

January 1, 2025

Special points of interest:

- Meet a real Wanker.
- There are no 'Tricolor' beeches for sale anywhere.
- Discover a monster web site focused on Gymnosperms

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Bob's News & Musings

Plans for 2025

It seems as if most of my newsletters are the size of booklets. One reason for that is my prolific sharing of pictures. I know I like a lot of pictures in anything I read about conifers. I believe my readers like the same thing, so I use as many as I can to enhance my articles. That means each newsletter takes up a considerable amount of computer memory and cannot be emailed with hi-res settings for the pictures. So I send them with a suitable sizing for the internet. That way a 30 megabyte publication is reduced to less than 5 megabytes. Then I share the higher quality pictures on my web site at www.robertfincham.com.

Sometimes my software (Microsoft Publisher) is unable to convert the file to a .pdf file due to its size. In that case, the highest quality is at a level for desktop printing, a size between hi-res and web level. That has happened twice.

This coming year, I will often have the same issues, but there will be more of the actual newsletter size publications and the picture quality will be hi-res.

The quality of the pictures only matter if I was outsourcing these newsletters to a printer before publication. For those of you who might be printing these and keeping them as printed publications in binders, there is no noticeable difference with the picture quality on a home printer.

My Actual Plan

I will be doing these newsletters through 2025. Then I will have to decide if my brain has been drained of its knowledge or if I still have enough "fresh stuff" in there to continue.

Some of you might wonder why I do these newsletters and don't charge anything for the effort. I suppose I have two basic reasons. First, as an educator for most of my life, I enjoy the process of education. All but one of my conifer books were written after I retired from teaching. They allowed me to continue being an educator by passing on a wealth of knowledge from myself and the people in my second conifer book, Gone But Not Forgotten. When I look at these books on my shelf, I am amazed that I was able to complete so many books with little repetition.

Plans for 2025 (cont.)

I thought I was done with conifer books after my three volume set. Then I did Artsy Fartsy Conifers, a light-hearted exploration of the part of the conifer world I discovered through my friendship with Eddie Rezek and Jean Iseli. Since I am now focused on writing fictional stories, any future conifer books will have to be written by a different author. This newsletter is a way to continue my role as an educator without writing another conifer book.

Secondly, as an author, I need ways to advertise my books. Since I am focusing on completing two novels about a Civil War battle and the Dakotas in the 1870s, I will be shifting the main focus of these newsletters as I move away from nonfiction into fiction. The characters I develop in my two novels, will be part of my writings about the period after the Civil War. I have completed almost thirty short stories about these characters. I will either self-publish them as collections or build them into a series of novels. Either way, they will become a greater part of my future newsletters.

I have also written a complete novel in a genre that combines mystery and thriller categories. I recently had it professionally edited and will shop it around in a search for an agent. I would like to get it traditionally published. It is the first book of a continuing series that will be set in Seattle and involve a Private Investigator. This book will become a part of my future newsletters as well.

Conifers will always be an important part of future newsletters, but their focus will become a smaller part as 2025 progresses. As long as I get ideas, I will feature them in this way.

I presently have over 350 subscribers to this newsletter and hopefully the list will continue to expand, especially as I get more diversity into this publication. I do not get much feedback, but that is not very surprising, since people are so very busy these days. Sometimes I wonder how many people do more than just look at the pictures. However, I do have a number of people who respond to every issue and that is appreciated. I assume most of my readers are happy with this product and eventually read back issues in more detail. I don't get upset with the limited interaction because I seldom tell editors of other publications how much I enjoy them myself.

I have a website at www.robertfincham.com. It is an author's website and highly recommended to be part of any writer's portfolio. I have done my own websites since about 2005. They have always been hosted by the same provider and I have had at least three different addresses and sites over those twenty years. My present site has a mix of author and conifer information. I will keep this site through 2025, but no guarantees beyond that year. For the past year or so I have done little except post back issues of the newsletter on it. Whenever I close the site, that option will disappear and back issues will no longer be available. It is an expense with little return since all but two of my conifer books have sold out. Its survival depends upon the popularity of my fictional novels.

My conifer books have proven very successful for self-published books. The Small Conifers for Small Gardens book still sells on Amazon through their KDP Publishing service. It is by far my most popular conifer book. KDP is a print-on-demand service. I have to decide whether or not to put any of my other books on the same service. I have had enough sales of my various books to cover the costs related to their publication

Plans for 2025 (cont.)

(printing expenses). My three volume set is almost sold out, I have a few copies I can still sell directly. When they are gone, I will not be getting them reprinted.

