

## Virtual Hortlandia 2020

### Arbutus Garden Arts

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This week Joanne Fuller interviewed Norm Jacobs from Arbutus Garden Arts and edited the interview for this article.

#### *Norm, what is happening at the nursery right now?*

We are overflowing with all the plants that are the result of last summer and fall's grafting and propagation. So, the plant selection is great, and we have a lot of larger plants available for purchase. We love to talk plants with our customers. They bring their own taste, preference and ideas, and we help them find plants that fit their desires.

#### *You propagate new plants every year at the nursery. What is that process like?*

This is the time of year that we evaluate new varieties to decide what to propagate for the future. With Japanese maples, for example, we look at the crop we propagated from last year and see how well they perform in the spring weather, then we continue to grow on the best ones. The whole evaluation process is an assessment. What is special about this plant? What is unique about it? Is it wimpy? What sites does it prefer? What conditions does it need? Once the technical aspects of growing a plant are satisfied, what makes a good plant is really up to each individuals' taste. Each year is a new opportunity to grow something special.

#### *What plants are looking good to you?*

I like Acer palmatum 'Black Lace'. Unlike a lot of Japanese maples, as the temps get warmer the leaves get darker until they are almost black. It's a moderate grower to under ten feet in the long run. Acer palmatum 'LileeAnne's Jewel' has excellent white-pink variegation splashed across finely cut leaves, and you can plant it almost anywhere. Acer palmatum 'Rainbow' has bright pink foliage that turns bright red in fall. The variegation doesn't appear stable, but it appears to be related to fertilization. If you don't fertilize the tree, the variegation will be more stable.

Japanese maple breeders all want to find a tree that will hold the gold color of its leaves through summer. We are getting closer. Acer palmatum 'Anne Irene' has a small leaf that is pink edged in spring and then holds its golden foliage color through the summer when grown in full sun. A. palmatum 'Daidai haru' holds the gold in the foliage very well, will take a bit of shade and has a larger leaf. With its upright habit, it will get to full size at about twelve to fifteen feet.

In epimediums, rebloom is the hybridizer's loadstone. Epimedium 'Spritzer' has a heavy bloom in May with rebloom through August. The arching stems carry the yellow and cherry red flowers above the foliage. This plant has spiny liver-spotted leaves. Spiny leaves are increasingly popular in Epimediums. Epimedium 'Spine Tangler' has narrow spiny leaves with masses of

yellow flowers. Epimedium 'Tarantula' has softer points with very long narrow leaves with lots of yellow and white flowers.

***You are known for conifers as well, what conifers are you growing?***

We grow a lot of dwarfs, semi-dwarfs and miniatures focusing on species that are at risk in the wild. We grow these grafted onto rootstock that is healthy in the Northwest. My first love is firs. The Korean fir (*Abies koreana*) is so versatile-- with growth habits from flat as a pancake to an eighteen-foot tree. Fraser firs (*Abies fraseri*) from Southern Appalachia are in dire straits in the wild. One called 'Reeseville' is so narrow with the typical very blue foliage. It grows slowly to ten feet tall and is shade tolerant, growing in half day sun. One of the smallest with blue foliage is *A. fraseri* 'Rawl's Dwarf', a conical shaped tree growing to a height of about two feet. I also love some of the unusual pine species. This includes smaller selections of *Pinus parviflora* with dense, glaucous foliage and *Pinus pumila*. There are so many great conifers out there.

***It seems like some conifers have trouble growing well here. Any advice for gardeners?***

Conifers need the fungus in the soil in order to grow well, so the first thing the gardener needs to do is get the fungus going. The best way to do that is to spread mushroom compost, and let the worms work it into the soil. If you can get it straight from the mushroom growers that's the best but if not, bagged from a nursery will do.

***How do people shop from Arbutus Garden Arts right now?***

If customers know what they want they can email or call and arrange curbside pick-up. Or, they can visit the nursery with an appointment. The best way to make an appointment is to call, our numbers are Norm 503-206-2584 or Deb at 503-662-3704. People can also find information on the website [www.arbutusgarden.com](http://www.arbutusgarden.com). Because we only take so many appointments every day, it is never too crowded. Visitors can walk around the garden when they come. We can provide disposable gloves if shoppers are going to touch the containers in the nursery.