

# GROWING MATTERS

*Bella Anna Hydrangea*

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**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.

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## News Briefs

Shawna Bell and husband Jonathan welcomed a baby boy into their family. Lucas Jonathan was born on July 16th, weight 7lbs 7oz and 19" long.

Philip Ronald attended the fall meetings of the Canadian Ornamental Plant Foundation (COPF) in Guelph, Ontario.

Nursery tradeshow take place in Saskatoon and Edmonton next month (see back page for details).

Jeffries' 2011-2012 Reference Guide, Price List and Order Form are all available online at: [www.jeffriesnurseries.com](http://www.jeffriesnurseries.com). Use the password: xxxxxx to access protected files.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I write on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, we are seeing some excellent fall colours develop as we approach the end of the growing season and our fall digging. Our crop growth has been excellent and, with the exception of some flood damage at one of our five fields, it will be a good year for us. Caliper tree sales look very strong this fall after a slow spring.

This summer we have made a few changes in the company including the purchase of more over-wintering blankets and extensive pouring concrete for staging of truck shipments and avoiding spring frost boils. Our other changes include a few new product offerings (Amber Jubilee Ninebark, Emerald Spire Columnar Crabapple, Nobility White Ash) from our own R & D program and other plant developers.

Our new catalogue is in the mail and we hope you enjoy the changes and improvements. Philip and Shawna look after most of the catalogue so please pass on your comments or suggestions to either of them. We hope to see many of you at the prairie trade shows over the next few weeks. We trust we can talk about the year and enjoy a few good stories and laughs.

**Wilbert G. Ronald**



*Amber Jubilee®*  
Ninebark



**Bill Reid**



**Available as a 5.5" Premium Rose or #2 container this coming spring!**

# The Best Choices for Fall Colour

By Phillip Ronald

Late September marks peak fall colour in southern Manitoba. Depending on the weather, we witness a remarkable change from shades of green to dazzling gold. However, orange and red are in short supply among our native trees. Although fall colour is a very ephemeral trait much like spring flowers, it is worthy to consider when selecting shade trees for the landscape.

In the case of Sugar Maple, Jeffries cultivar **Unity**<sup>®</sup> continues to be the best cultivar for prairie conditions. Selected off the streets of Morden, Manitoba, Unity takes on a brilliant orange colour in fall so that a mature tree can be spotted from blocks away. American Sugar Maple cultivars such as **Fall Fiesta**<sup>®</sup> and **Green Mountain** offer red fall colour, but have failed in Manitoba plantings.

Although Red Maples represent a challenge on alkaline soil types, they are still the best source of early red fall colour. **Autumn Spire** and **Scarlet Jewell** have shown consistent fall colour and reliable cold hardiness in zone 3. **Red Rocket**, selected from a northern Minnesota seed source, offers a columnar growth habit.

The Freeman Maples have enormous potential as a prairie species, combining the soil tolerance of Silver Maple with the fall colour of Red Maple. Freeman cultivars such as **Matador**<sup>®</sup> and **Sienna Glen** killed to the ground their first year in the WNGG trial site in Portage. Only cultivar **Autumn Blaze** has shown the ability to survive in sheltered, sodded sites in zone 3. The hunt continues for northern Freeman sources that show early development of red fall colour.

Amur Maples provide red fall colour for both zones 2 and 3. In addition to seedling strains, there are several cultivars. **Royal Crown** from the University of Manitoba and **Ventura** from Prairie Shade Nursery are propagated from cuttings to provide uniformity in form and fall colour. Royal Crown was also selected for improved resistance to the alkaline soils so common in southern Manitoba.

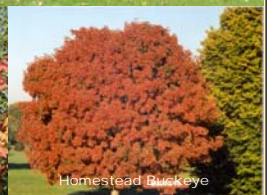
In addition to the Maple genus, I have been very impressed with the fall colour and cold hardiness of two new cultivars of Buckeye. The unique palmately compound foliage of **Autumn Splendor** and **Homestead** turns a consistent orange-red colour in fall. Finally, outstanding purple fall colour can be found in **Nobility White Ash**. Selected from the northwestern limits of the species in Wisconsin, this new cultivar has performed well during 10 years of testing in Manitoba.



Unity<sup>®</sup> Sugar Maple



Autumn Spire Red Maple



Homestead Buckeye



Autumn Splendor Buckeye



Nobility White Ash



Customer Appreciation Day



August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011



# Diversity in Columnar Trees

By Michel Touchette

As I travelled throughout Alberta this past September, one topic kept coming up during discussions with customers. The often posed question: "What is the future for Swedish Aspen and Tower Poplar now that Bronze Leaf Disease is in Alberta?" How big of an impact did the article on the front page of the Edmonton Journal in mid-September have on the public?

My answer is YES there is a future for Swedish Aspen and Tower poplar. A newspaper article that had a negative impact in the short term, may actually turn out to be positive for the long term. The problem is not the trees being used, but rather our insistence on planting a monoculture in many landscape settings. This dangerous horticulture practice always has the potential of a high price to pay.

Some of Jeffries' customers have mentioned the public is not ready to change the way they use Swedish Aspen. Well that responsibility falls on the shoulder of everyone involved in selling or providing information to the public. I am a great believer that people will change their ways if they understand the reason. A good example is the smoking habit. People do change!! Albeit reluctantly at times.

How do we explain to the public the need to diversify our landscape? Why not look at the hanging basket? Does your customer prefer a hanging basket with only pink wave petunias or one with a mixture of different plants rich in multiple color and texture? Now ask your customer if aphids show up and prefer the petunia over lets say lobelia or King Tut, which basket will survive best?

