

Proper planting of spruce trees is a must

Many homeowners often plant young spruce trees with little or no regard for how large the trees will be in just a few short decades. It doesn't matter whether it be one of the much sought after blue spruce, or the one of the lesser-known white, Norway or Siberian spruce. All of these (which are hardy in virtually all of Canada) will easily attain 12 to 25 metres (40-80 ft.) in height, with a spread approaching three metres (ten ft.).

The popularity and beauty of the blue spruce seems to cause inexperienced homeowners to plant the small trees in areas where their growth will be restricted after only a few years. The difficulty comes in that there is almost no way that the growth can be restricted, unless the homeowner is willing to undertake a severe clipping regimen on the new growth each and every year. Since the latter does not happen, the most common scenario is for the larger

lower branches to be chopped off in order to regain access to a walkway, driveway, or the entrance to the house itself! This is where the trouble for the tree begins.

It is most important when planting not only spruce trees, but other large trees - whether evergreens such as fir and pine, or deciduous trees such as maples and oaks - that sufficient room be allowed for the trees to achieve their full growth. The Canadian Garden Council advises that an

inquiry to your garden centre should bring a close estimate as to just what ultimate size the tree you have chosen may be expected to achieve in your area.

By the way, if you are presently considering planting a blue spruce tree, there are several types available. The most common is the Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens* 'Glauca'). These vary in color considerably, and through the winter months, retain more of a green than blue color. It is generally the most economical variety to purchase. The oldest of the 'real blue' blue spruces is *Koster* (*Picea pungens* 'Koster'). Its major drawback has been a tendency to have a crooked main stem that needs to be staked upright for the first few years.

The *Koster* spruce though still very much available, has now been superseded by at least two other varieties you may want to check out at your favorite garden centres: *Hoopsii* blue spruce (*Picea pungens* 'Hoopsii') and *Moreheim* blue spruce (*P.p.* 'Moreheim'). Both of these have a much better conical shape, straight main stem, and excellent silver blue needle color, throughout the entire year (although the color is at its best in June).

A common habit of homeowners, once a spruce achieves a large size, is to remove the lower branches. Often this is done to accommodate access around the tree because it was planted too close to a walk or driveway. But sometimes, it's done just because it's thought to be the "thing to do." Even many professional "landscapers" are guilty of this "sin." If this "pruning up" sin can

be avoided, it should be at whatever the cost!

According to the Canadian Garden Council, one of the problems that affect older spruce trees is a canker disease known as *Cystospora*. It occurs generally on older branches at the interior of the trees. One of the best methods of avoiding the disease is to keep older trees in a healthy state. An important way of doing this is to ensure that all of the lower branches remain on the tree, removing only dead or dying limbs. It is likewise important to leave all of the old needles, which annually fall from the tree, beneath the branches. This material acts as a natural mulch both keeping the surface roots cool and moist, and maintaining an acid soil condition which the trees prefer.

Though the aforementioned care is the optimum, most homeowners do just the opposite by cutting away the lower limbs and removing all the valuable old needle mulch. The Canadian Garden Council says do your spruce trees a favour: leave the needle mulch intact and don't remove the lower branches from the trees either!

The canker disease is most easily noted on the interior branches near the trunk where exudations of sap with a white cottony appearance are evident. The only solution is the sterile removal of all dead branches exhibiting this appearance. After each cut dip the saw or pruners in alcohol to prevent spreading the disease. Some even recommend treating each cut on the tree with a sterilant such as wood alcohol. The removed branches should either be burned or disposed of as garbage - and not composted.

Tea and coffee producers ready to strike at rivals

Canadian tea and coffee producers may be poised for a competitive strike against their cold beverage rivals, thanks to some prize-winning product concepts developed by University of Toronto MBA students.

"The shift towards cold beverages and products with 'natural profiles' is irreversible. The tea and coffee industries can attempt to buck this trend or they can take heed of the age old adage: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!," said Julie Otto, a member of U of T's "tea team" and a 1990 MBA graduate.

Data published by the A.C. Nielsen Company of Canada show that coffee's percentage of all beverage sales in Canadian retail grocery stores dropped from 36 per cent in 1980 to 31 per cent in 1988, while tea sales declined from 26 per cent. Meanwhile, soft drink sales jumped from 17 per cent in 1980 to 23 per cent in 1988, and juice and other drinks (excluding alcoholic beverages and mineral waters) climbed to 24 per cent from 20 per cent.

With its members experiencing changes in market positions, the Tea and Coffee Association of Canada recently commissioned teams of MBA students from McMaster University and the University of Toronto to develop ideas for new retail brands of tea and coffee. The competition called for the business school teams to conduct marketing research, combine creativity with their research data to prepare complete marketing plans (including recommendations on pricing, advertising and promotion, and distribution of new brands), and present their proposals at a conference. Teams from U of T's Faculty of Management won the two \$1,000 prizes available, for best marketing plan in both tea and coffee categories.

"We decided to approach the problem as if we were an advertising agency pitching for new business. In order to win the business, we had to sell the client on our ideas, and the key to doing that was to be able to have the client's customers tell them how promising our ideas were. In that context, we concept-tested all the ideas in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal," said Kevin Greenwood, a member of U of T's "coffee team" and a 1990 MBA graduate.

The following are brand concept highlights from U of T's winning proposals:

TEA

"SPLASH!" is an all-natural, carbonated fruit and tea drink served cold: an alternative to pop

or fruit seltzers. It is made with 100 per cent all natural fruit juice, sparkling water and a mild blend of tea brewed with spring water. SPLASH comes in tall, clear glass bottles and cans, and in many flavors: lemon, raspberry, peach, lime and an assortment of tropical fruits.

"VitalTea" combines tea with spring water, plus added vitamins and minerals, to make a healthy fluid replenisher for active individuals.

"Tea Filter Paks" fit easily into your coffee machine, so you can make a quick and reliable pot of tea for two to eight people. Tea Filter Paks make it as convenient to make a fresh pot of tea in the office as it is to make coffee.

COFFEE

"Cachet" is a roast coffee product paced in a single serving filter for in-cup brewing. It provides a superior tasting coffee through the combination of consistent portion control and a select blend of international or flavored coffee beans.

"Nightscape" is an assortment of aromatic and flavored coffees, acid and caffeine-reduced, that provides a rich tasting, full-bodied coffee for quiet, late evening moments.

"Cafe Cool" is a refreshing bottled coffee beverage served cold or on ice, and made from the finest coffee beans and fresh spring water.

"A convenient cold coffee product would provide the coffee industry an entry into the cold beverage market, which the soft drink bottlers are aggressively and effectively expanding," said Doug Saetsinger, a U of T marketing professor and advisor to his business school's student teams.

"Cafe Cool, for example, would have a very definite adult appeal. People surveyed in shopping mall interviews commented that it sounds like the beer substitute they had been looking for. They said it was a drink you could feel as comfortable ordering in a bar as you would enjoying in your backyard.

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