



The Kruckeberg Botanic Garden at Richmond Beach is dedicated to fostering and providing educational, cultural and aesthetic enrichment for all who visit: gardeners, amateur and professional horticulturalists, and young students of the plant world — in all, people of all walks of life.

“In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, we will understand what we are taught.”

-- Baba Dioum Fenegal

Questions, ideas, suggestions?  
Please contact KBGF at  
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kbgf@kruckeberg.org · www.kruckeberg.org

Newsletter produced by Susan Will

Art by Mareen Kruckeberg: **Cyclamen coum**  
from the Caucasus Mountains blooms mid-winter  
regardless of weather.

## Conifers in the Garden, Part 3

by Art Kruckeberg

Previous accounts of conifers in the Kruckeberg Botanic Garden dealt with the two major conifer families: The needle-leaved pines and their kin (*Pinaceae*) and the scale-leaved cypresses and cedars (*Cupressaceae*). There remains a modest number of cone-bearing trees and shrubs that give charm to our garden.

The Yew Family (*Taxaceae*), though small in number of species, offers the garden several choice plants. Both the English yew (*Taxus baccata*) and our native western yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) are tallish evergreen shrubs or small trees. The English yew, with its many growth forms (cultivars) has been a dominant garden subject both here in North America and in the Old World. In England, yews have occupied church yards and cemeteries for centuries. The western yew is a ‘Johnny-come-lately’ in Northwest gardens. We have several specimens of western yew, some of which were byproducts of attempts to grow yews in plantations. Yew bark contains the chemical taxol, which proved to be a valuable drug for treating certain types of cancer. Cones in yews are solely the ephemeral pollen (male) cones. The seed-bearing unit is a red, fleshy, berry-like fruit. Beware: The seeds and foliage of yews are poisonous!

Three specimens of plum yew, *Cephalotaxus drupacea*, adorn the upper western garden. All are shrub-like small trees with dark-green narrow leaves, up to two inches long. Why plum yew? Indeed, the seed-bearing ifruiti is about the size of a Greengage plum, greenish or purplish at maturity. We have grown the plum yew, both from seed and easily from cuttings. This handsome conifer is one of five in its genus *Cephalotaxus*. All are native to eastern Asia; ours, *C. drupacea*, is from Japan. In my visit to Japan in 1989, I saw the dwarf variant (*var. nana*) growing as a shrublet in deep deciduous forests.

Next are the torreyas or nutmeg trees. Of the five species in *Torreya*, we grow the best of them, *T. californica*. It is called the California Nutmeg tree because of the fruitis similarity in shape to the real nutmeg, the tropical *Myristica fragrans*. This handsome small tree is native to the Coast Ranges and Sierra Nevada of central California. In the wild, it is seldom over 30 feet tall; thus it is an understory tree in mixed conifer-evergreen broadleaved forests. Our largest *Torreya* specimen has taken on a striking shape; its large trunk traces a curved slant and is an arching 30 feet in length. This unusual growth form was induced by the shading effect of a nearby coast redwood. We have other specimens in the garden, now growing perfectly upright.

Besides the California species, two torreyas come from eastern Asia and one from the southeastern United States. This bicontinental pattern of distribution continues to fascinate n and bewilder n botanists. It was the noted Harvard botanist, Asa Gray, who in 1859 first called attention to the fact that many plant groups show this type of distribution. It can be found in many flowering plants as well as conifers. Probable cause? It is likely that ancestors of these plants had a continuous distribution in past times, only to have their continuity broken by plate tectonics and climate change. The genus name, *Torreya*, honors another distinguished 19th century botanist, John Torrey; he was Asa Grayis mentor.

The Sequoia Family (*Taxodiaceae*). The KBG has mature specimens of

several species in the Sequoia Family. The family's celebrated namesakes are the three sequoias or redwoods. Both the coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and the Sierran Big Tree (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) are California natives but do well in the Pacific Northwest. The grandest of them all in our garden is the colossal specimen of the Big Tree; its massive trunk is 14 feet in circumference at its base and is over 100 feet tall. We started it as a six-inch cutting in 1952! Its close relative, coast redwood, does well in our garden. One old specimen even furnished us seedlings for several years.

One deciduous relative of the sequoias is the 'Dawn Redwood' (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). The fascinating history of this tree makes it one of the legendary discoveries of the 20th century. It was first known only as a fossil, appearing in sedimentary rocks in the Old and New Worlds. Then, in the 1940s, Chinese botanists discovered this elegant sequoia in a remote part of Hupeh Province, China. This discovery startled the botanical world and set two rival teams of American botanists on competitive efforts to bring back alive this rare and beautiful coniferous tree. We have several specimens, the oldest of which, near our front gate, has developed tell-tale depressions under each lateral branch, provoking in students a nickname, the iarpit tree. Nowadays the many specimens in cultivation worldwide are producing viable seed. Young saplings can be found for sale at specialty nurseries.

