

# 2015 Collectors' Conifer of the Year

By Dennis Lee • Photos by Randy Smith, Iseli Nursery

Well conifer enthusiasts, it's our 10th year of the CCOY program. Since its inception, it has provided members with opportunities to acquire unique conifers with outstanding attributes as well as providing the Society with incidental monetary support to promote the education and use of conifers.

**W**e are fortunate to celebrate our 10-year milestone with three selections. The first one is a very hardy, upright pine which can provide a bold accent with its rigid and sky-reaching structure. The second selection is also a pine, but one more squat, flexible, and with much shorter stature which will brighten a landscape with its variegated needles. The third gem is a diminutive, deciduous redwood with feathery foliage, colored with

varied shades of creamy green suffused with hues of yellow. It too will add glow to an area and will also invite a garden visitor to caress the layers of succulent looking foliage. Not surprising, they all can easily cause "Conifer Addiction" to flare up quite suddenly.

***Pinus cembra* 'Herman'**: This selection of Swiss stone pine was introduced by North Dakota State University and was named for Dr. Dale Herman, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Plant Sciences. It is often promoted under the trademark name of Prairie Statesman, and that attests to its origin and to its prominent, refined appearance. It is an extremely hardy, drought-resistant specimen, suitable for harsh, natural



or urban settings, and yet has an elegant, stately manner. Its narrow form has a strong central leader and lateral branches which markedly curve upward and slightly inward, allowing it to resist snow loads well. The branches are graced with soft, 2”–3” emerald green needles with silvery blue overtones which tend to concentrate toward the tips. The needles are held in bundles of five, retained for four or five years, and they maintain their color through the winter. Cones start out as violet-brown and mature to brown.

It performs well in USDA Zones 3 through 7 and should be planted in sunny to mostly sunny sites with well drained soils which are moderately acidic to neutral. Well sited plants will easily grow 6”–12” a year with an expected height of 6’–12’ feet in 10 years. The width can easily be approximately a third of the height at this time. ‘Herman’ is considered a low maintenance plant with a striking silhouette.

***Pinus parviflora* ‘Tanima-no-yuki’:** The origin of this Japanese white pine is unknown. According to ACS past President, Dennis Groh, who took an interest in researching an appropriate translation for the Japanese name of this cultivar, the English version would be snow-of-the-valley Japanese white pine. Slow growing, young plants generally start out as small, irregular mounds. At this stage, 2”–3” of annual growth is typical. Consequently, they can almost become 2’–2 ½’ high



and a little wider in 10 years. As pines go, it is one of the last to complete its new growth, but what a spectacle it is, because as the new growth elongates, it wows the observer with colors of pink, cream and green. The pink fades in a few weeks as the curved needles unfurl, and varying degrees of whiteness develop at the end of the branches. The underlying foliage is a bluish green so that the plant appears to have been flocked or dusted with snow, so-to-say.

‘Tanima-no-yuki’ performs well in USDA Zones 5 through 7, although siting of this plant is important because intense summer sun can burn out the variegated needles. Although losing the variegation doesn’t seem to affect the health of the plant much, it does make for one which is significantly less interesting and appealing in hotter and sunnier climates. Afternoon or general, high overhead shade is of great value for preserving the beauty of the plant. In a good site as the plant becomes well established, growth can pick up to 3”–4” a year, and the plant will gradually take on a more upright and sizable form. If a lower growing or more subdued plant is preferred, it can easily be obtained with some judicious pruning. Another siting consideration is a well-drained soil which is somewhat acidic to neutral. It is best that it does not dry out too readily. This variegated pine can be a rewarding addition not only for illuminating a garden spot, but also for often amusing the owner with its evolving beauty and form.

*Metasequoia glyptostroboides* ‘**Schirrmanns Nordlicht**’: This selection of dawn redwood was found by Winfried Schirrmann in Germany as a witch’s broom on another selection of *Metasequoia* known as ‘White Spot’. On this side of the Atlantic, it is often promoted under the English translation of ‘North Light’, but of course this is not proper botanical nomenclature. Besides its bright, cheerful, colorful foliage, it is a very much smaller and globular garden ornamental compared to the species. Although ‘Schirrmanns Nordlicht’ has lush growth, it may only be 5’–6’ high and 3’–5’ wide in 10 years. On ideal sites, it may grow larger during this time, but it down-sizes exceptionally well with careful pruning or shearing if a smaller specimen is wanted. Since it is relatively new, an ultimate size and form are not known. Over time, it seems to take on a more conical shape if left on its own.

Dawn redwood is considered suitable for USDA Zones 5 through 8. Ideal sites are sunny areas with moisture retentive acidic to neutral soils.

When plants become well established, they tolerate drier conditions much better, but generally produce less vigorous growth. Frost pockets should be avoided as tender new growth is easily damaged by spring frosts. 'Schirrmanns Nordlicht' does well in full sun to half sun. If it is in full sun, the yellow hues will become more pronounced while increasing amounts of shade will allow for the creamier tones to dominate. Afternoon shade would be preferred for hotter, drier sites. In either case, the somewhat waxed appearing, fine, ferny textured foliage makes for a great show. The foliage finale occurs in late autumn as it turns pleasing shades of russet before dropping. This colorful redwood can surely liven up a spot and provide for a feel of soothing comfort without the concern of dealing with a future dominating giant.

**Ordering:**

The Collectors' Conifer of the Year program is restricted to active members of the American Conifer Society. Purchases are limited to one of each selection per member. The cost for any of the three offerings is



*Metasequoia glytostroboides* 'Schirrmanns Nordlicht'

\$75.00 each. Each offering comes with a conditional one year/one time replacement guarantee. Accompanying each plant will be an anodized aluminum tag with its holder, which identifies the plant as a winner of the American Conifer Society's annual award of "Collectors' Conifer of the Year". Shipping is included in the above costs. For ordering, please complete the form in this publication. Orders will be filled by date of receipt until inventory sells out. All orders must be received by February 2, 2015. We cannot ship outside the United States. Happy coniferring to all of you!