

Question Box

Moderated by Ralph Shugert and Bruce Briggs

Question: What is the best way to prune *Sciadopidy verticillata* to keep a nice tight shape?

Bruce Briggs: There are selected forms that are tall and narrow and you should get those. Also, we have sheared them hard and have had no problem.

Question: Why does it take so long to get herbaceous perennials from Europe into the U.S.A.?

Bruce Briggs: Up until the last few years, herbaceous perennials have not been as popular as they are today.

Steve Still: Bruce, you are correct. The Perennial Plant Association was started in 1983 when we began to see interest in this group of plants. Interest in herbaceous perennials has also been cyclical. I have a student doing a study on perennials in the U.S.A. and it has shown that grasses, for example, were listed in catalogues in the late 1800s but that interest died down and again increased in the 1980s.

Dave Bakker: Canada as well as the U.S.A. has a quarantine system and the hassle of importing plants has additionally limited their importation.

Question: How does the NACPEC organization benefit China?

Rick Lewandowski: I participated in one of the NACPEC tours this year, although I am not an official member. One of the ways it helps is to provide funding to institutions in China to support research. In addition the last few trips have involved a contractual relationship with China at their request. The National Arboretum is currently looking at a program to bring new plants from China and seeing that royalties for such plants go back to China. I can tell you that the Chinese colleagues feel that they have benefited from this association.

Question: Could Darrel Apps comment on daylilies as a food plant and what parts are eaten?

Darrel Apps: We have not been assembling data on that subject but if you look in the book by Cathy Lilkinson Barash (1993, *Edible flowers: From garden to palate*, Fulcrum Publishers, Golden, Colorado) it has some information.

Ralph Shugert: In the culinary section of a bookstore might be a good place to start. I know in California there is interest in using them as food.

Bill Barnes: I have been know to taste them and red flowers are terrible; 'Happy Returns' is sweet and one of the best.

Question: For Don Knezick. Are there any compact or dwarf forms of *Cephalanthus*? It is nice for wet sites but as it gets older it become ungainly.

Don Knezick: We grow lots of that plant but I do not look for dwarf forms because we are interested in genetic diversity. I will look for it now. I have not seen any.

Question: For Shelley Dillard, Morris Arboretum. Why do you say to use ziplock bags, and not freezer bags? What difference does it make?

Shelley Dillard: We use ziplock bags because they are easier than the twist type.

Bill Barnes: Don't buy cheap bags, the ziplock will not hold. I just wanted to add to what Shelly said yesterday. Put the perlite in a container that has holes in the bottom. This will allow water to percolate out the bottom and prevent one batch of perlite being wetter than another batch. If you are concerned about mold forming on the seeds, put manzate in the water used to wet the perlite. This will stop mold from forming in the bag.

Robert Herman: I tried vegetable ziplock bags but the seeds dried out and I switched back to the normal type.

Mark Widrlechner: I have noticed that our milled sphagnum can have spirea seedlings germinate in some batches as weeds. If you are doing any spirea seed germination it is a good idea to get away from sphagnum and use perlite.

Question: Should you fertilize dwarf conifers like normal conifers? I have heard that you should not?

Jim Smith: We are in the business of selling plants, and we fertilize them like crazy.

Dave Thompson: For our dwarf conifers in the field, we fertilize in March, July, and November. We take the total nitrogen needed and divide it into thirds.

Question: How should *Cercis canadensis* be treated before sowing?

Cameron Smith: I asked that question 5 years ago, and Ralph gave the correct answer. Hot water is best and sulfuric acid is not good because seed coats vary and it will kill some embryos before others are properly treated.

Dick Bir: Take the water off the heater and don't use it until it stops bubbling.

Ralph Shugert: Always test a small lot before using any treatment. Seed source may influence the results.

Joerg Leiss: Another treatment I have used is ethylene glycol (antifreeze). Soak the seeds overnight and then wash them free of ethylene glycol.

Bruce Briggs: The use of gasoline has come up in the Western Region. Check the Western Region for details. Be careful not to start fires around it.

Question: Addressed to Rick Lewandowski, Paul Meyer, Dick Bir, and Tim Brotzman. Should we not be spending an equal amount of time, money, and effort to look for and discover new or better forms of North American native plants as we do Asian exotics? What about expeditions to our mountains, deserts, wetlands, and prairies?

