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Bob's News & Musings

Firs for the Rock Garden

Firs are found in alpine areas around the world and would be a natural addition to almost any rock garden. There are many dwarf and miniature cultivars that would fit into a wide range of rock garden designs.

Firs must have well-drained soils, a basic rock garden requirement. Good air movement is very beneficial and excessive watering is not. The hot, summer sun can do considerable damage during the middle of the day, especially if the fir is planted on the south side of a large rock. Think of an alpine environment where soils are not mature. They are fast-draining and organics poor. There is a lot of air movement at higher elevations and the temperatures tend to be cool.

The conditions that favor alpine perennials also favor the firs.

Special points of interest:

- **A band of squirrels causes havoc in a small town.**
- **What is The Belt in South Kilworth, Near Lutterworth?**
- **Getting your conifer discovery registered is important.**
- **A bright yellow conifer that does not burn.**

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Abies alba 'Hedge'

An European species, *Abies alba* typically has dark, glossy-green foliage and is found in areas where the climate is cool and damp with deep, rich soil. There are several cultivars of *Abies alba* suitable for a rock garden. *Abies alba* 'Hedge' is a flat-topped, spreading selection with a depressed center and short, stubby needles. It will grow 1"-2" in the Northwest.

Abies alba 'Mlada Boleslaw'

Found in the Jeseniky Mountains of the Czech Republic by Vesely, *Abies alba* 'Mlada Boleslaw' was one of Gunter Horstmann's introductions. It is a slow-growing bush which grows wider than high. It will grow 1"-2" in the Northwest.

Neither of these two *Abies alba* selections would be suitable for a small rock garden unless regularly pruned into alpine forms.

Abies balsamea 'Jamy'

Originating as a witches' broom on *Abies balsamea* 'Nana' at Iseli Nursery in Boring, Oregon in 1989, *Abies balsamea* 'Jamy' is a dense, miniature plant that is ideal for the rock garden. It is one of the smallest balsam firs and is usually easy to find at garden centers that carry Iseli material.

The foliage is light green during the growing season, gradually becoming dark green with short needles that curve slightly downward. It is a miniature globe suitable for smaller rock gardens.

Abies balsamea 'Nana' types

Abies balsamea 'Nana' is a dwarf, dense, globose shrub that grows about 2 inches (5 cm) per year. Its foliage is dark green with the needles radially arranged around the stems. Found before 1866, it is very popular in the nursery industry since it roots very easily from winter cuttings, rapidly forming a dense little plant.

Areas of coarse growth occurs from time to time. These areas of coarse growth are referred to as reversions since they resemble the growth rate of the original species. Such growth needs to be removed whenever it occurs, since it will eventually dominate the plant.

Produced in large quantities from rooted cuttings by nurseries, the heavy application of fertilizer to accelerate the growth for quick sales, will encourage these reversions. Once placed in a rock garden setting with a lack of fertilizer and rich soil, a plant should behave itself.

Forma hudsonia grows in the White Mountains, New Hampshire, on very exposed places. A selection was made from this forma that grows low and rather broad with short, wide leaves that are arranged pectinately (comb-like). It is marketed as *Abies balsamea* 'Hudsonii' and the leaf arrangement distinguishes this cultivar from 'Nana'. They both have the same growth rate and color.

A third selection, *Abies balsamea* 'Piccolo' is a dwarf, globose selection that grows about 1 inch (2 cm) per year. It is miniature in all respects and quite dense, making it easy to distinguish from 'Nana'. It was discovered and introduced by Erwin Carstens Nursery, Varel, Germany about 1983.

It is important to keep in mind that the balsam fir cannot tolerate warm soil and mild winters. It is best used in more northern climates.

Abies balsamea 'Picola' is the front, left plant in the picture. 'Hudsonii' is behind it and 'Nana' is to the right.

Abies balsamea 'Nana' types

Abies balsamea 'Picola'

Abies balsamea 'Nana'

Abies balsamea 'Hudsonii'

Abies balsamea 'Eugene Gold'

I first saw *Abies balsamea* 'Eugene Gold' at the former Porterhowse Farms in Sandy, Oregon. It was a spreading, golden balsam fir that Don had planted in a partially shaded area of his garden. At the time I thought it had come from Eugene, Oregon. When I found out that he had gotten it from Greg Williams in Vermont, I wondered how Greg had found a plant out here in Oregon. When I contacted Greg about it, he told me that he had found it growing in a Christmas tree plantation belonging to a man named Eugene.

When it is propagated, it tends to grow as a dwarf, spreading shrub. If it is planted in too much shade, it suffers and has problems with survival. It needs some sun during the day. Eventually a leader will develop, and it can grow 6 inches (15 cm) or more per year, eventually developing into a small, conical tree. The foliage is bright yellow and adds a nice bright splash of color to a garden.

When used in a rock garden, it will add to the vertical aspect of the garden and can be carefully pruned into a open-growing, alpine type of conifer.

Abies concolor 'Archer's Dwarf'

On various trips through Europe I would occasionally come across an attractive blue fir with an almost perfect Christmas tree shape. It always made a statement whenever it was a part of the landscape. I learned its name the first time I saw it and knew it immediately every time I came across it again. It is very distinctive in a number of ways.

Abies concolor 'Archer's Dwarf' is a small tree with a narrowly conical growth habit. It has a growth rate of up to 4" (10 cm) per year. The branch structure is very dense with many smaller branchlets. The bright blue needles are long, thin, and sickle-shaped, almost touching across the tops of the branches.

