

March Nursery Notes

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Read about these important topics:

- Prunus mume—Great tree for early bloom.
- Late spring Frosts and what you can do.
- Plant of the month

Open for the Season!

After much preparation, the nursery opened March 6th for our seventh season. Our sales volume was the highest ever which was encouraging as Saturday was rainy for part of the day. No advertising other than the flyer to those on the mailing list allowed our current and loyal customers first crack at the most spectacular and rare cultivars. Though some found new homes the first weekend, there are still plenty of treasures remaining. We have never had so many trees and shrubs available. Spring flowering trees are repre-

sented by many types of Redbuds, crabapples, and Flowering Cherries. We have a great selection of Japa-

level. When you visit, remember to bring old sheets if you intend to travel in an open air pickup



nese Maples in a variety of sizes. Our conifer selections are second to none in the region. The new renovated 'tractor barn' was well received as the smaller plants now can be inspected at eye

truck or trailer. We will provide the twine and help you wrap your tree so they travel safely. Delivery and installation service will be available as it has been in the past.

For Early spring bloom Japanese mumes fill important niche.

Most people are not in the nursery when the Prunus mumes are blooming. In fact these delightful trees are just finishing their peak bloom as you read this. The Japanese flowering apricots were a favorite of the late JC Raulston. He used to say that he hoped they would catch on as a popular tree for this area as they were ideally suited. This small tree

grows to about 15 ft by 15 ft. It is fairly non-descript during most of the year but come late winter or early spring, and this tree becomes a show stopper. Most of the cultivars are extremely fragrant with a pleasant spicy and fruity fragrance. At our nursery we have grown Rosemary Clarke (white), Peggy Clarke (double pink), Matsubara (Red) and

W.B. Clarke (double pink and a weeping form). They have been an easy tree to grow requiring mostly sun and adequate water to do quite well. The only pest problem we have noticed is a potential for a borer in late summer. A paperclip straightened out is a great tool for destroying the pest if one should settle on the base of your tree.

Our new Japanese Maple Trail.

We hope you will enjoy the beauty and convenience of our new 'Japanese Maple Trail'. We have developed an unused section of the property and have created a well-shaded area for the display of Japanese maples that are

available for sale. In the past, our maples have been spread out all across the nursery making it difficult sometimes in finding them. Now almost all the Japanese maples will be located in one area with the exception of several specimen

Lace leaf varieties that will continue to be displayed in the shaded hoop house. We will have reference books nearby so that you can read up on any maple that captures your interest.

Grafting Class—No accidents to report!

Despite using very sharp Tina grafting knives, none of our students had even one injury! Actually, the class of 04 did quite well, and learned the technique of side veneer grafting on both deciduous and evergreen material. Each was able to take home

three completed grafts of some of the more unusual trees that we have at the nursery. Grafting takes place in January and February. It is a skill that develops with practice. For some plants, it is the only way to propagate. The aftercare of the graft is also impor-

tant. High humidity is required for a period of time while the graft is taking. Consider signing up for next years Winter Grafting Class—space is limited.

"We hope you will enjoy the beauty and convenience of our new Japanese Maple Trail"

Arboretum Progress.

We have completed the initial plantings of the new arboretum, which is located adjacent to the parking lot. The soils were improved by adding 20 yds of aged Pinebark, (Sands and Soils—919-596-0801), and having Mark Carpenter of Carpenter Landscapes (919-479-0297) use his tractor to till it in. What was created was a berm

with much improved drainage. The plantings include some trees that are not typically planted in this zone. We consider this a trial garden, to determine if any of these plants could be grown here with some accommodation. Some of the 'experimental' trees include:

Picea engelmannii
'Snake', *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*

'Imbricata pendula', *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Silver Queen' and 'Oregon Blue', *Picea polita*, and *Abies koreana* 'aurea'. We will keep you informed of our results in future newsletters. Later in the spring, the arboretum will be 'open'. We need to establish turf and prepare more planting areas first.

Late spring Frosts—and What you can do.

In Bahama, April 15th is our last 'freeze date'. Some years, we do not have any problem, but we have learned that a 'late' freeze can happen every few years. This date (which will vary depending on where you live), helps provide a general guideline so that you can be prepared to protect some of your plants that may have emerged from winter dormancy. At the nursery we have the most concern over the Japanese Maples which often will break dormancy early and have long tender shoot ex-

tensions well before the April 15th date. If the temperatures dips to the upper 20's (28 degrees F or lower), the air is still and the temperature hits that low spot for several hours, then damage will occur.

What can you do? In most cases, placing old sheets over the plants will keep the frost from settling on the shoots and this seems to help quite a bit. We have tried spraying water in an effort to encase the shoots with the insulation of ice (temp 32). The heat of fusion (ice

forming) provides some heat if the water is constantly sprayed on throughout the night. We have become less convinced that this works very well. It is especially important to NOT get water on evergreen needles (spruces especially) as they will discolor. Most trees have secondary buds that will emerge later. The growth from these buds are never as vigorous as the original set of buds. If there is much damage, sometimes it helps to remember that Mother Nature gives as well as takes away!

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Acer palmatum 'Murasaki kiyohime'-Plant of the month.

Most people think of a red Laceleaf maple when they think of getting a Japanese Maple. Its been said that almost everyone in American wants one in their front yard near the entrance. Well, there is a much larger world of maples than this category. One recent customer has over 180 different varieties in his garden! They are a fun group to collect as each variety, called 'cultivar' is

distinct in some more or less significant way justifying a new cultivar name.

One cultivar that we have enjoyed is 'Murasaki kiyohime'. This tree is a dwarf that has tiny green leaves, margined in purple (especially noticeable in the spring and when grown in full sun). Fall leaf color is yellow. Probably the most interesting characteristic of this small tree is the habit of growing in a

dense fashion, wider than tall. We call it a 'table top' maple. Seldom growing over 3 ft, it can spread much more than that. Simple pruning can easily keep this tree in smaller bounds. We have an example (seen above) in our display garden. It has been planted for five years and is still only three feet across. Consider adding 'Murasaki kiyohime' to your landscape.