

February 2009

We were at the Idaho Horticulture Expo last week. Doom and Gloom baby. Nobody was buying. Everyone is hunkered down, hoping to outlast the storm. Recession is causing depression.

But if you stop and think about it for a moment, we are really pretty fortunate. We work in an exhilarating industry. We are growers. We are involved in making the world a more pleasant place to live.

We remember Portland in the 1970's, and compare it to Portland today. Urban wasteland becomes urban forest. The same has happened in your cities. What we do makes a difference.

Economics are cyclical, and for the most part they are beyond our power. All we can do is make our operations run as efficiently as possible.

Profitability will return, and until it does, take solace in the fact that what you do is important.



## Don't Just Sit There, Get Excited

"Hey Buddy, I was wondering if you know how Landscape Architects find out about new varieties".

"They don't need to Frank, they already know everything".

This may seem a snide remark, but we use it to point out the perennial problem of getting architects and plant buyers to use new varieties.

We are joking when we say that they know everything. But as a group, they are comfortable with using the same old material they always have.

We've all bought liners of something new, grew them, and then, no matter

how nice they are, watch them sit in our fields because no one buys them. We remember one such field of large Jacquemontii Birch. Then Sunset Magazine did a one page article, and Jacquemontii got really hot.

Rick once showed me an extensive list of all the varieties he has grown over the years and dropped. Some didn't fit into our production program, others were too slow or had diseases or insect problems. But many were outstanding choices which would perform wonderfully in a landscape situation. They were dropped because they didn't sell.

An example is Acer buergerianum, the Trident Maple. It's a wonderful medium sized, urban tough tree with leaves that turn in fall to bright yellow, orange, red and scarlet. It should be common in the trade, but you will have to go to a specialty nursery to find it.

There are dozens of such examples.

Robinson Nursery tries each year to offer many new and underused trees and shrubs. We also work on growing new forms, such as multi-stem or standards.

Quantities are usually limited, but we try to get some to each of you who are interested.

One thing you can do to promote new varieties is to invite architects and plant buyer to tour your farm. Have a field day or luncheon. Once they see these plants they are more apt to use them. Now would be a good time. They have lots of empty space on their calendars.

Dr. A. N. Roberts at Oregon State University used to say that "New varieties are what drive the industry. They arouse interest, even excitement".

So don't let meganomics get you down. Get excited. Get your customers excited. They might just buy something.



Dawn Redwood, New this year