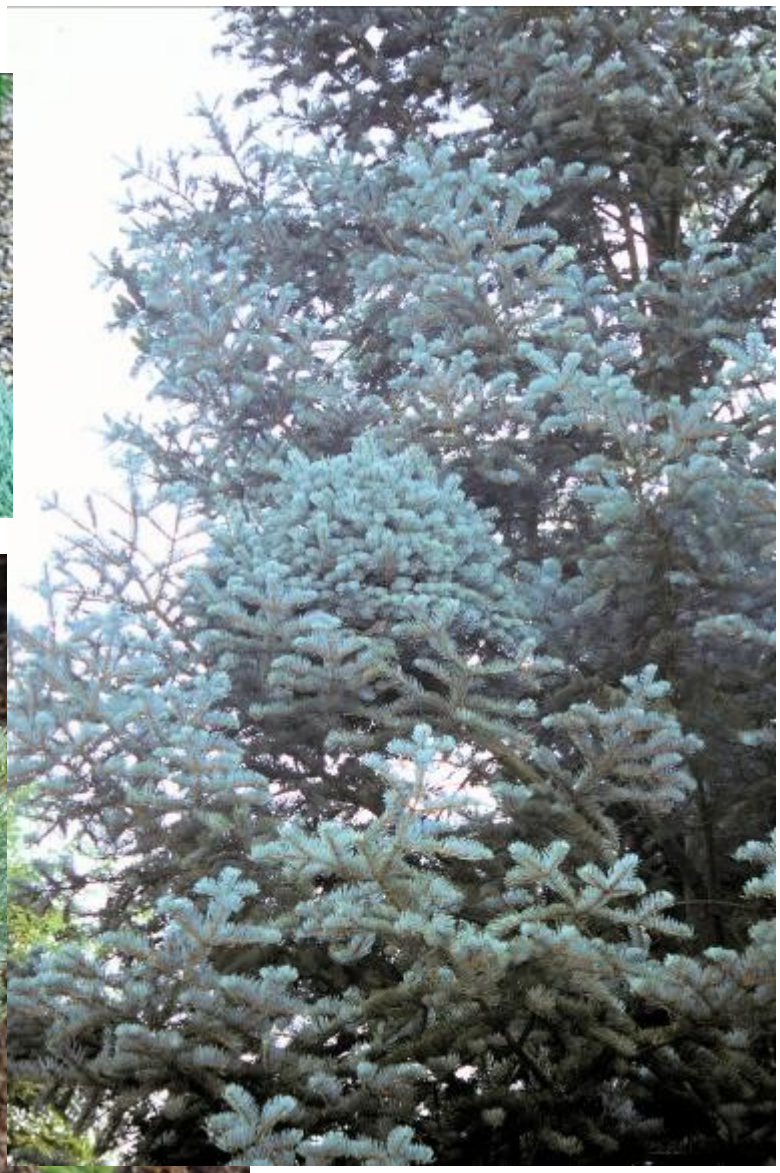
A typical specimen of *Abies concolor* 'Archer's Dwarf' will have a large number of terminal shoots on the branch ends. When these shoots are grafted onto seedlings, they need minimal training to develop into upright little shrubs. 'Archer's Dwarf' grows best in the full sun with well-drained soil. In its native habitat it has adapted to dry soil and cold temperatures, but garden conditions do not always mimic nature.

It is interesting how many selections of the native North American conifer species have been found and named by Europeans. This one was discovered by J. W. Archer, Farnham, Surrey, England about 1982. *Abies concolor* is native to the mountains of western North America, but several excellent selections have been made in European gardens. *Abies concolor* 'Archer's Dwarf' is but one of these.

Abies concolor 'Blue Saphire'

The larger picture below shows the original witches' broom on *Abies concolor* 'Violacea' that was given the name 'Blue Saphire'. I was visiting Miroslav Malik in the Czech Republic when he showed me the broom and a block of young plants he had produced from it. He asked me if I had any ideas about a name for the plant. When I suggested 'Blue Sahire', he loved it.

Growing about 1" (3 cm) per year, with bright blue, almost silvery foliage, *Abies concolor* 'Blue Saphire' is a nice miniature selection for any rock garden. It is prone to needle blight during wet, cool springs and needs good air circulation to thrive. It will always be in short supply since nurseries have difficulty growing it in containers under overhead irrigation.



Abies concolor 'Conica WB' ('Morton')

An older cultivar, *Abies concolor* 'Conica', seen below right, is popular throughout the Midwest due to its narrowly conical shape and bluish foliage. A witches' broom was discovered in a specimen at the Morton Arboretum and was shared with propagators as 'Conica WB", probably a provisional name. More recently, it has been offered as *Abies concolor* 'Morton'. Two names but the same plant.

A dense little ball with small leaves, 'Morton' is a nice addition to the smaller rock garden. It is interesting that it has apparently lost the character of its parent plant. Somehow, the genetic change in the broom did not include the mutation that causes 'Conica' to be a narrow column.

Abies concolor 'Gable's Weeping'

I have always favored weeping conifers in my collection. They exhibit a grace not always seen in the species. When I came across *Abies concolor* 'Gable's Weeping' at Watnong Nursery in New Jersey, I just had to have it. Don Smith, who owned Watnong Nursery and was a good friend, explained that it was discovered by Joe Gable, a well-known rhododendron and azalea hybridizer, from Stewartstown, Pennsylvania. Gable had been hybridizing rhododendrons and azaleas for about forty years and had also discovered a few nice conifers in that time. *Abies concolor* 'Gable's Weeping' was his most recent discovery (1970) and it looked very promising. Gable had given it to Don since he knew Don specialized in conifers and he did not. Don had some for sale so I added one to my "pile" during one of my visits to Watnong Nursery.

Abies concolor 'Hosta La Vista'

A dwarf, spreading selection that originated as a witches' broom at Hidden Lake Gardens in Michigan, Abies concolor 'Hosta La Vista' was given this name due to its location. It is growing in an area where the Gardens maintains a large collection of hostas. The original broom is shown in the large picture below.

A nice selection for the smaller rock garden, 'Hosta La Vista' is a slow-growing selection that will develop into a dense, bluish mound.

Abies concolor 'Ostrov Nad Ori'

Possibly the weirdest fir in existence, *Abies concolor* 'Ostrov Nad Ori' screams "Take me!" to conifer collectors around the world. It is a dwarf plant, but definitely not a miniature. With its kinky needles, blue color, and weblike branch growth, it sprawls over the ground. Its unique appearance and growth make it a good choice for a variety of situations in a rock garden.

I used to offer this plant through Coenosium Gardens, but I had to discontinue it due to blight issues. The dwarf forms of *Abies concolor* just do not work well in the Northwest without extra care in planting and maintenance. The American Northwest is a plant paradise for a wide range of plants, however, I discovered it is a plant purgatory for the dwarf forms of *Abies concolor* and *Pinus ponderosa*.

Abies concolor 'Pigglemee'

The name of a conifer is a very important aspect of its popularity with gardeners. Unfortunately, some conifers are given names that condemn the plant to obscurity. 'Piggelmee', on the other hand, is a name that produces a variety of favorable mental images and stimulates a gardener's natural curiosity.

Abies concolor 'Piggelmee' is a miniature concolor fir. Every garden has space for one of these beauties, but not every garden has the proper growing conditions for it. Wet and mild winters followed by cool springs can cause foliage blights while poorly draining soils will cause root rot. I have excellent conifer soil conditions but have problems growing any of the miniature cultivars of *Abies concolor* due our Northwest climatic conditions.

'Piggelmee' was discovered as a witches' broom on *Abies concolor* 'Candicans' by H. J. Draijer, Heemstede, Holland, sometime before 1972. It is a miniature selection that grows about 1" (3 cm) per year and has an exceptionally dense branching habit.

Abies concolor 'Candicans' has exceptionally bright blue foliage and is very popular in its own right. Its color is shared with 'Piggelmee', which has short, thick blue needles that are densely arranged on its short stems. The color and texture of this plant add an attractive aspect to any garden.

'Piggelmee' is often described as a flat, spreading selection of concolor fir. This description is true for a young plant but not necessarily for an older one. I once visited a conifer collector in Holland who had one of the original plants. As we walked around his garden, I noticed his *Abies concolor* 'Piggelmee' was about three feet wide and about the same in height. It stood out because his large garden had only three conifers that were over twenty years old, and this was one of them. Five years previously most of his collection had been destroyed in the spring when he mistakenly sprayed an herbicide onto his plants, thinking it was an insecticide.