We need to display a home landscape with large plant diversity and explain to our customers why this system is the best defense against pest attacks. Compare that to a home landscape with rows of Swedish Aspen accounting for almost half of the trees and you can show the customer that this is the weakest defense you could possibly have for pests. Now give them a choice: which one would you prefer for your home?

The nursery industry is actively looking for narrow type trees. At Jeffries we have introduced **Purple Spire** and **Emerald Spire** Flowering Crabapple and within one or two years will be introducing **Parkland Pillar** Birch, a columnar selection of Asian White Birch. We need to suggest that our customers plant a Swedish Aspen, an Emerald Spire Crabapple and a Parkland Pillar Birch side by side rather than a row of Swedish Aspen. If we do not break our addiction to monoculture landscaping we will no doubt succumb to another pest attack even with the introduction of new plants.

I have seen a few positives aspects since the article was published in the Edmonton Journal. Firstly, the industry is now talking, recognizing the need to change our monoculture tendencies. Second, the article was published in September rather than May so some of our customers will forget by spring time. Finally, I believe we may see a substantial drop in the demand for Swedish Aspen. This is good since by reducing the number of Swedish Aspen planted annually we will reduce the size of the target for Bronze Leaf Disease to attack. Such changes may help to prolong the use of Swedish Aspen for up to ten or twenty additional years.

Discussing, promoting and encouraging plant diversification in the landscape combined with the introduction of new columnar woody plants by the industry will extend the life of Swedish Aspen and Tower Poplar. Diversification is our best defense against future pest invasion and will lead to the development of a healthy urban forest.



*Tower Aspen*



*Purple Spire & Emerald Spire Crabapple*



*Parkland Pillar Columnar Birch*



*Amber Jubilee Ninebark*



## JEFFRIES' EXCLUSIVES

The best new introductions for the prairies are only available through Jeffries Nurseries

Emerald Spire® Columnar Crabapple

Starlite® Flowering Crabapple

Nobility® White Ash

Amber Jubilee® Ninebark

Download factsheets at  
[www.northerngardencollection.com](http://www.northerngardencollection.com)



**Canada's First National Tree Day**

September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 marked Canada's first ever National Tree Day. Jeffries Nurseries partnered with Westpark School in Portage la Prairie by donating 23 trees for planting on the school grounds. Approximately 200 students from pre-school to grade 12 were excited to be involved in the planting process. Among the new caliper trees installed were Unity<sup>®</sup> Sugar Maple, Prairie Horizon<sup>®</sup> Alder and Autumn Splendor<sup>®</sup> Buckeye. A small "forest" of 20 Glenleven Linden was also planted as the future home of a natural playground area.



## New Study to Evaluate Oak Propagation

By Phillip Ronald

The advance of Emerald Ash Borer across North America threatens the ash genus that is so important in the Canadian prairies. Alternative shade trees are needed to facilitate diversity in our urban forests. Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) is well known as a long-lived native tree species with excellent cold hardiness. However, use of Bur Oak has been limited due to seedling variation and poor transplant success. An investigation into methods to allow clonal production of improved Oak selections as well as techniques to improve transplant success will be of tremendous value. Last month, an exciting research project commenced at the University of Manitoba. In partnership with Jeffries Nurseries, Dr. Claudio Stassola and M.Sc. student Simranjit Singh will undertake a multi-year study of oak propagation.

### Clonal Propagation of Oak

Until recently, all oaks were produced from seed. Seed propagated populations show variation in quality and vigor and have been largely replaced with superior selections that can be reproduced asexually. Most production nurseries are clonally propagating oaks by bud grafting onto seedling rootstock. However, the success rate of budding oaks varies and is challenged by compatibility issues between stock and scion. An own-root propagation system such as softwood cuttings would be highly desirable. Oaks have two growth flushes in the growing season and a study on the effect of collection date on rooting will be undertaken.

### Graft Compatibility of Oak

Nurseries are most likely to prefer a bud-grafting system for clonal propagation of oak. However, there are questions to be answered regarding the compatibility of oak species with Bur Oak rootstock. Bur Oak is the most drought/alkaline-tolerant and cold hardy species within the genus. As such, it represents the best choice for rootstock in the prairies. Nevertheless, questions remain as to the compatibility of Red Oak species (*Q. rubra*, *Q. ellipsoidalis*) and White Oak species (*Q. alba*, *Q. bicolor*) with Bur Oak rootstock. Anatomical studies will be done with young trees of *Q. ellipsoidalis* grafted on Bur Oak rootstock.

### Improving Bur Oak Root Systems

Oak species are predominately tap-rooted, creating problems during growing and transplanting. Numerous technologies (RPM, Rootmaker) have been developed to promote a more fibrous root system in oak seedlings. Some nurseries have even made the radical decision to cease bare-root production of oak, as a means to better condition the root system for survival. One interesting question that still needs to be answered: What effect does the quality of a seedling rootstock have on the success of bud grafting in oak?



Effect of air-pruning on seedling roots



Budded Green Pillar & Regal Prince Oak

## SEE YOU AT THE PRAIRIE TRADESHOWS



Photo: Jenni Jackson, Prairie Landscaping Magazine

**SGGA Tradeshow** Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
November 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 [www.sgtc.ca](http://www.sgtc.ca)

**Green Industry Show** Edmonton, Alberta  
November 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 [www.greenindustryshow.com](http://www.greenindustryshow.com)

**Manitoba Green Show** Winnipeg, Manitoba  
February 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 [www.landscapemb.com](http://www.landscapemb.com)