



Johnson's Garden Talk

Newsletter archives ... for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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Plants Grown for Exhibition

Jeremy Johnson, Johnson's Nursery Buyer, Kansas Certified Nurseryman

While looking at my back yard the other day, I decided there was something missing. The landscape is beginning to fill in beautifully, but it just seems like it needs a little tweaking. What I need is a specimen plant or two. My beds are all filling in with a wonderful mix of perennials and woody ornamentals, but I need something to give a little stronger vertical presence. Something that will break up the lines in the garden but tie it all together at the same time.

A specimen plant is just what the name implies. It is a plant that is grown for exhibition to display its full development; it is selected to be looked at and admired for its beauty. Looking through the nursery, I found several very qualified candidates to fill my voids.

One of my favorite specimen plants is the Blue Atlas Cedar. We have these available in the traditional weeping forms as well as the really cool uprights. The blue and green needles are held tightly to the branches on these trees, giving a really open look, almost as if the branches are made of blue needles. The upright forms, though slightly less popular, are my favorite, as they simply have a look that is not found in any other plants.

Another great choice would be the Vanderwolf's Pyramid Pine. These trees are similar in color to the aforementioned cedars, but have a completely different look. Vanderwolf is a plant that holds an incredible blue color on very finely textured needles. If kept candle-pruned (pruning new growth as it emerges), this tree will maintain an incredible dense shape in the landscape. These trees also work well as a sort of "specimen backdrop" by mass planting three or more together and then planting other plant varieties in front.

This next tree has to be one of my favorite new plants that we are carrying this spring. I have been familiar with Leucodermis (Bosnian) Pine for many years, but discovered a few new selections of this wonderful little tree while in Oregon last summer. 'Mint Truffle' Leucodermis Pine is a brand new selection that is just an awesome little pine tree. It was selected for its even, pyramidal growth habit, as well as its awesome green color that holds well all year long. If you are looking for a cool tree that will hold its "Christmas Tree" shape and that will not get out of control when planted up next to the house, this is the tree for you.

When searching for a specimen plant, keep in mind that you and your guests will be looking closely at your selection, as this is the whole point of specimen planting. For this reason, you want to pick healthy plants that have a shape that you like. This does not mean, however, that you should look for perfectly shaped specimens. I am generally drawn to something that may be misshapen just a bit, with a little more character.