Apparently 'Piggelmee' will produce occasional upright shoots that become stunted and heavily branched. This allows the plant to maintain its congested growth habit. That is a good characteristic since it provides contrast in the dwarf conifer garden to the many cushion-shaped dwarf conifers. It also allows 'Piggelmee' to maintain its position in the garden as the garden matures.

Abies concolor Cushion Collection

On this page and page 15 are pictures of a number of *Abies concolor* cultivars that have similar growing habits. They are all suitable for the smaller rock garden and all but one originated from witches' brooms. I suspect that *Abies concolor* 'Igel', which was grown from seed by Gunter Horstmann, is actually an *Abies grandis*. It is the smallest *concolor* (or *grandis*) and very difficult to locate for purchase.

Abies concolor 'Birthday Broom'

Abies concolor 'Bryce Canyon'

Abies concolor 'Cernocice'

Abies concolor Cushion Collection

Abies concolor 'Masonic Broom'

Abies concolor 'Kalous'

Abies concolor 'Mike Stearns'

Abies concolor (*grandis*?) 'Igel'

Abies koreana 'Blauer Eskimo'

Commonly found in gardens throughout Europe, *Abies koreana* 'Blauer Eskimo' is used wherever a pale blue cushion is wanted. Growing at the rate of just over 1" (3 cm) per year, 'Blauer Eskimo' develops into a broad mound less than 12" (30 cm) high when it is 24" (60 cm) wide. The foliage is pale blue with gray buds that are partially coated with white resin. It does best in full to partial sun with well drained, fertile soil.

In the summer of 2001 Ronald Vermeulen, a Dutch friend, and I visited the Wittboldt-Muller Nursery in Germany. A major goal of the Wittboldt-Muller Nursery has always been to produce a fast-growing, well-branched, blue form of Abies koreana for the Christmas tree industry in Germany. Among their introductions are *Abies koreana* 'Blaue Zwo' and *Abies koreana* 'Blauer Pfiff ', two powder blue trees. They are continuously trying to improve these selections by cross pollinating them with blue selections of *Abies lasiocarpa.*

One of the 'Blauer Pfiff ' trees provided a surprise for the nursery. A witches' broom appeared on one of its lower branches and had the same bright blue foliage of the parent tree. The 'Blauer Pfiff ' was in a block of trees being grown for their seeds. We followed a short trail that had been cut into the block of 'Blauer Pfiff ' specimens and found the witches' broom in an area that had been cleared of overhanging limbs. It was not in great shape but was surviving. It is always a treat to see the source of a nice cultivar.

Abies koreana 'Cis'

Discovered as a seedling, *Abies koreana* 'Cis' was introduced in 1989. It is very dense and compact with dark green foliage. It grows about 1" (3 cm) per year into a broadly rounded, conical plant.

Abies koreana 'Gait'

Abies koreana 'Gait' is one member of a select group of dwarf conifers that will dependably produce large numbers of cones on a regular basis. It grows just over 3" (8 cm) per year, is densely branched, and develops into a narrow little pillar. The foliage is dark green and small, blue cones are produced in large numbers.

Cone production in most species takes place as a conifer matures and can require up to twenty or more years to commense, although an individual plant may actually produce cones at a younger age. For example, seedlings of *Picea abies* 'Acrocona' will cone as young as five years. When any conifer becomes mature enough to produce cones, propagations of that conifer will also produce cones because the age of the parent tree is carried forth in each of the propagations. Dwarf conifers that produce cones generally do so because they originated as witches' brooms on older trees that had attained maturity.

Grafted plants of *Abies koreana* 'Gait' are very slow to develop any size. It will never become a common selection in garden centers, but, nonetheless, is a valuable asset to any garden. The slow growth rate coupled with its extensive cone production results in an attractive addition to any landscape.

Abies koreana 'Gait' was introduced in 1975 by Roelvink Nursery, Zuidbroek, Holland, where it originated as a seedling. It is an uncommon plant throughout Europe and may be seen only in conifer collectors' gardens. Locating one for sale does require contacting specialty nurseries.

Abies koreana 'Kohout's Icebreaker'

One of the most exciting plants to make an appearance in gardens during the 1980's was *Abies koreana* 'Horstmann's Silberlocke'. Gunter Horstmann introduced this plant under that name in 1979, and it rapidly became very popular. All the needles curl and expose their silvery undersides producing an effect similar to a flocked Christmas tree.

Jorg Kohout, a German nurseryman/conifer collector, found a witches' broom on a 'Horstmann's Silberlocke' and propagated it. What resulted is one of the most exciting new conifers to appear in a long time. Imagine a ball of silver growing in your garden. *Abies koreana* 'Kohout's Icebreaker' has the same needle curl as the tree of its origin, but the curl is much more pronounced and more dependable. This fact is not too surprising since 'Horstmann's Silberlocke' maintains its curl best when it is kept under some stress, and 'Kohout's Icebreaker' is a mutation that produces extensive branching and slow growth, the equivalent to a 'Horstmann's Silberlocke' under stress.

Abies koreana 'Kohout's Icebreaker' does best in fertile soil with full sun. Poor air circulation and cold, wet weather in the spring can cause some difficulties with foliar diseases.

Young plants are consistently globose and densely branched with curved needles displaying their silvery undersides so extensively that the bark on the young branches is completely hidden. The growth rate is up to 1" (3 cm) per year for its branchlets and just under 2" (5 cm) per year for the branches. As a plant develops, it often produces an upright shoot and develops more of an upright habit, all the while staying very dense, dwarf, and above all, very silver in color. In that way it appears to have a growth habit very similar to that of *Abies koreana* 'Silberperle'.

For the best results it is commonly propagated by grafting. Some specialty nurseries root it from cuttings, producing a plant that grows at a slower rate with a fuller branching structure. The propagation costs is less than grafting, but the slower growth rate adds several years to the time needed to develop a saleable plant.

Abies koreana 'Oberon'

A slow-growing, dense, dwarf selection, *Abies koreana* 'Oberon' will often grow slightly wider than high, although the original plant was actually broadly conical. Growing about 2 inches (5 cm) per year, its foliage is dark green with short needles and large, white winter buds. *Abies koreana* 'Oberon' was found by D. Guldeman, Boskoop, Holland in 1963.

Miniature and dwarf conifers come in an assortment of sizes and shapes. Most commonly the shape is cushion-like to globose. Upright or conical growth habits are fairly rare so when a conical shaped plant is discovered that has garden merit, it quickly develops wide appeal among gardeners.

Abies koreana 'Silberkugel'

Europeans have been proficient at finding witches' brooms and stunted seedlings of *Abies koreana*. Quite a few selections have been found and named that are reliably dwarf or miniature. Some of them are susceptible to fungal problems in a cool, wet spring; others are not. These selections include *Abies koreana* 'Pinocchio' (seedling selection by the Carstens Baumschule, Germany), *Abies koreana* 'Nadelkissen' (seedling selection from the Wittbolt-Müller Nursery, Germany), *Abies koreana* 'Kohout's Hexe'(witches' broom found by Jorge Kohout, Germany), and *Abies koreana* 'Kristallkugel' (witches' broom found at the Wittbolt-Müller Nursery, Germany). Their growth habits are all similar, and young plants can be difficult to distinguish by the average person.