We grow still other members of the Sequoia Family. *Cryptomeria japonica*, grown from seed, is the 'Tsugi' of Asiatic origin, so much a part of Japanese culture. The China-fir, *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, with its distinctive, large, tapered needle leaves does well here. Visitors to the garden will also find two specimens of the eastern United States bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), a deciduous conifer resembling the Dawn Redwood. Some botanists include the Japanese umbrella pine in the Sequoia Family; we have three specimens of this unusual conifer, *Sciadopitys verticillata*.

A recent acquisition, the gift of an expert gardener Jeannette Kunnen, is the unusual Tasmanian cypress (*Athrotaxis cupressoides*). It rests uneasily in the Sequoia Family but could just as well be part of the Cypress Family.

The last conifer family, the podocarps (*Podocarpaceae*), is mostly found in the Southern Hemisphere in the wild. Many are massive tropical forest trees, such as the timber podocarps of South Africa. We grow two of them. *Podocarpus nivalis* is a subalpine shrub of New Zealand; its charmingly low stature works well in temperate gardens. Another of the podocarp clan does well here: *P. macrophyllus* (or *P. chinensis*) is a slow-growing, small tree from the Orient.

And that's it for our conifer collection. It took three installments to encompass the rich variety of conifers in the Kruckeberg Botanic Garden. We are always delighted to show them to visitors.

## Meetings and Elections

The winter general membership meeting is scheduled for 7 pm on Thursday January 23, 2003, at the Richmond Beach Congregational Church-United Church of Christ. The church is located at the corner of Richmond Beach Rd. and 15th Ave. NW. The speaker will be Robert Van Pelt. His talk is titled "Big Trees: Seattle, the Northwest, and beyond." Bob Van Pelt is an affiliate faculty member at the College of Forest Resources, University of Washington. His most recent book is "Forest Giants of the Pacific Coast," UW Press 2001. Copies will be available for purchase at the January meeting. This talk is sure to motivate many to visit and admire the Washington State champions in the Kruckeberg Botanic Garden: Tanbark oak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*), Mutant tanbark oak (*L. densiflorus* var. *attenuatodentatus*), Striped-bark maple (*Acer davidii*), and Eastern choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*).

Regular Board meetings are normally scheduled on the third Tuesday of each month; members are welcome to attend. Call 206-542-4777 or email [kbfg@kruckeberg.org](mailto:kbfg@kruckeberg.org) for more information.

## Northwest Flower & Garden Show 2003

The Northwest Flower & Garden Show will be held in Seattle at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, February 19-23 2003. The Foundation will have a booth at the show for the purpose of informing the public about our work. We plan to staff the booth with a team of volunteers who would work half-day shifts. Volunteers will have free admission and can come early/stay late to enjoy the show. If you're interested in joining the team, please call us at 206-542-4777 or send a message to [kbfg@kruckeberg.org](mailto:kbfg@kruckeberg.org).

## Parking

Many readers know the Garden is in a residential neighborhood, the right of way on 15th Ave. is narrow, and parking for visitors is quite limited. When planning a visit for tours or other events, please make carpooling a very high priority. When necessary to reduce parking impact on the neighborhood, we will set special parking arrangements. If you have questions about parking, call us at 206-542-4777. Thanks in advance for your cooperation, and thanks also to KBG neighbors for their patience.

## Garden Tours

One last tour of the garden this season has been scheduled by the City of Shoreline. The date is Saturday, October 12. For more information call 206-546-5041. The fee is \$20 per person, of which the City forwards \$15 to KBGF. Tours usually are conducted by Mareen Kruckeberg.

Tours may also be scheduled directly by calling the KBGF voicemail line, 206-542-4777. These tours normally are offered

for groups of 6 to 15 persons, by appointment. The fee is \$15 per person (fee waived for students). For organizations dedicated to coordinating senior citizen activities, a flat fee of \$100 is charged, irrespective of group size. Tours normally start at 10 am and last about two hours.

### Volunteer Help

The final Sunday afternoon work party of the season is scheduled for October 6. We'll pick it up again in March. If you weren't able to make it this season, consider adding this to your list of New Year's resolutions. We do need help.

Thanks to our Sunday volunteers in August and September: Al and Gretchen Brookes, Mickey Gourley, Barbara Hilty, Frankye Jones, Wendy Kay, Helen McCall, Jeremiah Ralston, Teena Reichgott, and Karen Ware.