Dick Bir: There is a wealth of plants out there and a lot of people searching for better native plants. It is not that one flora is better than another, it is fadism that is the problem. People jump on bandwagons and the eastern Asian plant flora are in now. Our thrust has been to make up for the neglect of the last 70 to 80 years in our eastern flora.

Ralph Shugert: If you have the interest in natives they are there. It is just that matter of looking for them.

Phil Roslyn: At the present time we are evaluating 200 selections of native plants.

Question: How do you address the challenge of using exotic plant species when government agencies are specifying native species? How do you put the two together?

Dick Lightly: You are always going to have a market for the total array of plants. There may be shifts but no one is going to go out of business overnight. There is a trend towards naturalistic gardens and the plants that fit into them. But there are always going to be those people who will like callery pear or dwarf conifers.

Dick Bir: There are lots of different people, styles, and ways to do things in this world and I don't think that there is any right way to do anything when it comes to plants. Even though I have written a book on natives, because a publisher saw a need for such a book, two-thirds of the plants I work with are non-natives and hybrids. We look for good plants in the landscape not just natives. The fads will change.

Dave Thompson: This all started out with the need for drought-tolerant plants. The need was there, to replace native plants with native plants in those areas. The need was generated because of increasing population in the U.S.A. This is a chance to make change.

Dale Deppe: The native plant thing has gotten out of hand. People want a perfect plant not a one-sided plant. I think this is related to the aging population with people wanting to go back to the way things were.

Dale Hendricks: I do not think that the native plant interest has hurt the existing plant business. A lot of this demand is a new market not the same market sliced thinner for the existing plant producers. We also do not have the luxury of dictating to our customers what they want. I don't think the tail wags the dog.

Don Shadow: I don't want anyone telling me what I can grow or what plant material can be utilized.

Bruce Briggs: Just one closing comment. I have a problem with what is native. We have road projects that utilize a lot of kinnikinick. Our native plants have a lot of blight, and die out in a few years. We have a native in Massachusetts that is just beautiful. How do we get them to choose the one from Massachusetts? They are both native.

Question: What is the hardiness (specifically to Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois) of *Cephalotaxus koreana* and other species in this genus?

Chris Backtell: In the case of *C. harringtonia* we have had them since the mid fifties. We had 24 below and did not suffer any problems. Protecting them from the winter sun is important. When you consider the deer resistance, it is a great area for testing.

Rick Lewandowski: We have had plants of *Cephalotaxus* since the early 1900s on the Philadelphia area. We have had temperatures of close to 20 below for short periods of time. We grow in both sun and shade. They take our warmer conditions well also.

Kim Trip: I am from Arnold Arboretum and have done considerable looking around on the East Coast and I think that there is a greater degree of variation in hardiness than we have recognized. We are most often dealing with *C. harringtonia*. Some clones are reliably hardy towards the borders of Zones 6 and 5. If you do not have the right clone you will get a false reading on how hardy the plant is. We don't know how hardy the other asian species are. We need to increase our collecting in native populations so we get a better breadth of the diversity that exists. So, don't take a pat answer to that question. You need to know the origin of the clone you have. In a cold region avoid *C. fortunei* and *C. sinensis*.

Mark Widrlechner: About 10 years ago in the NC-7 ornamental trials we distribute a seedling population of *C. harringtonia* from Hakito to 20 sites in the upper Midwest. Within 2 to 3 years all the sites had lost their plants except Manhine Botanical Garden in Michigan and they had it in a protected site against a building. Therefore citing in the Midwest is important.

Question: Will we be losing Simazine and can Basamid serve as a substitute for methyl bromide, which will be banned in 2001 as a seed-bed fumigate.

Ralph Shugert: I removed methyl bromide about 5 years ago and substituted Basamid. I have been very satisfied with it. The nice thing about it is that it does not need a cover. It will inhibit or kill 60-65% of the nuttlets of yellow nutsedge. Soil temperature should be 60F and up.

Bruce Briggs: On the Simazine, use the lowest level you can. I would recommend that you stay under 1 lb. Our state is considering banning it. At the low level it will almost be broken down by bacteria.

The Thursday afternoon session was moderated by Jim Johnson.