Abies koreana 'Silberkugel' is a miniature plant that is easy to distinguish from the members of this select group. Growing about 1" (3 cm) per year, 'Silberkugel' has a mass of branchlets that appear to spread horizontally over the top of the plant. Each branchlet is slightly curved with the foliage concentrated more toward its tip. The older branchlets are beneath the younger ones as the plant dependably grows into the shape of a broadly spreading cushion. The needles have a slight twist, producing a bicolored effect of silver and green.

When I first added this plant to my collection, it was under the name 'Hexenbesen Wustemeyer No. 1' and consisted of three little pieces of wood in a small plastic bag. Three years later I realized that I had a real winner to add to my conifer collection. It is best grown in bright sunlight with some shade during the heat of the afternoon, otherwise an exceptionally hot summer afternoon could cause foliage burn. Planting *Abies koreana* 'Silberkugel' in well drained, fertile soil will help it thrive.

Abies koreana 'Silberperle'

From the early 1960's through the 1980's the name Gunter Horstmann was synonymous with the term hexenbesen (witches' broom), and both were often used in the same sentence. Horstmann lived in Schneverdingen, Germany, and introduced an extensive number of new conifers to the gardening world. Firs and spruces were his special forte. One of his many choice introductions was a plant with the initial name of *Abies koreana* 'Horstmann Hexebesen', a temporary designation until a better name could be chosen.

Abies koreana 'Silberperle' originated from a hexenbesen that was found and propagated by Horstmann. The broom was a 5" (13 cm) ball in a 5' (2.6 m) tall tree. When grafted, it grew about 2" (5 cm) per year. 'Silberperle' is spherical when young with short, thick branches that produce numerous buds, which, in turn, develop into stubby branchlets. The foliage is green with enough twist to the needles to give the plant an almost silver and green bicolored appearance. As it ages, 'Silberperle' will develop a terminal shoot, becoming more conical while still maintaining its dense branch structure. The terminal shoot can grow up to 3" (8 cm) per year.

As the new growth hardens off through the end of summer, the buds mature into little spheres along the branches and branchlets. They are covered with white resin and take on the appearance of tiny pearls thoughout the plant, thus the name 'Silberperle'.

This selection does well in the full sun but must not be allowed to dry out during a hot summer afternoon. That would cause foliage burn. As it becomes larger, the chance of burning becomes much less. The soil should be fertile and well drained but still able to retain some moisture.

As often happens, other dwarf forms of *Abies koreana* appeared in the years following the introduction of 'Silberperle'. *Abies koreana* 'Silberzwerg' and 'Silber Mavers' are two forms that grow identical to 'Silberperle'. They are either the same plant with other names or originated independently of 'Silberperle' and just happen to be identical to it. Either way, those names should not be used since they merely add to the world of "taxonomic confusion".

Abies koreana Cushions

Abies koreana 'Tundra'

Abies koreana 'Kristalkugel'

Abies koreana Cushions

Abies koreana 'Silberkugel'

Abies koreana 'Nadelkissen'

Abies koreana 'Silberperle'

Abies koreana 'Silberperle' showing eventual upright growth

Abies lasiocarpa 'Alpine Beauty'

Abies lasiocarpa 'Alpine Beauty' is globose as a young plant but soon becomes conical as it ages. The silvery-blue foliage has a soft appearance with a shiny lus- ter. It is densely branched with the needles hiding the branch structure. Growing less than 2" (5 cm) per year, it will be about 12" (30 cm) tall in ten years.

This plant was introduced to the nursery trade by Larry Stanley of Boring, Oregon, through a program he developed with Morris. Another *Abies lasiocarpa* introduced at the same time was 'Prickley Pete'. This cultivar deceptively starts out looking like a young 'Alpine Beauty'. But it originated from a tree that was over 10' (3 m) tall and about 12" (30 cm) across and had short branches covering the trunk, giving the appearance of a cactus.

Grafting is the best method for propagating *Abies lasiocarpa* 'Alpine Beauty'. Its soft foliage will tend to suffer blighted spots in the late spring and early summer if weather conditions are exceptionally wet and cold. During drier weather the spots soon disappear, and the overall plant is little affected.

This plant benefits from good air circulation and full sun exposure. The soil needs the good drainage required for most firs. Using the plant among faster growing perennials is not recommended since it would be too crowded. An open area like a rock garden would be a perfect setting. As the name indicates, it is an 'Alpine Beauty'.

Abies lasiocarpa 'DuFlon'

Abies lasiocarpa 'DuFlon' is a miniature fir with an interesting story. In 1954 Alton and Bita DuFlon were hiking near Lake Cushman on the Olympic Peninsula when they came across a congested, little tree that must have been over 100 years old. They were able to successfully transplant this little treasure to their home in Seattle, Washington. Within a few years, this plant came to the attention of Ed Lohbrunner, the owner of Lakeside Gardens, a nursery specializing in alpine plants in Victoria, British Columbia. Lohbrunner would periodically visit the DuFlons attempting to obtain propagation material from this diminutive fir. Eventually the DuFlons allowed Lohbrunner to take three small pieces from the miniature tree. He was able to root the three pieces and grew them on with the idea of using them as stock plants.

The original tree only lived a few years and died. Lohbrunner was able to produce the plant and eventually offer it for sale. It is now available from specialty nurseries.

Developing into a congested little tree as it ages, *Abies lasiocarpa* 'DuFlon' is a miniature mound that is a bun for many years, until a weak leader establishes itself, then it will gain a little height. Growing about .5" (1 cm) per year it needs many years to even show a sign of a weak leader. Its foliage consists of green needles that are very tiny, staying in scale with the size of the plant.

Abies lasiocarpa 'DuFlon' can be propagated from cuttings or by grafting. The growth rate is slightly faster when grafted, but after a few years it reverts back the same rate as a cutting-grown plant.

The alpine garden is a perfect place for *Abies lasiocarpa* 'DuFlon'. It will be a small, dense cushion for many years and is much too slow to outgrow its space. It is also an excellent choice for a trough or container garden. It does well in full sun and needs well drained soil.

Abies lasiocarpa 'Lopalpun'

Gunter Horstmann used to spend considerable time traveling in western North America searching for witches' brooms. He found several in his travels that have proven to be exceptional. A number of these brooms were on *Abies lasiocarpa*. Two of them are very similar, and both may be found in gardens throughout Europe and North America.

Abies lasiocarpa 'Logan Pass' and *Abies lasiocarpa* 'Lopalpun' are almost identical, but 'Lopalpun' performs better in the garden setting since 'Logan Pass' appears to be more susceptible to fungal attack during prolonged wet spells.

Abies lasiocarpa 'Lopalpun' is a dense, miniature globe with stubby branches, each having several large buds at its terminus and numerous small buds scattered along each branch. It grows less than 1" (3 cm) per year. The foliage is almost a slate gray color with the needles being very small and thinly scattered on each branch and densely clustered around the terminal buds. A plant in the garden will appear to be a solid mass of foliage due to the impenetrable number of branches packed tightly together.

