

THE

CONIFERITE

Newsletter of the American Conifer Society Central Region

Vol. 8 No. 1, February 2017

Awards honor an organization's heroes... such as Marvin Snyder

Receiving an organization's highest honor can be a lifetime achievement: think Oscar, Tony, Heisman or Nobel. It follows that having such an award named in your honor must be an even greater achievement, bestowing a cloak of virtual immortality.

Such people are heroes in their spheres of influence, but too often, those in their midst know little about them. How many newer ACS members are familiar with the people whose name graces the "Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award of Merit for Dedicated Support of the American Conifer Society?"

Here is their story:

by Jerry Belanger, Editor

Marvin Snyder met Emelie Kirk when they were students at Kansas State University. He now says he knew she was perfect for him when he learned that she liked trees. They married on Feb. 1, 1948.

A registered architect, he designed their home, the first in the new suburb, with gardens and trees in mind. Emelie, with a degree in home economics, was in charge of selecting the trees, which included pfitzer junipers (*Juniperus chinensis*). This led to searching for more plants with winter interest, culminating in their discovery of the ACS in the early 1990s.

At the 1994 regional meeting President Chub Harper asked for volunteers to be state representatives. Marvin said he would represent Kansas, but only if he could include western Missouri, where he knew of potential new members. Soon after, he was nominated, and elected, to the ACS

Board of Directors and wrote his first article for the ACS Bulletin (now *Conifer Quarterly*). Once on the Board, he was elected National Secretary, a position he held for four terms. In 1999 he was elected President, serv-

The American Hosta Society has its Alex J. Summers Award, Eunice Fisher Award, and Benedict Garden Performance Award.

Not to be outdone, the American Conifer Society has the wordy but descriptive "Justin C. 'Chub' Harper Award for the Development in the Field of Conifers" and the "Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award of Merit for Dedicated Support of the American Conifer Society." The Harper Award goes to those who have made significant contributions to the field of conifer propagation and collecting. The Snyder Award recognizes contributions to the ACS itself.

ing in that capacity for three years, after which he continued to share his wisdom and experience as Past President for another two years.

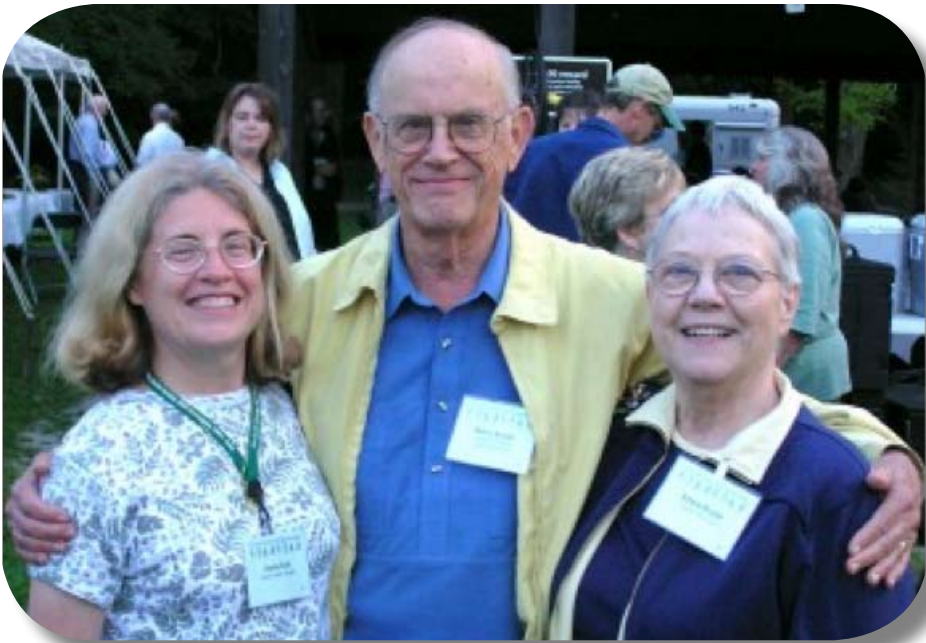
Merit Award History

ACS merit awards were first bestowed in 1995. The Harper and Snyder names were added by the Board of Directors in 2003. In his presentation of the award to Marvin in 2004, ACS National President Dennis Groh noted that "Marvin Snyder has made a significant and selfless contribution of his personal time, energy and talent to the Conifer Society for 10 consecutive years. Which I am certain would not have been possible with-

