner@jeffriesnurseries.com

News Briefs

Employees, Don and Julie Hofer are expecting their first child towards the end of March.

Philip Ronald has joined the Board of Directors for the Canadian Ornamental Plant Foundation.

Goldspur Amur Cherry now carries a U.S. Plant Patent (#19,665) Bailey Nurseries plans to offer Goldspur as a First Edition plant with sales in the U.S. and Europe in the near future.

Remember that April 1st is the last day to make changes to your spring orders.

Name that Plant...we have a new ninebark selection (JN0605) that needs a name. View photos at www.jeffriesnurseries.com/0605.pdf and e-mail us your ideas!

From the President

As I write this column on March 10th we are just a month away from the arrival of our Mexican farm workers and our normal date for the start of straw removal. We seem to be heading for a later spring this year with large snowdrifts on the ground and low temperatures still reaching -25 C.

Our company year end is March 31st and we can look back on several significant events. We have seen a nice increase in sales for the past year with growth in every sector of the company. Our new plants and increased field and container availability are certainly part of the story, but also the gains made by our customers using reference guides, signage and related support from our company.

Within the last year, we have seen the largest increase and decrease in oil-based energy prices as well as remarkable changes in employment levels across Canada. We feel a measure of stability in employment locally since our area is focused on agriculture and food processing.

We are making a few equipment changes for spring and appreciate that our key staff members remain in place. All in all we are gearing up for a good year while keeping a lid on costs and inventory. We are actually seeing some shortages in certain caliper trees and fast-selling small fruits like sour cherries.

Landscapers in the Winnipeg area and Saskatchewan all speak of strong bookings for 2009. The greatest factor controlling spring garden centre sales will always be the weather. We all can hope for a normal spring with sunny weekends and a few timely rains.

Wilbert G. Ronald



New for 2009

Arctic Mist

Coral Bells

Northern Garden Production

Lilacs... Fragrant Anticipation

By Philip Ronald

Perhaps the most recognized plant of spring is the lilac. Its reliable blooms provide us with a blast of colour and fragrance after a long cold winter. Several years ago in our annual production meetings we did a careful analysis of the lilac cultivars that were in production at Jeffries. Many single-flowered cultivars were dropped in favor of double-flowered relatives, leaving the cream of the crop.

American Lilac (*Syringa x hyacinthiflora*)

These hybrid cultivars are derived from crosses between *Syringa oblata* and *Syringa vulgaris*. American Lilacs typically flower 10 days prior to French hybrids, producing fragrant flowers in large panicles. Developed in Manitoba by Frank Skinner, these lilacs have unquestionable cold hardiness (zone 2) and excellent vigour. Consider the pink-flowered [Maiden's Blush](#) as one of the superior hybrids from within this group.

French Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)

The most common lilac cultivars come from this group. French lilacs produce fragrant flower panicles in mid-spring. Flower colours include white, blue, pink, magenta, lilac and violet. Most cultivars mature as large shrubs but there are exceptions such as [Prairie Petite](#) and [Little Boy Blue](#). Consider [Atheline Wilbur](#) (semi-double violet), [Belle de Nancy](#) (double pink) and [President Grevy](#) (double blue) for unique flower colour.

Preston Lilac (*Syringa x prestoniae*)

The Preston hybrids were derived from a cross between *Syringa villosa* and *Syringa reflexa*. These hardy cultivars are late bloomers, with peak flowering two weeks after French hybrids. In the landscape they mature as dense, medium-sized shrubs. Consider [Donald Wyman](#), [Coral](#), [Minuet](#) and [Royalty](#) as ideal choices from within this group. Remember that Preston lilacs are ideal for forming a medium-sized hedge. What could be better than a living fence that bursts into fragrant bloom each spring?

Other Lilacs (*Syringa x*)

This category takes in such champions as [Dwarf Korean](#) and [Miss Kim](#). Both of these small statured lilacs deserve a place in every home landscape for their prolific bloom and intoxicating fragrance. Well suited to foundation plantings in confined urban landscapes, they dispel the age-old notion that all lilacs become large, overgrown shrubs.