Older plants maintain their globose shapes as they grow, making 'Lopalpun' a dependable member of the landscape. For the best results, 'Lopalpun' should be planted in well-drained soil with lots of sunlight and good air circulation.

Abies lasiocarpa 'Lopalpun' is best propagated by grafting onto *Abies procera* seedlings. I prefer to use *Abies procera* because other species tend to form thick callous tissue at the graft site, creating an unsightly mass just above the soil line.

Abies procera 'Blaue Hexe'

Abies procera 'Blaue Hexe' originated as a congested growth in a tree. This type of congested growth is known as a witches' broom (hexenbesen in German). Discovered by the Boehlje Nursery, Westerstede, Germany, in 1965, 'Blaue Hexe' is a dwarf selection that grows broad and globose with short branches and bright blue, short, wide needles. It will grow up to 2" (5 cm) per year and will often send up faster shoots that grow up to 6" (15 cm).

During the early 1980's while traveling with Dick van Hoey Smith in Holland visiting conifer collectors and their gardens, I first saw 'Blaue Hexe'. Every garden had one or more plants of this cultivar used in a variety of ways. The most memo- rable use was as a specimen on the top of a low stone block wall in the garden of Wiel Linssen. The intensely blue foliage made a dramatic contrast with the dark gray stone of the wall as well as with a number of golden conifers in the immediate area.

In my Eatonville garden, I had ten 'Blaue Hexe' scattered through our three acres of gardens. They required little space in the garden and added much color. As young plants they were low-spreading cushions, developing some upward growth as they aged. As time passes, they will make more of a statement in the garden but will not outgrow their locations.

Abies procera 'Blaue Hexe' is propagated by grafting onto true fir (*Abies*) seedlings. I prefer to use *Abies procera* seedlings since other seedling species often produce callous tissue along the graft union creating an ugly looking graft.

Abies veitchii 'Heddergott', 'Heine' , & 'Rumburk'

Three exceptional cultivars have been selected and named from *Abies veitchii*. The *veitchii* foliage is especially attractive, and each has special attributes that makes it a fine choice for the smaller garden. When planted under the proper conditions, the plant will thrive. I grew several plants of each cultivar in various locations in our Eatonville gardens. I found that under dry conditions veitchii cultivars do not have a very good appearance. They seem to do best in richer soil with some protection from the hot afternoon sun when kept moderately moist. These demands are quite different from the typical fir.

Found as a witches' broom in Hamburg, Germany, before 1985, *Abies veitchii* 'Heddergott' (pictured below) is the largest growing of these three selections. It begins as a low, dense, spreading bush. As it ages, it becomes vase-shaped with a depressed center and ascending branches with short, green needles that are slightly twisted, exposing their silvery undersides. The growth rate also accelerates as it ages to about 3" (8 cm) per year.

Abies veitchii 'Rumburk' is a dense, miniature, nest-forming selection with a slightly irregular outline. According to its discoverer, at twenty-five years it will be about 20" (55cm) wide by 28" (60cm) high. In the Northwest, however, it grows about 3" (8 cm) per year and seems to grow broader than high. Its foliage is silver and blue-gray due to exposure of the undersides of many of the needles which have a blue-gray surface color. 'Rumburk' originated from a witches' broom discovered in 1972 near Rumburk, Czech Republic, by Ladizslav Fritsche.

The third cultivar of this special group, *Abies veitchii* 'Heine', is a dwarf, spread- ing plant. Growing up to 3" (8 cm) per year with occasional end branches of up to 4" (10 cm), it is similar to 'Heddergott' but with longer leaves and a lighter green color. It was found by W. Wustemeyer, Schermbeck, Germany, about 1991.

Abies veitchii 'Heddergott', 'Heine' , & 'Rumburk'

Abies veitchii 'Heine' is pictured above and 'Rumburk' is pictured to the left.

Blast From the Past: Derek Spicer & Piers Trehane

Derek

I first met Derek Spicer in 1985 when Dianne and I were on a four-week trip through England, Scotland, and Wales. I could not find his place on any maps, so we stopped at a store in Leicestershire for directions. When I asked the clerk where to find The Belt in South Kilworth, near Lutterworth, he smiled and said he knew why we were having a problem since no one ever goes there. By the time he finished his directions, ten customers were queued behind us, patiently waiting while the Yank (me) was helped.

We eventually arrived at Derek's place and spent the day touring his nursery, Kilworth Conifers. His specialty appeared to be *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*. Derek was collecting as many cultivars as possible and evaluating them for production by his nursery. He also had extensive plantings of *Chamaecyparis obtusa* and *thyoides*.

During the following years, we traded material. I sent Derek a variety of conifer grafts in exchange for rooted cuttings of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*. In three years I had a collection of about 150 cultivars which I grew in containers in a holding house (an unheated greenhouse). When we purchased Mitsch Nursery in Oregon in 1987, I planned to offer an extensive list of rooted cuttings from this block of plants. I lined one of each cultivar out into a special place on the nursery. Unfortunately, most of the plants I lined out died within a year from root disease.

Larry Stanley was a good friend, and he was working with Lawson cypresses so I offered him the plants that remained in the containerized stock block. That was an unfortunate ending to my trading with Derek.

I sent Derek a few more plants over the years and stayed away from the Lawson cypresses. However, *Taxus baccata* 'Icicle' and 'Ivory Tower' made it into my collection. These were two plants that Derek grew from seed in 1974. He had collected the seed from *Taxus baccata* 'Standishi' at the Rogers Nursery in England. Both of these plants are bright yellow through the growing season and develop white margins on their foliage during the winter. Both grow into narrow columns, with 'Ivory Tower' growing about twice as fast as 'Icicle'.

I next saw Derek at the Fourth International Conifer Conference at Nye College, England in 1999. I was a speaker and Derek was an exhibitor. He displayed 133 cultivars from *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, *nootkatensis* (*Cupressus*), *obtusa*, *pisifera*, and *thyoides*. Derek also showed his conifer knowledge by winning a prize from Keith Rushforth (a book) for identifying the most unlabeled specimens of conifer foliage. There were 47 species on display as part of Rushforth's exhibit and quiz. Derek was the first President and a driving force behind the English Conifer Society and worked with Aris Auders in the production of a momentous book for the Royal Horticultural Society, The Encyclopedia of Conifers. Aris focused upon the photography and data collection while Derek focused on doing the text for the book.

Derek passed away in 2020 at the age of 77 from complications due to an operation for the removal of cancer.

Derek is pictured here (in the hat) at Bedgebury Pinetum in England during a tour by the participants during the 1999 International Conifer Conference.

Blast From the Past: Derek Spicer & Piers Trehane

Piers

Piers Trehane was on the RHS Conifer Registration Advisory Panel from 1995–2003. He was the contact person for conifer registration during those years. He worked very hard at trying to get conifers into the registration system at the Royal Horticultural Society. As Registrar, Piers did much good work to promote conifer registration (especially in liaison with the American Conifer Society), produced a rather radical new application form, and played a key role in the International Conifer Conference held at Wye College in 1999. Tragically, most of the data he gathered during this period, in preparation for further parts of the International Register, was lost in a computer crash, setting back the Conifer Register by many years as a result.