I consider my six conifer books to be the best books available for conifer collectors. Anyone who does not have copies, in my opinion, is just a dabbler in conifers and not a real collector. When I wrote these books, I wanted to provide books focused on North American conifer cultivars that were not encyclopedic in approach. Instead of ten plants on a page, I tried to do two pages per plant while focusing on plants available in North America. Based upon my sales, I would estimate that 10 to 15% of the membership of the American Conifer Society owns more than one of the titles. It is unfortunate that it will soon be almost impossible to locate copies for sale, but the real collectors will have copies in their libraries.



Many people who have purchased one or two of these books have returned to buy the ones they did not have. They tell me how much they enjoy reading them. Possibly the person who received the greatest pleasure out of reading my conifer books was a good friend from Lookout Mountain Tennessee. She used to purchase multiple copies of my conifer books and give them to her friends. She would often tell me about the two complete sets of my books that she had for herself. One set was in her downstairs library and the other set she kept in her nightstand. Those books provided her nightly reading material.

Although my conifer collecting has diminished to a small iota of what it used to be, I still enjoy them, especially during the winter. This plant grouping welcomes visitors to our home.

Gymnosperm Database Website

The majority of the people who enjoy conifers focus mainly on conifer cultivars. This happens because they are using the conifers in their landscapes, or they suffer from a collecting addiction. The conifer species are an afterthought and most generally taken into consideration by conifer collectors who want to know factors like hardiness and soil needs for additions to their gardens. The average homeowner, who is not a collector, assumes a conifer will grow well in their climate and soil if it is sold by a local nursery. They have less interest in the species and care mainly if they are buying junipers, spruce, or pines and can't always tell the difference.

Collectors also like to know the basic information related to a cultivar's genus and species for a variety of reasons beyond hardiness and soil needs. They want to know about diseases and pests of a species as well as how the species grows in its native habitat and something about its taxonomic history.

Some conifer collectors focus more on genus and species than cultivars. These are the collectors with a lot of space who love the big conifers. It also includes the professionals who work with tree species in landscape maintenance, forestry, and curators of conifer collections in places like the Arnold Arboretum, the Morton Arboretum, and the Hoyt Arboretum, three of the many North American tree collections.

I have found a website that is my go to website for information on conifer species. It is located at www.conifers.org, and is professionally done by Christopher J. Earl, PhD. He has an extensive resume as a professional forester, scientist, and writer in the world of gymnosperms. Chris keeps the site up to date with the latest taxonomic changes and has exhaustive data on any of the gymnosperm species.

Access to the site is free and his only income from the site is through donations or Amazon purchases made through the site. If you have never visited www.conifers.org, you are missing a wealth of information that is well done by an exceptionally knowledgeable person. It is possibly the best conifer species site on the world wide web.



Screen Shot From www.conifers.org

The Gymnosperm Database

[Species](#) [Topics](#)

Welcome to the Gymnosperm Database, the web's premier source of information on conifers and their allies. Since we went online in 1997, the Database has attracted worldwide attention as a readily accessible, scientifically accurate source of information on the classification, description, ecology and uses of this culturally and ecologically important group of plants. This home page gives some hints about how to navigate the Database, as well as providing background information for the curious.

There are three major sections of the site:

Species Descriptions of all the species and higher-rank taxa of gymnosperms. See *Example Species* for more information on the format of these pages. For each taxon I provide information on classification, description, ecology, ethnobotany, and various other topics of interest.

Topics Things that are not strictly tied to a particular species. For instance, pages on the gymnosperms of Australia (and other regions), the largest and oldest trees in the world, why trees have spiral grain, and conifers in musical instruments.

Bookstore Most of the books sold here are linked through Amazon, and if you buy them through this site, the price is the same to you but some of the proceeds come to me, to help support the Database.



Conifer of the Month: *Cedrus atlantica* 'Fontaine'

I first came across this plant when I was visiting with Wiel Linssen at his home in The Netherlands. It is a very impressive plant with bright blue foliage. If it is not staked, it will grow flat along the ground and has a stiffer branching habit and a much denser canopy of foliage than 'Glauca Pendula'. In America it is most commonly sold under the name of *Cedrus atlantica* 'Blue Cascade' (a more descriptive name). Sometimes it is sold under the name of *Cedrus atlantica* 'Blue Fountain' (a translation from the French). (I have not been able to find the origin of this cultivar other than according to the former Kas Koemans it is of French origin.

Like all the *Cedrus atlantica*, it can suffer some damage to the new growth during a wet, cool spring as seen in one of the pictures.



