

WVNLA NEWS

West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association, Inc. www.wvnla.org July 2009

Cypress Action

The use and demand of cypress mulch at residential and commercial landscape sites are practices that need to be reevaluated by landscape contractors and private citizens in West Virginia and throughout the United States. The demand for this mulch has created an exploitation of this unsustainable, environmentally damaging product. In the past, cypress mulch was a byproduct of the lumber industry and at that time there was a sufficient supply of cypress. However, due to the need and continual use of the cypress, it has caused cypress harvesters to clear cut whole areas of large and small trees for garden mulch.

Scientists have studied the abuse of cypress harvesting and have concluded:

- Swamps and wetlands have been permanently altered to the extent that even artificial regeneration is not possible.
- Cutting cypress forests for garden mulch destroys vital wetlands that stabilize coastlines

against hurricanes.

- Cypress forests are some of the most biologically productive and diverse wetlands in North America.

- Many of Louisiana's cypress forests that help protect New Orleans will not grow back if they are now cut.

Studies have been completed as to the benefits of using cypress mulch. Cypress mulch is not a superior product. It does not provide as much nutrition as hardwood mulch does for plants. Cypress mulch does not compress as well as hardwood mulch so weeds are more than likely to grow in the cypress mulch.

The University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences recommends not to use cypress mulch in your landscape. Only heartwood from mature cypress trees is rot and termite resistant. The University of Florida suggests using pine straw, pine bark nuggets, pine bark shreds, and shredded hardwoods as mulch.

Recommended Viewing

Check out Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seed Initiative at www.turtletreeseed.org. It is a great supplier of flower, vegetable and herb seeds.

They pledge to offer open-pollinated seed grown on farms and in gardens working with biodynamic practices as outlined by Rudolf Steiner in his Agriculture Course of 1924. Their North American seed growers understand and are committed to this. They work with a network of growers on a basis of mutual trust and understanding, through personal contact and with specific guidelines, which include watching isolation carefully to ensure purity of variety and safety from genetic pollution. They do not carry hybrids or knowingly carry seed that has been genetically engineered or polluted with genetically engineered products. They also do not knowingly carry products from farms where animals are fed genetically engineered feed. They pledge to educate themselves and others as they learn, grow and develop towards attaining the ideal of a biodynamic farm or garden.

Tidbits, Updates, Etc.

- The WVNLA Board of Directors recently passed a directive that involves ordering Plant Catalogs from the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association. Starting in 2010, it will be your company's responsibility to order and pay for plant catalogs from MNLA. The Association will have information available to contact MNLA when the time comes.

- Future MANTS (Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show) dates: January 6-8, 2010; January 5-7, 2011; January 11-13, 2012 and January 9-11, 2013.

- We will begin offering a classified ad section in September of 2009. See the article on page 2 for details. It's your opportunity to share with the membership.



Plants of the Month

or, Green Things the Director Finds Interesting!

Grafted Lantana Plants

Here is a great way to get some height to a summer annual! This Lantana plant can be planted in a large pot or in a planting bed, with full sun or part sun. It does well on a deck or above a wall. *below right*



Dwarf Oriental Spruce

(*Picea orientalis* 'Shadow's Broom')

The great small garden conifer has medium green glossy needles that needs very little attention. It has an upright pyramidal shape and grows to a maximum height 4'-5'. Cold hardiness zone is minus 30. It needs to be in full sun with proper drainage. *above left*

Hens & Chicks (Semprvivum 'Red Heart')

The best place to plant Hens & Chicks is an up-close location. These clumped plant forms look great planted in a detailed small rock garden or in a large oval unique pot with small ornamental grasses and succulent plants.

below left



Variegated Holly Leaf Osmanthus

(*Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki')

This unique evergreen can be used as a focal point or as a hedge. It can be located in sun-part shade. The maximum size is 5-6'. The compact, dense rounded habit makes it perfect near a sunny entrance, deck, or along a path to the back door. *above right*

(continued, next column)

Cornelian Dogwood (*Cornus mas*)

A great multi-season tree that can tolerate clay soil. The medium sized tree that has exceptional clustered yellow flowers in spring, followed by small red fruit in mid summer. The bark is flaky, quite showy in winter. The tree can be used in a cluster or as a single specimen by a sidewalk. *no photo at press time*

Photos taken and plants available at Forren Soil, a member business in Charleston.

New Classifieds Area

The WVNLA is adding a new section in the Newsletter! *Classified Items* will be offered beginning in September 2009. Members can advertise equipment, tools, vehicles, plants, etc. by sending pictures and ad copy to Beth.

Price for members is \$10.00 for a small ad (one column wide by 2 inches deep) and \$25.00 for large ad (one column wide by 4 inches deep). Photographs will not be returned, but we do accept digital images via email. They must be high resolution images, plainly show items and can be in color.

Please mail information and a check to Beth by end of the month prior to publication - end of July for September issue, end of September for November issue, etc.

The WVNLA reserves the right to refuse any ad at the discretion of the editor and publisher of the newsletter.