Piers was chief editor of the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (1995), a work which distilled and clarified previous versions of the Code for use by even the average gardener. He was involved with a wide range of plant species and their cultivars and was well known throughout the horticultural world.

Piers spent some time in Oregon and Washington doing work associated with cultivated conifers and met with nurserymen and members of the American Conifer Society. He spent several days with us in Eatonville and did considerable work on the documentation of my conifer collection. I enjoyed the time we spent together looking at conifers and discussing nomenclature.

Piers presented a new registration form for conifers at the 1999 International Conifer Conference. It is a form that collects detailed information on any new cultivars when they are registered with the RHS. There is a lot of value completing a registration for any new cultivar since it details the history behind the new cultivar as well as a description of the plant itself. The registration also protects the name.

Publishing the name of a new cultivar with a brief description of a mature plant also serves as a form of registration if the publication is dated. The problem with this method is that catalogs have short life spans and catalog descriptions seldom have many details about the new cultivar. Then, if the new cultivar finds its way to other nurseries and gets listed on the web, all of a sudden there are several different descriptions, and its origin may be lost to history.

It is also interesting to note that plant names are not permanently assigned until a form of registration occurs. Simply publishing a list of names and offering plants for sale from that list does not register any of those plants. If someone purchases a plant that is not registered and propagates it, listing it in a catalog under another name, that name becomes the first name for that cultivar used in a dated publication with a description. Then that becomes the name for that cultivar.

For example, Greg Williams found a witches' broom on a *Picea glauca* near Philadelphia. It was along the Skippack Highway. Layne Ziegenfuss listed it as *Picea glauca* 'Skippack' but without a description. When Humphrey Welch was working on his book about dwarf conifers, he named the plant *Picea glauca* 'Cecilia', after Joel Spingarn's first wife. Humphrey gave it a description, and that became the accepted name for that plant. That led to several considerably negative consequences during subsequent years.

Piers was a living encyclopedia of plant taxonomy and nomenclature. He passed away in 2011 at 61.

Here is a statement by Piers that I found in an obituary. It makes a nice little "food for thought" item.

"We name plants for the purpose of communication. The discipline of nomenclature has become a pursuit of its own, not a science even though the scientists have to learn and use it."

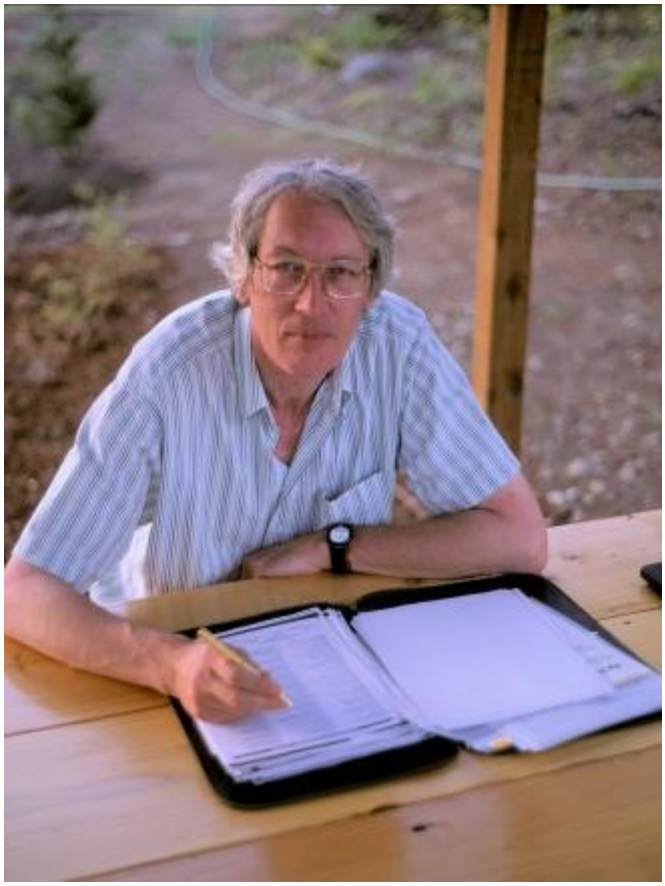
"As human beings, we sort things into groups every day. They are things that are enough alike to have the same name. We sort flatware into knives, forks and spoons. Those are taxonomic groups. Taxonomy sorts into groups and nomenclature gives the groups names."

Blast From the Past: Derek Spicer & Piers Trehane

Piers Trehane and Derek Spicer at the International Conifer Conference in 1999 during the tour of the Bedgebury Pinetum.

Below left picture: I am talking with Leo Koelwyn from Coolwyn Conifers in Australia while Derek is standing behind us.

Picture below shows Piers working on conifer data while visiting us in Eatonville sometime after the Conference Conference in England.



Blast From the Past: Derek Spicer & Piers Trehane

Taxus baccata 'Icicle' with its winter foliage is pictured to the left in two photos. The bottom left photo shows the summer color of *Taxus baccata* 'Ivory Tower'.

The picture below shows a specimen of *Taxus baccata* 'Standishii', the cultivar that was the seed source for these two selections.

Conifer of the Month: Juniperus rigida ssp. *conferta* 'Allgold'

Originating in Australia before 2001, *Juniperus rigida* ssp. *conferta* 'Allgold' was found by Ron Andrews from Andrews Nursery, Picnic Point, New South Wales, Australia.
It was brought into the United States from Ron Radford at Osmaston Conifers, Tasmania by Larry Stanley, Boring, Oregon. Larry sent cuttings to a Dutch Nursery who disseminated it throughout Europe. It is a prostrate selection with bright yellow spring foliage that maintains good color right into the winter. It does not burn in the full sun and is an excellent choice for any setting needing a choice groundcover. It will spread across the ground at a rate of up to 1 foot (30 cm) per year. It is not 100% stable as an occasional green spot will appear and should be removed.

Tree of the Month: *Quercus robur* 'Salfast'

Found in 1974 as a chance seedling by Dick van Hoey Smith, *Quercus robur* 'Salfast' is apparently a "hybrid" between 'Salicifolia' and f. fastigiata. It is narrowly columnar and possesses leaves that show entire margins without lobes. *Quercus robur* 'Salicifolia' (Picture below to the right) has identical leaves but a spreading branch structure more typical of the species.

Aaron Talbot And The Old Apache (March 1867) Part 1

An old Mescalero Apache warrior sat cross-legged on the ground while staring into the darkness. He sang a song of prayer to the Spirits. He had spent the previous three days and nights alone while sitting in a cave. It was his sacred place, discovered during his youth. He had come here many winters past as a boy wanting to become a man among his people.

He had experienced waking dreams that prepared him for the trials of manhood. Now, fifty years later, he had returned. He hoped for new visions to guide him from his present life to the spirit world.

Gone were the muscles and vigor of youth, replaced with a wiry frame held together with gristle and determination. The old man was tired and ready for whatever the Great Spirit shared with him. The hot, New Mexico sun had given him a tough, leathery skin that was drawn tightly over his body. So tight that his bones protruded where once muscles had fleshed everything out.

