

Plantline

January 2016

A Newsletter from Carlton Plants LLC

Hydrangea quercifolia, the 'Rock Star' of shrubs.

By Dennis Nieymeyer

Almost no other shrub receives the accolades that many great plants people & authors have bestowed on *Hydrangea quercifolia* and its cultivars. Often heard are comments such as 'The best all-around shrub on earth,' or 'It has one of the finest floral and fall foliage color displays of any plant, and on a grand



scale,' or 'It is interesting in virtually every season' and 'A plant that pays the rent.'

This group of plants has been a star performer for many years since its discovery in 1791 near Knoxville, GA by the great plant explorer John Bartram. Since that time, it has continued to get rave reviews and has been used extensively. In 1895, after designing Central Park in NY, the father of American landscape architecture, Fredrick Law Olmstead became enamored with the plant and used it in his landscape design for George Vanderbilt's Biltmore Estate in NC. Today it is a mainstream plant in the nursery/landscape industry in the zones

of 5-9 and continues to gain popularity as additional forms, foliage colors and sizes become available. The *Hydrangea quercifolia* family is very insect and disease free and transplant well into the landscape. They perform well in slightly alkaline to acidic soils and can withstand drought in the landscape once established.

It performs as good as any shrub in dense shade and

wants more sunlight the farther north you go with it. It blooms

on old wood so pruning or shaping should be done after flowering. Nursery production in containers offers more of a challenge, as it can be tricky in overwintering; the rule of thumb is running them as dry as possible during those dormant months. Also with overhead irrigation, leaf spot can occur. However, precautionary fungicide sprays should control this issue. Most propagation is done by rooted cuttings and most recently tissue cultured plants have become a standard in the market place. These plants can be finished in one season in a #3 container.

"Thought is the blossom, language the bud and action the fruit behind it."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Carlton Plants offers the species and five of the most popular cultivars in a range of sizes from tissue cultured plants to liner sizes that fit 3, 5 and 7 gallon containers.

Hydrangea q. "Alice" is the largest of the lot with a 12' height and spread. The huge flower heads start out white and mature to a pink-rose color. Its fall foliage turns from dark green to a pleasant burgundy-red.



Hydrangea q. "Snowflake" has one of the largest flowerheads and gives the appearance of being a double flowered form. It has a moderate size of 6-8' high and wide and is the best of the lot to be used in dried arrangements and as a cut flower.



Hydrangea q. "Snow Queen" is the standard in the industry and considered the classic Oakleaf form. Its compact form and sturdy stems to hold the flowers upright make this 6' high by 5' wide a mainstay for landscapers. It sports typical flowers and foliage colors as in the species.



Hydrangea q. "Sikes Dwarf" is the smallest of our offerings growing only 3' high by 4' wide. It sports typical flowers and foliage colors as in the species and is the choice for that small space in the landscape.



Hydrangea q. "Ruby Slippers" is one of the latest new superstar cultivars to hit the market. This National Arboretum introduction has a compact form growing 4' high and 5' wide with extremely strong upright flower panicles. The flowers turn a brilliant ruby red as they mature and the fall foliage transitions into a mahogany red. This sturdy plant exhibits a strong exfoliating bark in the winter as most in the family do.



These late spring to midsummer bloomers fit an array of possibilities in the landscape. Whether in the shrub border, mass plantings, hedges, specimen or that shady problem spot in the landscape, the Hydrangea quercifolia and its cultivars offer a great solution for both landscapers and nurserymen.

Quotes: 1. Ken Druse 2. Larry Millichamp 3. Rick Darke 4. Ken Druse



Finding a Cool-er Space By Jason Bizon

How quickly the harvest comes back around! Trailers carrying pallets full of plants are beginning to fill the warehouses, readying themselves for the next six months of a cold, moist and semi dark existence. This is the life of a bareroot plant here at Carlton Plants. After working directly in those very coolers for the last 10 years I have come to have a sort of 'take for granted' attitude when it comes to the cold storage on the property. However there are literally hundreds of details that the group here works through each storage season. Protocols and systems are followed each year



Cooler control room

with only minor tweaks here and there. Each one of these systems has both a direct and indirect effect of how our plants arrive to you and how they perform in your nursery. When the spring of 2015 hit this last March it hit

fast and it was warm. Our long growing season was off to an early start and a mad rush to get the handful of varieties stored in the sawdust into the cold storage was under way, even if it was a month early. It was this very April as we scrambled to

pull orders and bring material into the buildings before bud swell that I stopped to ask myself, how did we get these buildings? Fortunately some of our current and past managers along with ownership had the forethought to recognize that changes in weather patterns will always occur and there will be springs where storing in the outdoors will not sustain Mother Nature's wake up calls, she has no snooze button. In 1979 Carlton was working with only a 9,600 sq. ft. building called the "Round-Top" for its porcelain colored bulbous roof. It housed many activities over the years until the year of 1980. In that year the first engineered Cold Storage facility was constructed. Named, appropriately, Cooler #1, this 21,000 sq. ft. structure was state of the art for its time, refrigerated, insulated and humidified. Today, over 95% of shrub storage is in this cooler. The following years of 1987 and 1989 bore two additional cold storage spaces with a combined square footage of 70,000. As the company continued to grow and its product line changed to larger ornamentals so too did our need for more cold space.