Please turn to next page



Marvin Snyder in his garden in Overland Park, Kansas



Carole Groh, and Marvin and Emelie Snyder, for whom the ACS Marvin and Emelie Snyder Award of Merit for Dedicated Support of the American Conifer Society is named, in 2004. — Dennis Groh photo

out Emelie's support and patience. When you consider that the Society was founded only 21 years ago it becomes even clearer just how significant a contributor Marvin has been to this organization. Marvin's nine consecutive years as an officer easily make him our Society's longest-serving officer."

His stick-to-itiveness isn't limited to conifers: with B.S. degrees in both architecture and architectural engineering, he joined Butler Manufacturing (metal buildings) in 1949, retired in 1986, and continued as a consultant on patent matters until just last fall, shortly before turning 91, saying "67 years was enough."

Emelie's dedication was similar. In addition to her membership in several garden clubs and her long association with music, she was very active in Kappa Kappa Gamma Alumnae Association. She served as office chairman for 19 years and was named 1995 Kappa of the Year.

Emelie was also a member of Chapter GI of PEO* for 16 years and served two years as chapter president.

Her association with ACS was largely through Marvin. "She was

a tremendous support to me while I served as president of the ACS (a full time job). We worked together. I supported her work with the KKG Sorority Alumnae and she helped me with ACS. She was not active in ACS but she was a good typist and I am not."

Something you probably didn't know about Marvin Snyder: As a member of the 99th Infantry Division during World War II, he was captured at the Battle of the Bulge on Dec. 18, 1944. He was 19. Today he recalls "Fair treatment except not much (hardly anything) to eat."

As for his early interest in pfitzer junipers, Marvin points out that at that time that's what landscapers used. "Chub Harper and I, in our slide talks, spoke of the "Pfitzerian Period" of landscape design. The designers didn't know there might be other conifers available. They weren't widely marketed.

"The Pfitzerian Period was followed by the Yewardian Period when designers discovered the yew. Then they all discovered all the conifers

that were available to them and the rest is history.

"Now I probably have a dozen small junipers, no pfitzers, in my collection of 225 to 250 conifers."

Marvin Snyder is an artist: he says, "I paint with plants." In an article in *Kansas City Gardener*, Susan Mertz wrote, "Brush strokes of blue, gold and green plants fool visitors into thinking they are simply enjoying a beautiful garden. The artistry of the design hides the fact that this is a collector's garden. Marvin Snyder has an incredible collection of conifers, hostas, Japanese maples, peonies, carex, epimediums and many other plants. Fifty-five years of gardening (*as of 2015*) at his home in Overland Park, Kansas have given him the opportunity to explore locally available plants, challenge the limits of what is believed to grow here, and search the country for new plants to try."

And he's still at it, collecting plants and creating new gardens. He has a treasured gardening buddy, Kim Adams, who he says "is so much more than a helper. I haven't come up with a description, but she is my 'head gardener.' Her design ideas mesh with mine and at my age of 91, I can't do much. She is the main worker. My success in giving garden tours is totally due to her hard work. She drives up from Joplin, Missouri, for 2-3 days



Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Emelie,' a Larry Stanley introduction, is named for Emelie Snyder.—Dennis Groh photo

*The meaning is secret, but nonmembers refer to it as "Philanthropic Education Organization."

of work when needed, which is often when spring arrives. If I didn't have Kim I would probably have to give it all up, sell the place and move to a rest home. No one could replace her."

The two constructed a living wall planter using succulents, which he now says "was a complete bust and shouldn't be mentioned at all. The spot we had planned for it didn't work, and the way it was held together didn't work, so we gave the idea up."

That's rather comforting to us lesser gardeners whose plans don't always work out. However, with his typical enthusiasm, he adds, "I have some new ideas using potted plants, and may try again."