Three days ago, he had left the company of his family, promising to return after he had his vision. His son had come to the edge of the entrance to this holy cave. His son's wife and three children waited at the camp set up about five miles away. It was a temporary camp and would be home to the family just until the old man returned.

A vision did come as the morning of the fourth day saw the sun appearing above the eastern horizon. It was not a vision of a simple death with a journey into the spirit world. Instead, it was a vision of a battle. He was at the side of a white man, and the two of them were fighting against a Comanche war party.

One warrior was swinging a tomahawk at his head when he suddenly awoke. He was uneasy about the vision and puzzled about what it meant. He started swaying as he continued his song of prayer. He wanted to know if the image showed his death.

As he sang, he became uneasy. He sensed something was wrong with the world outside of the cave. Bodaway (Firemaker) uncrossed his legs and attempted to stand. He groaned a bit as his joints creaked and popped with his movement. When he finally rose, he nearly fell back to the ground from stiffness and weakness.

When the stiffness and short spell of dizziness subsided, he moved toward the opening of the cave. As he emerged from the darkness into the light, he squinted and looked around through his nearly closed eyes. He found some pemmican and a waterskin where he had stashed them three days before. He took a few swallows of the water and chewed on a piece of the pemmican. He felt the goodness flow down into his stomach.

Another swallow of water followed by a piece of the pemmican broke his fasting. Then he staggered away from the mouth of the cave. Within a few minutes, he was walking at a brisk pace toward his family's campsite.

It took him well over an hour to cover the five miles to their temporary home. He was upset with himself that he was moving at such a slow pace. As a young man, he would have taken much less than an hour to cover such a short distance.

He was nearly home when he found the body of his grandson. It was sprawled across a boulder. He had been shot in the back, and his scalp had been taken.

Bodaway stopped beside the remains of the six-year-old boy and stared into the sky as he said a brief prayer to the Great Spirit. Then he lifted him off the rock and cradled him in his arms. Grief and anger coursed through his veins as he steadily walked toward the campsite carrying his grandson.

The camp was destroyed, with everything being smashed or cut into ribbons. His two granddaughters lay on the ground near what had been the center of the site. Their father had been killed while trying to defend them. All three had been shot and scalped. After a brief search, he discovered their mother's body inside the shredded tepee.

As Bodaway gathered their bodies, he studied the signs left behind by their attackers. He steadily worked two days preparing everything so that their souls could enter paradise. After caring for their remains, Bodaway sat at the place where his granddaughters had died. He stared into the distance. He softly sang a death song for his lost family while waiting for his vision to come true.

The sun was moving toward the western horizon when Bodaway came out of his self-induced trance to see a Tonkawa warrior crouching at the edge of the clearing that defined the campsite.

The warrior made no threatening moves. He just crouched there, staring at Bodaway. Before he could speak to the Tonkawa, he heard a loose pebble click against a stone somewhere behind his position.

He pretended not to hear anything as he inched

Aaron Talbot And The Old Apache (March 1867) Part 1 Continued

his hand toward the knife concealed in his breechcloth. He would take the life of the person at his back before the Tonkawa could react and interfere. Then he would deal with him as well.

Aaron Talbot belonged to a company of Texas Rangers that did not officially exist. It was the summer of 1866, and Texas was being run by people known as carpetbaggers. They were profiteers who had set up their own police force while making sure the Texas Rangers no longer existed.

These people were too busy looting the state to bother protecting the citizens. Three companies of Texas Rangers had been authorized after the war but never officially formed since no funds were approved.

A group of ranchers and businessmen in West Texas organized their own company of Rangers. They worked to keep the peace while avoiding the Texas State Police.

Aaron had left Arkansas just a short time after returning home from the war. His family had been killed by Confederate deserters during the confusion that marked the end of the war. He had spoken to one of the murderers before killing him. He had a name and a trail that led into Texas, where reconstruction was underway.

After a few months of hunting buffalo with a group of ex-confederate soldiers, Aaron decided it was not the kind of life he wanted. Besides, he was hunting other prey.

Texas was a big state with many opportunities. He would travel across it and live off the land until he found one of those opportunities or got wind of a particular former Confederate soldier.

Red Hawk was a Tonkawa Indian without a home. A vicious Comanche attack had destroyed his village and killed his family. Red Hawk did most of the scouting for the group of hunters. He always watched for any signs of Comanche war parties while locating scattered buffalo herds. Often he guided the men away from run-ins with the Comanche. Groups of Mexicans often raided with them. In many ways, these Comancheros were worse than the Indians they accompanied.

Red Hawk sensed in Aaron, another man with a deep sadness in his heart. In a brief time, they became friends.

Aaron and Red Hawk spent considerable time together. They presented quite a contrast. Aaron was six feet tall with a framework that stretched his buckskin shirt and Confederate army trousers to their extremes. A slouch hat shaded his eyes while a military-style belt held a Bowie knife. A holster with its Colt Army pistol added to his appearance of ruthless efficiency.

Always alert and aware of his surroundings, Aaron rode a dun-colored horse. He sat tall in the saddle. The stock of a Henry repeating rifle jutted out of its scabbard on one side of his saddle while a tomahawk hung on the other side.

Red Hawk was just a bit over five feet tall with baggy leather leggings and jerkin covering his lean, sinewy frame. His hair hung to his shoulders and was held in place with a Yankee forager cap. Around his waist was a military-style belt holding a Colt Navy revolver.

He rode a pinto pony and carried a .50-70 breechloading rifle in a scabbard attached to a light saddle. He tended to slump in his saddle because he was in the habit of closely watching the ground for signs of life when not studying the distant horizon.

Whenever the two men rode out on a scouting trip, they presented an unlikely sight. Their competence was unquestioned. Aaron had been readily accepted into the hunting group when he demonstrated his prowess with a rifle. He put a slug through the center of an ace of spades at a hundred yards with a borrowed Sharps rifle. Besides, his Henry rifle significantly increased their defensive firepower.

Although Aaron appeared to dominate their partnership, the Tonkawa warrior was the actual leader on any scouting expedition. Aaron had learned tracking and scouting techniques during his travels after the war. However, he was still an amateur by American Indian standards.

When Aaron left the group, Red Hawk went along with him. They traveled west, avoiding scattered Comanche parties and occasional United States Army patrols.

From time to time, they came across a destroyed cabin. Once or twice, the destruction was fresh, and the men stopped to bury dead families. The signs of torture and mutilation fostered a deep dislike of Aaron's part toward the Comanche warriors and their behavior.

Stack 'em Deep & Teach 'em Cheap:
Obey School Rules: Not All Rule Breakers Are Malignant Forces

In chapter nine, I talked about Brock and his test-taking fiasco. He was not a significant discipline problem in class, but he did push the envelope with some of his behaviors.