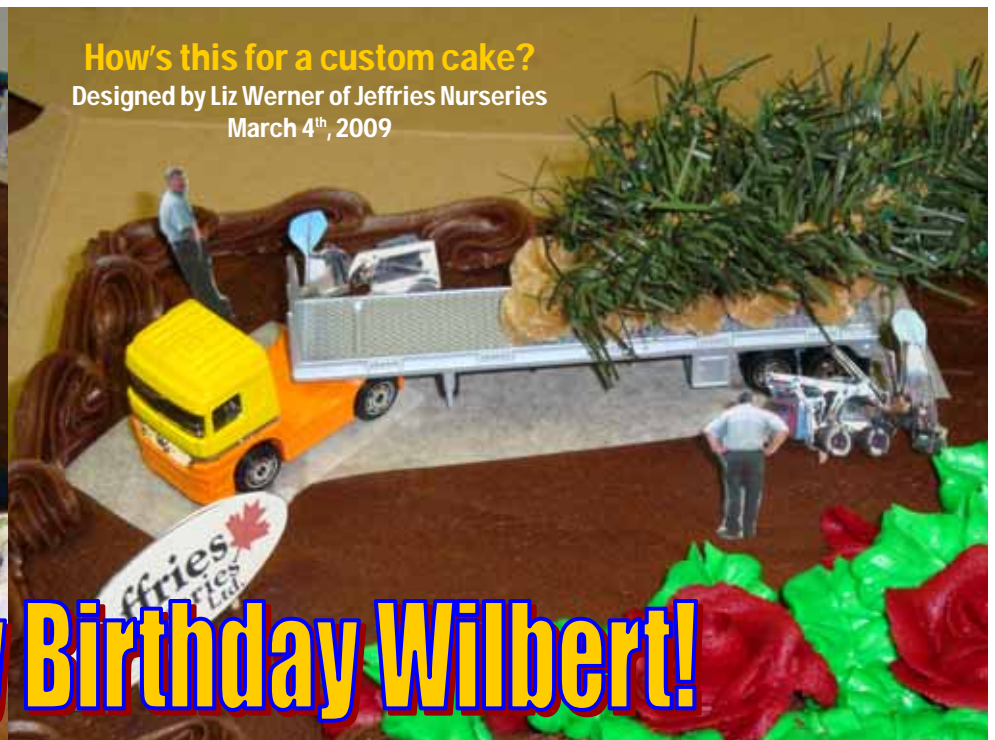
Maiden's Blush Lilac



President Grevy Lilac



Miss Kim Lilac



Happy Birthday Wilbert!

Unusual Trees for Your Garden Centre

By Philip Ronald

"Diversity" is the buzz word when it comes to tree planting these days. The prairie region is severely limited when it comes to expanded choices for boulevard and landscape plantings. However, there is a group of trees that are on the fringe, so to speak. Many of these cultivars/species might be best rated "zone 3b" since mature specimens can be found in many prairie cities. Their success can be traced to more subtle factors such as wind protection, soil type, and drainage.

At Jeffries we have made an effort to provide additional choices for diversity in tree planting. For spring 2009 we still have a good supply of container stock for many of the cultivars/species listed below. The educated consumer is now looking for more selection than just the long-term staples of ash and linden. Consider adding a sampling of these unusual trees to your garden center's portfolio for spring sales.

Marvelous Maples

We have expanded our offering of maple cultivars in the last three years. [Autumn Spire](#) is a seedless, Minnesota selection of Red Maple. It shows the earliest red fall colour of any maple, usually by September 25th in Manitoba. Remember that Red Maple requires acidic amendment on soils with high pH. [Deborah Norway Maple](#) offers purple spring foliage that turns bronze-green in summer. In areas where fall rainfall is common, Norway Maples must be planted in rain shadows or well drained areas to avoid a second growth flush that will often show winter damage.

Of the Freeman Maples, we have decided to move ahead in the short term with two cultivars: [Autumn Blaze](#) and [Sienna Glen](#). Both show good red fall colour in southern Manitoba, but not until mid-October. Sugar Maple is another species that sparks interest in prairie gardeners. We presently offer three cultivars: [Fall Fiesta](#), [Green Mountain](#) and Jeffries' own introduction [Unity](#). Fall shut down is crucial for Freeman and Sugar Maple. Careful application of nutrition and a sheltered planting site under sod (wicks up additional moisture) facilitate hardening off of the current season's growth and promote earlier development of fall colour.

Trees with Compound Foliage

Compound leaves differ from simple leaves in that they are composed of a collection of small leaflets. There are a number of trees for the prairies that offer the texture and complexity of compound foliage. [Northern Acclaim Honeylocust](#) from North Dakota State University represents a cold hardy selection of locust for use in zones 3 and 4. [Butternut](#) and [Black Walnut](#) are more proven species for the prairies. Both develop into handsome shade trees over time and produce nuts that attract wildlife. [Amur Maackia](#) is an attractive small tree with white flowers and exfoliating, copper bark. For the truly adventurous gardener, the [Kentucky Coffee Tree](#) represents the ultimate conversation piece. Native to southern Minnesota, a single leaf from this species may be composed of more than 100 leaflets!