He also has been replacing hundreds of plant tags with new stainless steel stakes so visitors can easily learn the names of all the plants. Recent additions to the conifer collection include *Thuja* 'Franky Boy,' *Pinus strobus* 'Mini Twist,' and a *Thuja koraiensis*. His favorite conifer is a *Picea omorika* 'pendula,' but his "most treasured" is *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Emelie,' named for his wife.

Shortly after her death in July, 2005, his good friend Larry Stanley, an Oregon nurseryman since 1976 and a holder of both of the ACS Merit Awards, called and asked if an unnamed plant he had could be named for Emelie. Marvin relates, "Of course I tearfully said that would be nice. He then took a large quantity of 'Emelie' conifer plants to the National meeting (I obviously didn't go to that one) and gave them to anyone who remembered Emelie. That was the only National meeting I missed until old age caused me to quit my traveling. I loved the National and Regional meetings."

'Emelie' is a bun-shaped miniature Japanese hinoki cypress with nice green foliage.

Of himself, Marvin said, "I have always been a gardener and did landscape design for myself and others. I never knew much about conifers ex-

**"MARVIN AND EMELIE
SNYDER AWARD OF MERIT FOR
DEDICATED SUPPORT OF THE
AMERICAN CONIFER SOCIETY"
WINNERS:**

- 2004 Marvin Snyder, Kansas
- 2005 Gary Whittenbaugh, Iowa
- 2006 Ridge Goodwin, Penn.
- 2007 Maud Henne, Virginia
- 2008 Frank Goodhart, New Jersey
- 2009 Kathleen Pottratz, Oregon
- 2010 Jordan Jack, North Carolina
- 2011 Clark West, Ohio
- 2012 Flo Chapin, North Carolina
- 2013 Dennis Groh, Michigan
- 2014 Bill Barger, Ohio
- 2015 Ethan Johnson, Ohio
- 2016 Tom Cox, Georgia

How honorees are chosen:
A committee, currently chaired by Kathleen Pottratz, solicits nominations directly from the ACS membership. Ballots are then sent to all former award recipients. A tally of the vote is given to the Board of Directors at the Winter Board Meeting.

cept for pfizer junipers. My expanded knowledge of conifers came from the association I had with experts in the conifer world —growers, professors, hobby gardeners, etc. (especially Chub Harper). Also I accumulated quite a conifer library, which is rather idle now with the internet. " He does continue to treasure his copy of the Royal Horticultural Society's *Ency-*



Marvin Snyder says that at 91, he probably wouldn't have a garden without his helper and "gardening buddy," Kim Adams.

lopedia of Conifers, however.

It's been said that Marvin's garden is a conifer enthusiast's delight, but its companion plantings with a wealth of other premier shrubs and perennials are what make it a masterpiece. Alan Branahagen, Director of Horticulture, Powell Gardens, Kansas City's 970-acre botanical garden, said "From its shade trees to its ground-covers, it is top-notch and its plant compositions, color echoes, texture contrasts and quality plants make it an inspiration to all that visit — and it looks great in every season!"

It seems that every organization has its honors and awards, most of them named after heroes, keeping their memories alive. So it is that Marvin and Emelie Snyder will be remembered for a long, long time to come, as future selfless ACS volunteers are honored with the award bearing their names.

An unusual threat to many forests was recently found in Longnecker Arboretum in Madison, Wisconsin, the well-known habitat of ACS member Dr. Ed Hasselkus: the jumping worm. The article is too long for this newsletter, but for a pdf, send an email to coniferite@gmail.com with "Jumping Worm" as the subject.



"Don't believe everything you read on the internet just because it has a picture and quote marks." —Abraham Lincoln

A reminder: The Central Region is establishing a "Special Recognition Award" to acknowledge a member who has exhibited extraordinary volunteerism in the workings of the region... but you have to to nominate the candidates. Contact President Byron Baxter at byron@dendrologicalsales.net before March 31, 2017. (Details were in the October 2016 *Coniferite*.)

From the President:

Notes on the Board Meeting, and more...

4 David Speth (Central Region Director) and I recently participated in the ACS Winter Board of Directors meeting. Meeting notes were prepared by Sara Malone and added to the ACS website. It can be found on the web site's Home Page under the heading: "What's New". If you have any questions about the meeting or would like to discuss it, please contact either David or me.