I noticed that Brock was chewing tobacco and spitting the juice into a cup he thought he was keeping well hidden. I made him throw the cup away, told him he could not spit into anything in my room, and I figured that was the end. A few days later, I caught Brock chewing again and started to lay into him when I discovered he was not spitting into anything. I asked him what he was doing with the juice. His response was, "I'm just swallowing it." He gave me a big grin. He grossed me out, as well as many of the other students. There were rules against smoking in those days, but nobody had thought about chewing tobacco. So, I just shook my head and continued with the lesson.

A kid like Brock, who is lazy and content to scrape through with minimal effort but at the same time bears no grudges and takes whatever consequences he earns for his behavior, is just hurting himself. But on the other hand, he is a student who can be amusing in the classroom while challenging the instructor. After all, not everyone will go on to higher education.

I do not know what Brock is up to today, but I hope he enjoys life. After all, only a real man can swallow his chew.

Sandra, a transfer student from Philadelphia, was in one of my other ninth-grade classes. She was quite different from the typical Tamaqua student.

Sandra came to class in some curious outfits. Panty girdles and stockings had disappeared from the scene with the advent of pantyhose and miniskirts. She was into the latest fashions, wearing her skirts as tight and short as possible, with varying hair colors and lots of makeup. She tried to project a very mature persona. One day, I spoke to her after class about her wardrobe, avoiding embarrassment to her or the other students.

I was having an especially rough time with one of the other girls in the class when Sandra told me not to worry, saying the other girl "has the rag on." I suppose she thought that explained the girl's antagonistic behavior. Deciding to pass on that one, I did not comment in front of the class. However, after class ended, I talked to Sandra about what she had said. I could tell she had spoken matter-of-factly and hadn't meant to embarrass anyone.

Students can be highly creative while "pushing the envelope" with their actions. The classrooms on the north side of the school had a good view of the football field. One Monday morning, after a weekend snowfall, someone tramped out an obscene message in the snow for everyone to read. It is amusing how the acronym for 'fornication under the command of the king' has become such an overused word with many meanings for middle and high school students. This person showed genuine initiative. It was a harmless prank. Luckily the stunt was not done to the turf of the football field with an herbicide. Then it would have been a costly thing to fix. Maybe we were just lucky it was winter.

In my first year at Keithley Middle School, I suffered an episode of vandalism by a student. Someone had shattered the rear window on my Ford Econoline. I found the top of a sparkplug lying on the ground nearby. Someone had tossed the ceramic part of a sparkplug against the glass, possibly just to see what would happen.

The following day I announced the school's public address system requesting information about the vandal. Two girls reported a seventh-grade boy. He confessed and said he had wanted to see if the "sparkplug thing" was true. He did not know me and did not have anything against me. I suppose he was performing a science experiment related to vandalism by throwing the ceramic top of a sparkplug against the safety glass of a car.

His parents paid for the damage. A year later, I had him in class. The incident was old news and forgotten. He was not a bad boy. He was simply a boy who did something stupid.

Obey School Rules: Not All Rule Breakers Are Malignant Forces (cont.)

I finished my career with an eleven-year stint at Eatonville High School. There were several incidents where students who appeared to be incorrigible turned things around.

I was teaching my ninth-grade science class when Kim, another ninth-grade science teacher, brought one of her students into my class. The young lady was habitually throwing the word fuck around the room like a sailor onboard a ship. I agreed when Kim explained the problem and asked me to keep her for a while. After Kim left, I said softly to the student, "If you are going to talk like a slut, you will soon find out that your classmates will treat you like a slut.

A week later, Kim asked me what I had done or said to the girl. She no longer used profanity in Kim's class. Over the next few years, I observed the girl in the halls and at lunch. She had done a complete turnaround in her behavior and appeared to have cleaned up her language.

A ninth-grade boy, Carl, acted like a malignant force on campus. His favorite activity appeared to be making Mike, a math teacher, angry. He refused to do any work in Mike's general math class and openly defied him at every opportunity. At least once a week, Mike would kick him out of math or walk him over to Principal Byron's office.

Carl's visits to that office were exercises in futility. He had no fear of Byron. Once, he commented about a family picture on Byron's desk showing the principal with his infant son, also named Byron. Carl said, "Who names his kid Byron?"

During what should have been his sophomore year (he earned zero credits in his freshman year), Carl was in my life science class. One day, he thought he had found a sure way to disrupt a lesson and make me angry. He asked me about the curly hairs sticking out the top of the front of my shirt.

I responded immediately, "When you go through puberty, you'll get some of those too."

After a short pause, Carl replied, "Good one, Mr. Fincham," and displayed a wide grin. But, of course, he failed the class, and after two years of high school, he had zero credits.

Carl disappeared from the campus the following year, and things quieted down a bit. I heard he was attending a local alternative school. Near the end of the year, I ran into him outside the cafeteria on my way to lunch. It would have been his junior year if he had made some effort in school. Not only was he decently dressed, but he was also very polite.

When I kiddingly asked who he was and what he had done with Carl, he told me the old Carl was gone. He had "wised up" and was trying to get enough credits to graduate. He appeared happy and figured he would graduate just one year late. I felt good after speaking with him. He had been a general problem on campus but had never behaved in a dangerous or threatening manner.

Then there was Jake, who single-handedly destroyed much of our "wet portable" during our two years on a temporary campus during the high school reconstruction.

Jake was in the ninth grade and felt like he wanted to smash something. So he went into the portable equipped as a student lavatory (a "wet portable) and destroyed a sink and toilet. He got caught, and the restroom was closed for several months. During that time, we had access to a boys' lavatory inside the nearby middle school.

I got to know Jake well. He even talked me into letting him be my teaching aide for physics. Then he kept telling everyone he was taking physics. I figured I could help him stay out of trouble, and maybe he would learn a little science. He would also benefit from being around students with very defined goals in life.

Jake was my aide in physics for three years, and I found him dependable and trustworthy the whole time. I was proud to attend his graduation party and have seen him become a successful local businessman.

A Little Humor

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In a small American town, a band of squirrels had become quite a problem

The Presbyterian church called a meeting to decide what to do about their squirrel infestation. After much prayer and consideration, they concluded that the squirrels were predestined to be there, and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will.

At the Baptist church the squirrels had taken an interest in the baptistery. The deacons met and decided to put a water-slide on the baptistery and let the squirrels drown themselves. The squirrels liked the slide and unfortunately, knew instinctively how to swim, so twice as many squirrels showed up the following week.

The Lutheran church decided that they were not in a position to harm any of God's creatures. So, they humanely trapped their squirrels and set them free near the Baptist church. Two weeks later the squirrels were back when the Baptists took down the water-slide.

The Methodist church tried a much more unique path by setting out pans of whiskey around their church in an effort to kill the squirrels with alcohol poisoning. They sadly learned how much damage a band of drunk squirrels can do.

But the Catholic church came up with a more very creative strategy! They baptized all the squirrels and made them members of the church. Now they only see them at Christmas and Easter.

And not much was heard from the Jewish synagogue. They took the first squirrel and circumcised him. They haven't seen a squirrel since.

THE MARCH ISSUE OF MY NEWSLETTER WILL EXPLORE THE SPRUCE CULTIVARS THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR USE IN A ROCK GARDEN.