Conifer of the Month: *Cedrus atlantica* 'Fontaine'



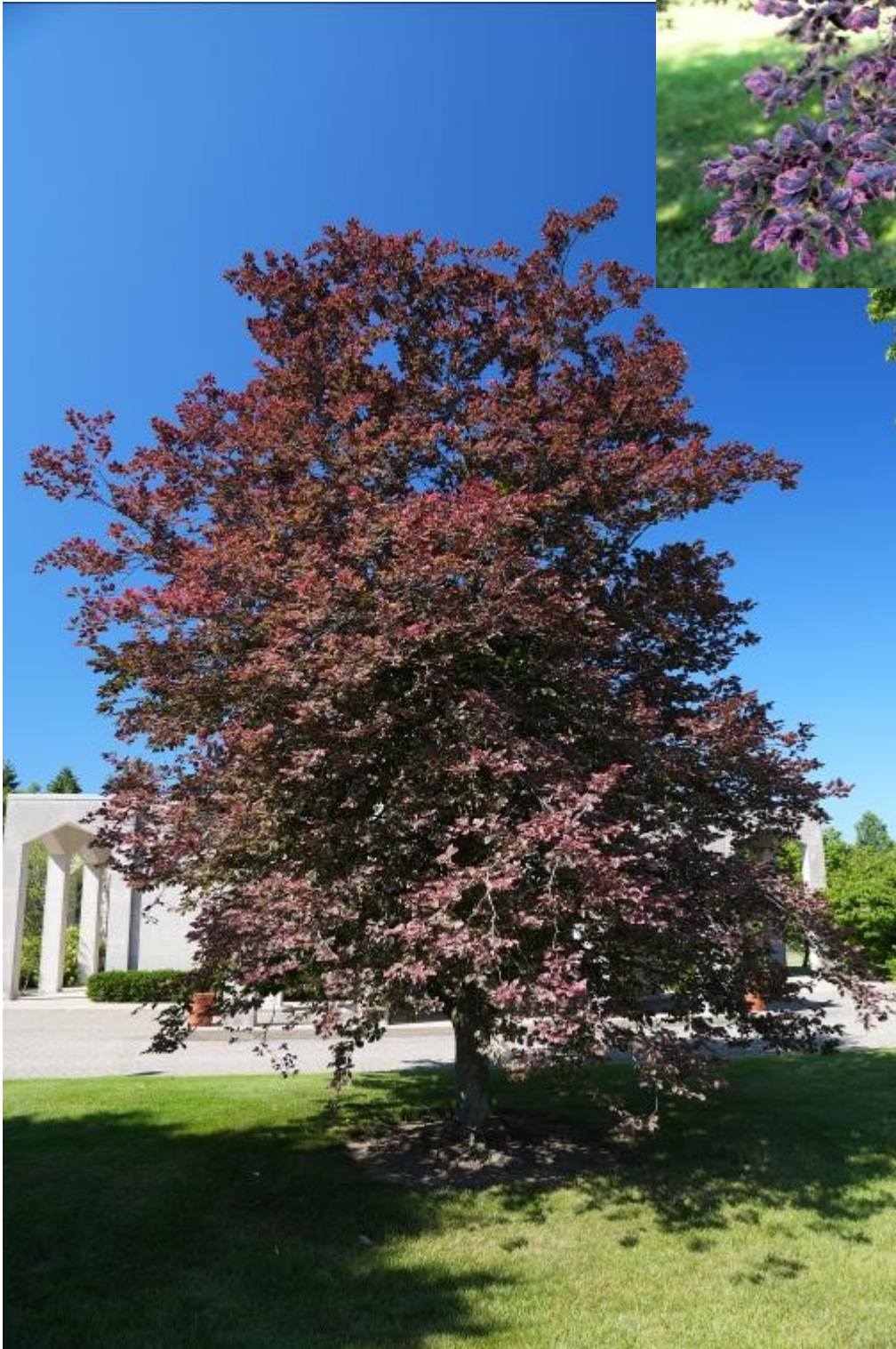
Tree of the Month: *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea Tricolor'

Fagus sylvatica 'Tricolor' is not known to exist in any country. In fact, it is only rumored to still be present in France. 'Tricolor' is a white-leaved tree, with each leaf possessing a few green spots and a pink margin. It is probably lost to cultivation. The tree sold under that name in this country is really 'Purpurea Tricolor', a purple-leaved beech with an irregular pink margin, becoming somewhat bronzed by the end of summer with the pink fading. The tree with the name of 'Purpurea Tricolor' originated in Orleans, France in 1885 while an identical tree, 'Roseomarginata', appeared in 1888 at Cripps Nursery in England.

'Purpurea Tricolor' puts on its best display of color during the spring and tends to bronze out during the summer heat. It is not very difficult to locate and adds a nice color to the spring garden.