Based on your input to the ACS Membership Survey, which was completed this past summer, the Central Region plans to encourage more local events. Gary Whittenbaugh is currently organizing the 18th annual Iowa rendezvous; and several Ohio members are planning their 3rd annual Autumn get-together. We hope to offer more new events this year and will have more information later this Spring. If there is interest in hosting an event in your area, please contact me. We'd be happy to offer support as might be helpful.

The Central Region will hold Election of officers this year. This might seem like a short amount of time between elections, and you are correct. We held an election last year to bring the expiration of terms into the proper alignment with the other ACS regions. Please send your nominations to Chris Daeger, 4600 Muchmore Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio 45245-4108 or email them to: cdaeger@ihill.org before March 31. The offices of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are open for nomination.

The Central Region has a Facebook page and is in need of an editor. If social media is your cup of tea, then please consider utilizing your expertise and helping with this



Giant sequoia falls after more than 2,000 years, many photos

One of the best-known — and most loved — conifers in the U.S. has met its demise.

The Pioneer Cabin Tree, also known as the tunnel tree, was toppled by the drought-busting rains that deluged California in January. The tree is down, but countless thousands of family photos of automobiles being driven through the bored-out trunk remain, throughout America, and beyond.

The trunk was hollowed out in the 1880s. At first only hikers passed through. Then cars, after they were invented. Recently, passage was again limited to pedestrians.

The tree fell after 8 inches of rain page. The national ACS President is a whiz at technology and has offered to help with any questions you might encounter. Contact David Speth or myself and we will get you started.

This year's Central Region meeting in Michigan will be one of the best attended meetings in some time. If you are going, I urge you to book your travel arrangements as early as possible. We hope to see you there. — *Byron Baxter, President*

and fierce winds on Jan. 8. By the next day, Calaveras Big Trees Association logged 10,000 comments on its post of the demise, some sharing stories about their visits over the years.

It will remain where it fell, feeding the soil from whence it sprang.

It was a giant sequoia, *Sequoia dendron giganteum*, the type of redwood famed for its girth, not height. It stood approximately 100 feet tall and was 22 feet in diameter at breast height. Sequoias live naturally only in groves on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. They are the largest living things on earth.

The Pioneer Cabin Tree was one of the last of the historic "tunnel redwoods" in the Sierra. The Palace Hotel Tree and Smith Cabin Tree remain standing in the more remote South Grove at the park. Yosemite's Wawona tree still stands, as do three coast redwood "tunnel trees" in northwestern California.

The felled sequoia — and its 150 surviving siblings in the grove — was an ancestral remnant of once-vast conifer forests that blanketed a cooler and wetter California, and now face threats from climate change.

Another iconic conifer bites the dust

The “Big Tree” is dead, but hardly anyone has noticed.

For decades the aptly but unimaginatively-named mammoth ponderosa pine was a beacon for countless tourists driving through the Columbia River Gorge in Washington, and the centerpiece of an interpretive site for travelers headed for Mount Adams.

No one knows how old it was. Its web page says 370 years, but Jon Nakae, a local silviculturist with the Mount Adams Ranger District, thinks it’s much older: perhaps more than 500. He doesn’t have a core sampling tool long enough to count the rings, and besides, parts of the interior are rotten. It could be cut down and the rings counted, but the Forest Service says it’s worth more standing.

No one knows how tall it was. *Champion Trees of Washington* lists it as having a diameter of 22 feet and a height of 213 feet in 1996, but Nakae said it was 202 feet tall in 2015.

No one knows why it died: the stresses of old age, drought, insects, and years of visitors compacting the soil around its roots all contributed, but the death blow, Nakae said, was most likely a Western Pine Beetle attack which started about three years ago.

The Big Tree wasn’t the biggest ponderosa alive, it wasn’t the oldest, and it might not have been the tallest, but it still stands. It’s leaning away from the road, and the Forest Service closed the picnic area near the tree’s base to protect the public, but it stands because it’s valuable to wildlife. “Ironically, the tree can provide more life in its death than it did when it was alive,” a forestry professor said. “Forty percent of our species rely on dead trees for habitat.”