There's also need for help with the other work of the Foundation. We're still looking for people who would enjoy being a docent or newsletter coordinator, and we need help with publicity, plant inventory and labeling, grant applications, and workshops and seminars. If you have an interest in any of these areas, please contact us.

### Web Site

In each issue we include this standing reminder of our web site, [www.kruckeberg.org](http://www.kruckeberg.org). Worldlink Internet Services is donating domain-name hosting for KBGF. Worldlink offers the following discounts to KBGF members:

- Dialup Internet Access at \$15/month
- DSL at 15% off
- All other Worldlink services at 10% off

Worldlink is a local company with over 5,000 subscribers, and we have been pleased with their support and positive attitude. Visit [www.w-link.net](http://www.w-link.net) or call 1-888-361-4638 for more information.

### Membership Renewal

We continue to mail our newsletter to a growing list of friends whose membership has expired, and to many others who have not yet joined. Look in the lower right corner of the mailing label for the expiration date of your membership. Please consider rejoining our effort to preserve this very special place; a membership form is on p. 3 of this newsletter. Your donation is tax-deductible.

### New Members

Welcome to the following members who have joined since June:

- Bernice Beeman
- Emily Carter
- Bob O'Brien
- Walt Bubelis
- Wanda Fleischman
- Lisa Prigmore
- Tex and Marylou Bunney
- Thomas and Catherine Mentele
- Teena Reichgott
- Susan Wright

Northwest Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society

### Profile of a Volunteer: Jeremiah Ralston

by Liz Birkholz

When Jeremiah Ralston finished high school in 1997, he already had developed a great interest in native botany. He owned and appreciated Arthur Kruckeberg's books, *Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest* and *The Natural History of Puget Sound Country*. Jeremiah, a Shorecrest High School grad, had always been interested in doing volunteer work, and so he looked for activities that would match his interest in native plant species. He saw a listing for MsK Nursery and decided to give the nursery a call. He spoke with Mareen Kruckeberg and asked if she would be interested in his help as

# m e m b e r s h i p

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Please make tx-deductible checks payable to  
 KBGF and mail to  
 Kathie Morino  
 958 Walnut  
 Edmonds, WA 98020

Please let us know how you heard about the Garden:

MsK



**Board of Directors**

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**Ex officio members**

Art and Mareen Kruckeberg

**Mark Your Calendar**

Sunday, Oct. 6, 12-4 pm: Garden cleanup work party, last of the season

Saturday, Oct. 12, 10 am: Tour sponsored by Shoreline Parks & Recreation

Thursday, Jan. 20, 7 pm: General Membership meeting

February 19-23: Northwest Flower & Garden Show

**Call 206-542-4777**  
for tour reservations

a volunteer. Mareen accepted his offer right away, and within a week Jeremiah found himself happily pulling the invasive Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) from the grounds of the Garden. These days Jeremiah tries to be at KBG for every Sunday work party. One of our youngest but most consistent volunteers, he spends most of that time working down in the meadow, expanding the tree beds by doing the admirable and much-needed task of pulling sod.

If you ask him what his favorite KBG plants are, Jeremiah will point out Andersonis Sword Fern (*Polystichum andersonii*) and a particular red alder (*Alnus rubra*). Aside from the doubly pinnate fronds of the fern, the characteristic of interest to him is the bulblet on the surface of its frond tips, which can be asexually propagated. As the fronds age, they fall over and touch the ground and give the fern the opportunity to produce new plants. Andersonis Sword Fern is the only native fern that propagates this way. It is extraordinarily rare and unusual in the Northwest.

Art Kruckeberg lucidly describes the red alder's common appearance in our lowlands and its value in regional ecological restoration in *Gardening with Native Plants*. Jeremiah appreciates KBG's *Alnus rubra* for another reason: the Garden has a beautiful cutleaf specimen. He says he likes finding those mutant characteristics in plants.

Volunteering for KBG gives Jeremiah a way to connect with the botany community. He says it is really nice to work with Mareen because she knows so much about propagation. He once expressed interest in her container gardening, then brought in his own Japanese bonsai container. Together they planted a tiny seedling of a Larch (*Larix*) and a dwarf Goats Beard (*Aruncus* sp.) in it. He still has the planted container, three years old now, which has kept the Larch in a wonderfully diminutive bonsai scale.

**Send Us Your Email Address**

Please keep us informed of changes in your email address. Email is a great way to remind you of scheduled events and inform you of changes and short-fuse happenings, and, email is inexpensive. If you think we may not have your email address, please send a message to [kgbf@kruckeberg.org](mailto:kgbf@kruckeberg.org). All personal information is kept strictly private.

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