WVU Extension Service

The West Virginia University Extension Service horticulture and gardening program is an excellent source for our members and the public. The Extension Service (ES) provides recommendations for everything from trees, shrubs, lawn, annual and perennials, to turf management and greenhouse operations. The ES is available to help develop and teach best practices for sustainable agriculture.

If you have questions on lawn care, the ES can provide a lawn care calendar that indicates when applications should be applied for best results.

If you need a source for pest control and control of ornamental diseases, this can be your source. Powdery mildew, needle blight of evergreens, leaf scorch of shade trees, scab of crabapple and pyracantha, and anthracnose of Oak, Sycamore and Dogwood trees can be addressed by these professionals.

Questions about other horticulture diseases such as slime molds, leaf and bud gall on rhododendrons and azaleas, and also iron chlorosis can be answered too. (cont, next page)



(WVU continued) For more information, contact John Jett, a WVNLA member, and a WVU Extension Specialist. He can be reached at (304) 293-6131 ext. 4224 or John.Jett@mail.wvu.edu

High Performing Teams

by Robert Godbey

We need the people we hire, our talent, to work together in high performing teams. It not only makes our businesses more successful and our customers happy, but it makes the work more fun. Keeping our teams in this high-performing state is an important management focus and it is hard to do. Any change seems to take the team out of this high-performing mode. Bringing in new team members almost always resets team performance. In businesses with high turnover or seasonal workers this can be a reoccurring problem. This brings the question. How do you keep your teams high-performing?

Great Expectations

The first step is to expect it to happen. Whenever there is a change on one of your teams, someone leaves, someone is added, a big change in the work, the performance of the team will change too. Don't act surprised, be prepared, or in the words of a famous labor organizer, "Don't agonize, organize." What does that mean in this case?

Teams develop following a predictable pattern that was described by Bruce Tuckman as Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. Here are some brief descriptions of these developmental stages.

Forming - This is when the team gets to know one another, exchange some personal information, and make new friends. The team meets and learns about the work or project. Team members are usually on their best behavior but very focused on themselves. Supervisors of the team tend to need to be directive during this phase.

Storming - Every team will storm in which different ideas compete for consideration. Team members open up to each other and confront each other's ideas and perspectives on just about everything. The storming stage is necessary for the growth of the team. Tolerance of each team member and their differences needs to be emphasized. Supervisors of the team during this phase may be more accessible but tend to still need to be directive in their guidance of decision-making and professional behavior.

Norming - In this stage team members adjust

their behavior to each other as they develop work habits that make teamwork seem more natural and fluid. Team members often work through this stage by agreeing on rules, values, professional behavior, shared methods, working tools and even taboos. During this phase, team members begin to trust each other. Motivation increases as the team gets more acquainted with the work or project.

Performing - These high-performing teams are able to function as a unit as they find ways to get the job done smoothly and effectively without inappropriate conflict or the need for external supervision. Team members have become interdependent. By this time they are motivated and knowledgeable.

The general idea is teams don't skip stages. You cannot avoid storming. It is like being a teenager, you have to get through it. Some people's teenage years were not as bad as others, so you want to aim for a short and healthy storming stage. Sharing this concept of teams Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing is extremely helpful to the team. You want to organize yourself to make sure everyone learns the concept and set their expectations.

Big Ideas

You may need to do a little training. There are good workshops on team building, but you want to focus on everyone getting the idea of team development stages. You will know you have internalized the concepts when someone comes in saying, "Team Blue is storming." After you have given everyone in the current company a good dose of team development training, you need to figure out how the new people will get it. Some type of orientation training for new hires would be a good idea. You don't need to go overboard, but create a list of the things new people need to know and decide how best or who best to walk them through it. Include the team development stages (at the end maybe), so they know what to expect.

The last thing to consider is how to minimize the impact of changes or maximize the odds of a healthy team. If you have a new crew coming in each season and a few old-timers, you may want to set up a team building exercise. The idea is to get the team started on going through the stages. This might work better off the job in the beginning, so the team isn't storming with your customers. Playing sports and community projects have all been used for team building. (continued on page 4)



High Performance Teams continued
Short Story

It is early spring (or late winter depending on your point-of-view) and it is at least two weeks before your landscaping business will start up again. You are assembling all your talent at one of the White Water Rafting places that does team building exercises near Fayetteville, WV. In attendance are all the new hires for this season and some returning folks. You start off by giving some inspiring remarks about what is planned for the year and how you need all the people in the room to pitch in to make it happen. After the applause dies down, everyone breaks up into groups. New people go to one corner to begin their orientation, returning folks go to another for information tailored for them. All your team leaders get together to set goals, talk shop, and tell fish stories. After the breakout sessions the whole group comes together and the team leaders run through a quick version of Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing as a review for everyone. They then call everyone onto a team. The teams go out with the rafting folks and do strange things with ropes, poles and trees that are challenging and fun. At the end of the day you

thank everyone for at least Forming and tell them when to report to work. High performing teaming has begun. Good luck.



above, the lush setting of Aubry Wilson's Central West Virginia Nursery, Buckhannon WV

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WVNLA  NEWS

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