Nakae did write an obituary, but didn’t publish it, fearing people would think he was making light of a sensitive section of newspapers.

The Big Tree is dead. Hardly anyone even noticed. Long live The Big Tree.



How flushed with excitement can you get with Addicted Conifer Syndrome? We can’t answer that, but we know that Chris Daeger has walls and halls like this, even including witches’ brooms. As Chris always says, “Conifers forever!”

And how many trees do YOU have?

How many trees are there in the U.S.? Only 96.6 billion.

So says the Forest Inventory and Analysis National Program, of the U.S. Forest Service. It counts trees — but only those more than 5 inches dbh (diameter at breast height).

Why does it bother?

Because it guides the decisions of the forest products industry, which exported \$8.7 billion worth of product in 2016. Among agricultural products, this is third, behind only soybeans and corn.

Source: Forest Inventory and Analysis National Program, U.S. Forest Service

Thanks to Susan Eyre, Chris Daeger, Dennis Groh, Terri Park and Anne-marie Ida for their contributions to this issue; to Marvin Snyder and Tom Stapleton for their invaluable input; and as usual, to Byron Baxter, David Speth and Diane Belanger for their continued support. Contact JD Belanger, Editor at coniferite@gmail.com

Winter care of conifers

Light fluffy snow is good for plants, because it insulates and protects. Without snow cover, woody plants can suffer from extreme temperatures, or extreme fluctuations.

Wet, heavy snow is another matter. Branches can be bent, or broken.

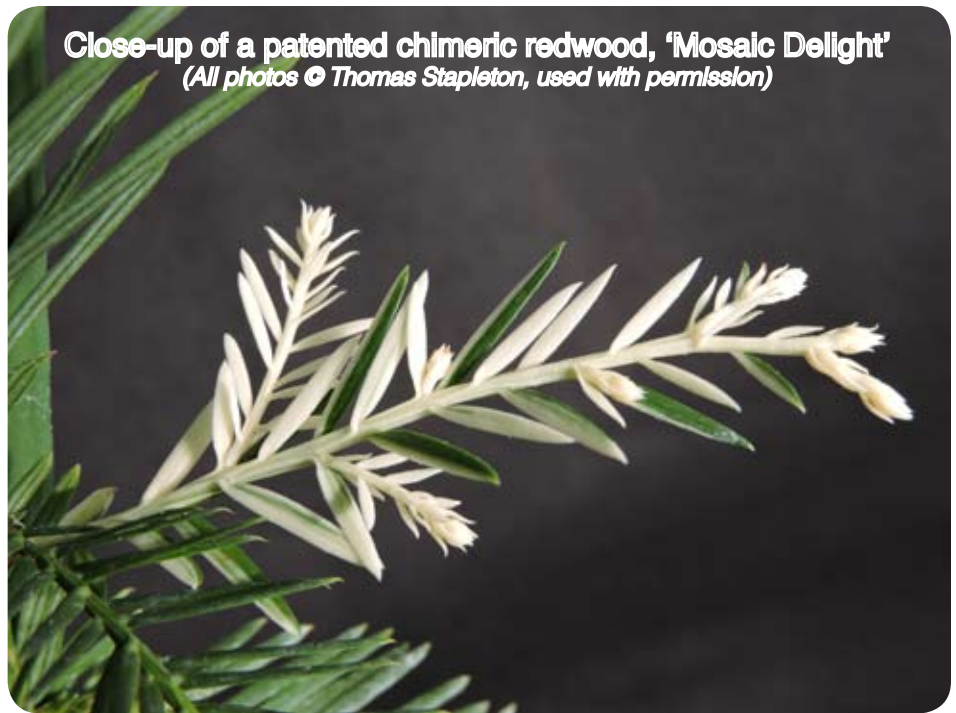
In some cases conifer branches bent by a snowload pop back in spring, only to turn brown and die in the heat of summer. This occurs when small cracks that were formed when the branches were bent do not heal. This prevents water from moving up the stem.