Other Oak Species

Our lone native oak species, Bur (*Q. macrocarpa*), now has some company from the south. Oaks are notoriously adaptable species and there are several species (Northern Pin, Red, Swamp White, White) that have sufficient cold hardiness to move into the prairie region. The greater challenge with some of these non-native oak species is soil pH, as many prefer neutral to acidic conditions. [Northern Pin Oak](#) is the most adaptable of this group to alkaline soils and can be used reliably in most parts of the prairies. Its outstanding features include bristled foliage and dark-red fall colour. Seed source (provenance) is crucial in the case of oak, with our preference being locations in northern and central Minnesota.

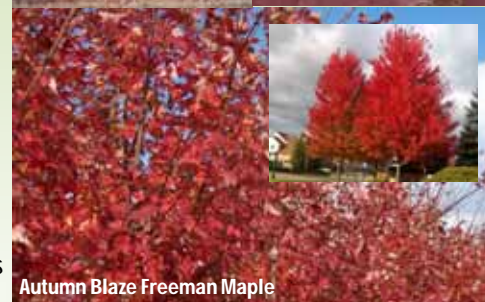
Golden Eclipse

Variegated foliage was an unknown trait in prairie-hardy trees until the arrival of [Golden Eclipse Tree Lilac](#). The foliage of this cultivar begins the growing season in shades of green but the leaf margin quickly takes on a golden colour that contrasts with the dark green centre. Our field trials in Portage la Prairie, show that Golden Eclipse is slightly less cold hardy than its sister cultivar Ivory Silk. However, when planted on well-drained soils in a sheltered urban landscape, we believe this unusual cultivar can work throughout much of the prairies.



Autumn Spire Red Maple

Deborah Norway Maple



Autumn Blaze Freeman Maple



Northern Acclaim Honeylocust

Black Walnut



Kentucky Coffeetree

Amur Maackia



Northern Pin Oak



Golden Eclipse Tree Lilac

Adjustments in a New Economy

By Michel Touchette

I now have a new appreciation for the powerful impact news concerning the state of our economy can have on our businesses. Today with international and national news so readily available one could easily conclude it is raining locally even though the rain is in China or very distant from us. Thankfully, the Prairie economy remains vibrant for the most part although the constant bad news is starting to shake our confidence.

Talking to our customers I have already noticed a new approach toward spring. Garden center buyers are looking carefully at their inventory and welcome the opportunity to develop weekly specials with their suppliers. Special effort is directed toward understanding the mood, and the needs of the end customers. New strategies are being developed to entice customers to visit our establishments. All of us are silently hoping for good weather in May which may erase this negative perspective fed by the news.

Our Manitoba landscape customers are finding lots of work for this coming spring while experiencing a more flexible and willing labor force. Many landscape firms are booked past August. The impending concern of the Emerald Ash Borer is producing a new demand for caliper maples, flowering crabapples, tree lilacs, hackberry and other tree species. This new vision may create a shortage of caliper trees for certain varieties in the short term, which growers will rectify in the near future.

Challenging economical times require everyone to reexamine all our activities with a sharp eye: inventory control, labour costs, marketing programs, and last but not least, our friendliness to customers. We have faced similar economic news before. Our ingenuity, dedication and efforts has built a very successful industry and the same determination will ensure future success. Have a great spring!



*It's not too late
to order your copies of the
2009
Northern Garden Collection
Reference Guide
Priced at \$3 per copy
Packaged in boxes of 50*



Last Call...Greenhouse Forced Roses

By Philip Ronald

Get a head-start on your competition with greenhouse-forced hardy roses. It's a proven fact that a blooming rose is much easier to sell in late May than early July. Coordinating peak bloom with spring traffic in the garden centre is the secret.

For the last few years we have been overwintering 2 gallon container-grown stock of hardy rose cultivars in our new hoopouses. In late March, the process of accelerating bloom time begins as winter protection is removed and the plants feel warmth and sunshine for the first time in five months.

As the plants leaf out we top-dress with fertilizer and provide space for optimal development. The end result is a product that is more than 1 month ahead of its dormant counterparts. With flower buds often initiated at the time of shipping, it won't be long before these plants are in full bloom in your garden centre.

Check our on-line availability list for a list of remaining greenhouse-forced roses at www.jeffriesnurseries.com. Roses are available from the Canadian Artists, Parkland and Explorer series. Book yours now for spring delivery and watch them fly out of the garden center!



Greenhouse-forced Morden Blush Rose #2