Tree of the Month: *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea Tricolor'



Blast From the Past: Dr. Elemer Barabits

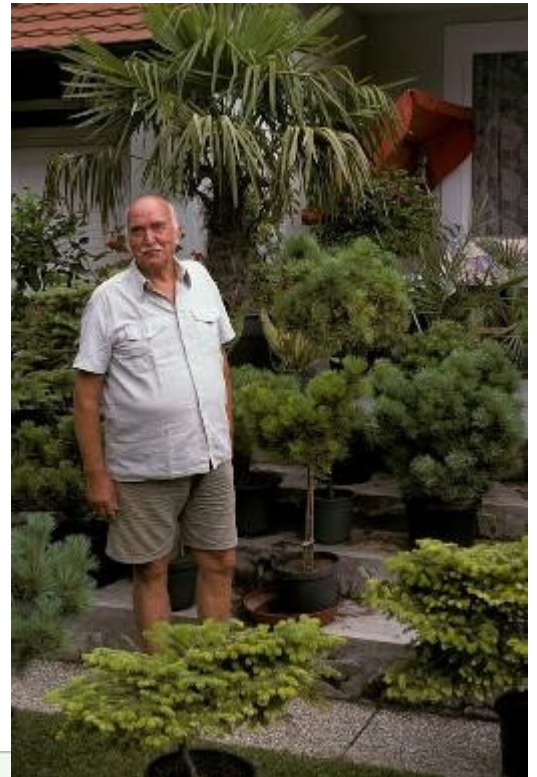
Elemer Barabits was a forester and for years was the supervisor of Hungary's forestry nurseries. During those years he came in contact with millions of seedlings and made a number of selections for his own nursery. Unfortunately, he never became well known outside of Hungary, except to a few of the more avid European conifer collectors. The Hungarian borders were subject to Russian control and nurseries were looked upon as useless since they were not growing food or forestry products. Some of his plants made it into Western Europe and I had first come in contact with some of them when I visited the Boemer Nursery in Holland. The Boemers were regular visitors to Barabits and had obtained a number of his introductions, which they were working to introduce into the Dutch conifer trade.

Barabits had many of his original introductions planted in his home landscape, while others were being grown at his nursery (Egzota Nursery) several miles away from his home. Among the plants at his home was the original *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Triumpf van Barabits', which he had named in a show of his sense of humor. It was a blue seedling grown from 'Triumpf van Boskoop'. He had hundreds of seedlings from that particular cultivar. I did not realize the "looseness" of its genes until I saw seedling flats from 'Triumpf van Boskoop' grown at several nurseries in Hungary and the variety of colors was amazing. There could easily be hundreds of cultivars named from its seedlings.

Later, walking around his nursery, I was amazed at just how prolific Barabits was at finding and growing new conifers. He had one employee at the nursery, who was older than he was, and had been with him a very long time. There were a number of treasures there that may or may not be introduced into the nursery trade, especially since Elemer Barabits died just four years after my visit. I was very lucky to be able to spend some time with him and put a face and memory to the plants in my collection that he had discovered and introduced.



Blast From the Past: Dr. Elemer Barabits



Organization

COENOSIUM PUBLISHING

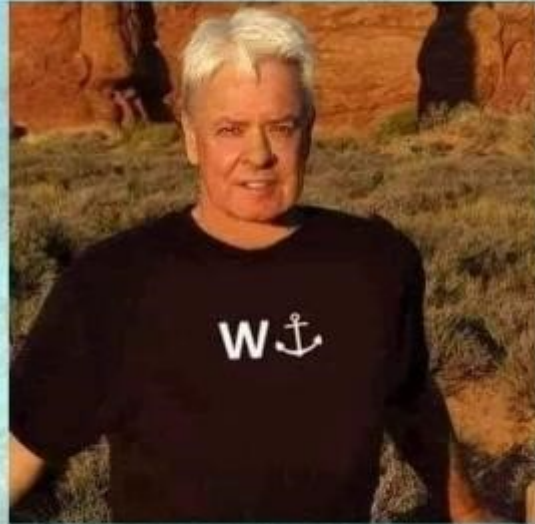
Robert Fincham
12609 118th Street Ct. E.
Puyallup WA 98374

Phone: 253-208-0233
Email: bobfincham@mashell.com

I am on the web.

www.robertfincham.com

My mother-in-law sent me this
shirt all the way from England!



She must really like me. I think
it's from a yacht club.



Here are two unlabeled pictures from the December issue. The original sport that produced *Picea omorika* 'Buttermilk Falls' was on page 1 while the garden pictured below was on page 50. None of my readers responded with the name of the garden. It is a picture of the Heartland Collection just a short time after Chub donated it to the Bicklehaupt Arboretum. There were quite a few *Pinus flexilis* in the collection at the time.

The February Issue

My February issue will continue my series on rock gardening. It will focus up-on the *Abies* that are suitable for use in a rock garden. As always, it will be picture intensive. Many of the plants included are covered in greater detail in my book, [Small Conifers for Small Gardens](#).