Heavy snow can be removed if it isn’t likely to melt soon, but this can cause even more damage if not done carefully. Brushing the snow off from above with a broom can exacerbate the cracking damage. It’s better to push the branches upward, from underneath.



It's a pale ghost-like tree in the coastal redwood forests. It's a mutant and very rare.

6 It's a white-needled tree that would make any gathering of coniferites gasp with excitement. It is also a mystery, although one that is slowly becoming unraveled.



Close-up of a patented chimeric redwood, 'Mosaic Delight'
(All photos © Thomas Stapleton, used with permission)

Ghost-Busters:

On the trail of the albino redwood

The albino coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) has been observed for 150 years but, as was noted after a branch was displayed at the California Academy of Sciences meeting in 1866, "no explanation or theory was offered to account for this curious, abnormal blanching of the foliage..."

More than 30 years later, in 1898, Stanford plant physiologist George James Peirce studied albino sprouts growing in the Santa Cruz Mountains and determined that the needle anatomy and chemistry were somewhat different from nearby green specimens. He also showed that the albino sprouts could not be propagated — or survive — on their own.

Nothing more happened until 1976, when forester Dale Holderman happened upon an albino redwood in the Santa Cruz Mountains that had male albino cones. This discovery was a major milestone in understanding redwood morphology, and led to the exciting possibility that these mutants could be propagated. Indeed, in 1977 Holderman succeeded in cross-

pollinating an albino redwood to a normal green redwood, producing the first chimeric hybrids.

Then, a break-through

In 1997 arborist Tom Stapleton discovered and successfully propagated the first wild albino chimeric redwood known. He told us via email, "I approached Mr. Holderman in the summer of 2012 with a collaborative idea to attempt a propagation experiment off his chimera



Patent USPP26573: Coast redwood 'Mosaic Delight'

albinos originating in the 1977 cross. He explained that prior attempts to asexually propagate these cuttings were met with failure. With permission, I carefully selected cuttings that exhibited specific periclinal chimeric traits. After procuring 10 cuttings I was able to successfully root eight of them in a special media mix. After observing stable albino and green characteristics, Mr. Holderman and I filed for a patent in June, 2014." The variegated, patented coast redwood with distinctive white and green needles has been named 'Mosaic Delight.'

"Sadly, Dale Holderman passed away just two days after the patent was approved on April 5, 2016. I am forever grateful for the opportunity Dale gave me to continue his pioneering research."

He added that the tree that produced the albino pollen in 1976 has never done it again.

However, in the spring of 2013, a redwood displaying a rather large teardrop aerial albino was found exhibiting albino male cones. More astounding, the mutation also dis-

played fully developed female albino cones. In the fall of 2013 seeds from these albino cones were planted in a research greenhouse. Seedlings emerged, but not all were white. This led to speculation that not all the pollen which fertilized the albino female cones had originated from within the mutation. Unlike Holderman's hybrid seedlings 36 years earlier, these were either pure green or pure white, with no variegation. Lacking the ability to photosynthesize, the white seedlings died in five weeks. The green ones continued to grow, and have not displayed any signs of albinism.

By the numbers:

2,673 seeds planted

119 germinated

92 were albino

Stapleton planted 2,673 seeds from the teardrop albino. Only 119 germinated. Of these 92 were albino and 27 were green.

In percentages, 4.45% of the seeds

A redwood that has two kinds of DNA, albino and regular, has a rare genetic constitution that qualifies it as a *chimera*. Worldwide, there are only about 10 known samples of this type of tree, which has the unique ability to produce both male and female cones.

Currently, there are 432 known albino specimens in the world, and they are typically distinguished by needles that are all white. But the far more rare chimera albino redwoods have two sets of DNA that produce multi-colored needles.

Splotchy sunlight peeking through the typically dense redwood forest canopies makes the trees with colorless, almost transparent needles, hard to spot, which could be one reason why so few of them have been documented.

planted seeds germinated, 3.44% were albino and 1.01% were green. In other words, viability was very low and genotype preference was approximately 30% green to 70% albino.

While the mystery of the ghostly white redwoods remains, it's being probed by a plant biology PhD student at U.C. Davis, Zane Moore. Moore, working with Stapleton and others, set out to locate every known albino redwood. They found only 432 in the entire world. (A few years ago that number was 200: more are being discovered regularly. See sidebar.) He then analyzed clippings from these trees, and from their green neighbors. He found that the white needles were loaded with what should have been a fatal dose of cadmium, copper and nickel — twice as many parts per million as their green neighbors. Yet, they appear to thrive.

Looking forward, Stapleton and Moore have embarked on an experiment which hopefully will shed light on these fascinating questions regarding metal toxicity in coast redwoods. In his greenhouse, Stapleton is working with Moore to test a group of chimeric albino redwoods with doses of heavy metals. The results may yield clues to unraveling the mystery of why albinism occurs in the world's tallest tree species.

Moore has several theories, which he hopes to publish this year. Much work yet needs to be done, but he's the man to do it: he's only 22, and with what he has already accomplished, he no doubt has a long and illustrious career ahead of him.

Speaking of careers, it's interesting to note that certified arborist, albino redwood guru and new ACS member Tom Stapleton's primary occupation is operating seven hydroelectric power plants for Pacific Gas & Electric. In the same vein, we might mention that forester Dale Holderman holds a patent on an improved gopher trap. Coniferites are such interesting people!

—JDB

For more information: <https://www.chimeraredwoods.com>



Tom Stapleton told *The Coniferite*, "(This is) the first wild albino chimeric redwood that I found in 1997. Unlike 'Mosaic Delight,' which expresses green growth first then albino secondary growth later, this one called the 'Christmas Tree' expresses the opposite growth arrangement: white growth first, then green secondary buds later. It may be worth an honorable mention considering how beautiful it is. The tree isn't patentable because it was derived from the wild and not in a cultivated setting. The albinism is supported by two green lower surrogate branches."

Photo © Thomas Stapleton

We asked Tom Stapleton how many trees have been asexually propagated so far. "I'd say there are approximately 50 from 'Mosaic Delight' so they're still very rare. Other chimeras which have been propagated by seed amount to only around five and are difficult to grow due to their unstable characteristics. I have about 100 or so from other albino chimeric redwood varieties."



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Bears die after eating *Taxus baccata*

A 300-pound bear and her three cubs were found dead in the parking lot of a church in Pennsylvania. The likely cause: eating the “berries” (arils) of an English yew (*Taxus baccata*). The arils are the “cones” that make yews conifers: the single seed is surrounded by a fleshy covering that’s derived from a highly modified cone scale. The plants, more so the arils, and most of all the seeds, contain taxine, a toxic alkaloid. The seeds have been accidentally ingested by children, and the entire plant has been implicated in murders and suicides.

One of eight species of *Taxus baccata* has been cultivated for centuries, especially in cemeteries and churchyards. Some of the oldest are estimated to be 1,000 years or more.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission says the bears probably died quickly, and painlessly. — *Terri Park*

Your library isn't complete without Adrian Bloom's *Gardening with Conifers*

Now be among the first to get the updated and expanded 2017 edition — at a 33% discount — available only to ACS members attending the 2017 Central Region Convention!



Adrian Bloom—author of more than a dozen gardening books, photographer, lecturer and world-renowned gardener—will be the keynote speaker at the ACS Central Region meeting in East Lansing, Michigan, on July 14. He will also be signing copies of his newly-revised book, *Gardening with Conifers*, as well as his 2010 book, *Best Perennials and Grasses*.

Order either one, or both, with this special offer:

***Gardening with Conifers*, reg. \$29.95, now only \$20**
***Best Perennials and Grasses*, reg. \$34.95, now only \$23**

Important notice: These books, at these special prices, must be ordered in advance, and picked up at the convention.

Get conference and optional tour information and a registration form in the December 2016 *Coniferite* or by contacting David Speth, Central Region Treasurer at sspeth@excel.net

This opportunity arose only after the Conference Registration form was printed. You MUST add your book choice(s) and payment to your registration!

If you're unable to attend the Convention, Adrian Bloom will also be lecturing — and signing books — at Dearborn Inn, in Dearborn, Michigan, on July 13. Tickets are \$35 before May 1. Contact Dennis Groh at dgroh8380mi@wowway.com for more information.