Temp/humidity recorder

WALDBART NURSERY SALAD SHOOTER By Tim Wommack

With all due respect to Ron Popeil, TV's late-night pitchman, this is not your mother's kitchen gadget. The "Side Discharge" Bucket, affectionately referred to by the Waldbart Nursery crew as their "Salad Shooter", is a heavy duty attachment used for a number of projects at this multi-faceted operation.

From the earliest years of Waldbart Nursery's existence, they have been producing high quality, field grown, balled and burlaped trees. Traditional farming practices, as well as conventional nursery equipment, was sufficient to get the job done.



Yet, over the past 15 years, more of their large caliper tree production has transitioned out of their fields and into containers. Along with that transition has come new and unique needs for efficiencies that traditional equipment doesn't provide. Rick Knobbe, manager of Waldbart Nursery's Florissant, Missouri operation provided some background. "We first experimented with container tree production 15 years ago. At that time, we filled the pots by hand with shovels. It was slow and very tedious work. But, it was manageable," said Rick. Potting mix was moved from the pile where it was located to the potting crew's work area with a "skid-steer" tractor utilizing a traditional front-end bucket. This process was working fine with the small number of trees they were potting. But, when the number of trees being potted started to increase, they had to find a better way. "We had good success with the container grown material we produced, and we felt like that was a direction we wanted to go," said Rick. Consequently, more of their tree production plan was moved from the field into containers. "We needed to find ways to be more efficient and take some of that backbreaking work off of our crew."

Chris Knobbe, farm manager at the nursery's Dorsey, Illinois location, had looked into numerous alternatives before settling on this attachment. "We looked at several potting machines that were available at the time, but we didn't find anything that we felt fit our purposes," said Chris. So the purchase was made and the attachment was put to the test.

The last cooler built in 1995 added 40,500 sq. ft. giving a total humidified cold storage square footage of 141,100! If you reference back to our January 2015 Plantline you will find an article by our Northeast Field Representative Will Steller about one of our



customers, Maple Lane Nursery. If you are interested in cold storage facilities on a smaller scale this article gives many great points and directions for doing so yourself.

A lot of forethought and details go into constructing such a building, but when done right it can reap great rewards including:

- Thermostat controlled environment for maintained dormancy and freeze protection
- Managed humidity levels for proper hydration
- Allows for flexible shipping season and planting season
- Concrete floors allow for easy clean up, more productive flows and less disease
- Floor drains for wash down to reduce slippage and injury
- Around the clock plant health monitoring and spray application even during inclement weather outside.

As harvest continues and we transition in to shipping season, our



customers can be assured that their plants will arrive in the same healthy dormant condition whether they ship in March or May. We encourage our customers to use our facility until they are ready to plant and then schedule their loads. With a good five day's notice we can pick your orders from the coolers and send them on their way. Our cold storage stays running until the month of June. If you have any questions about our cold storage please feel free to call any of us here at the nursery, we are more than willing to answer your questions about our cold storage practices and plant handling. 



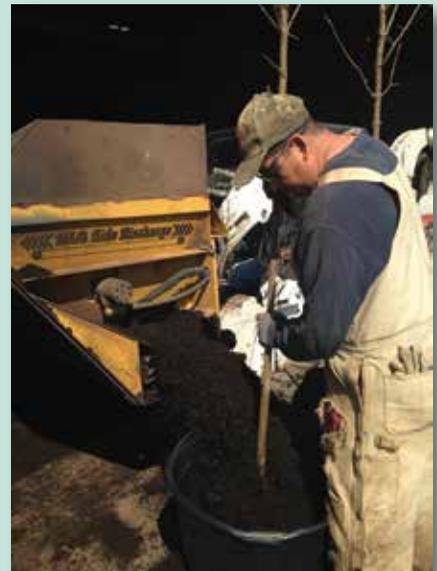
The 'Side Discharge' bucket holds about three times as much potting mix as the previous bucket. In addition to the size, the bucket's design helps reduce spillage. This made for fewer trips to the mix pile, speeding up the potting process as a result. In addition, the operator is able to more accurately measure the correct amount of mix going into the containers, reducing waste. "It makes the process of potting trees more of an assembly line," says Chris. "What took us a month to accomplish with four men and shovels can be simply done in less than a week."

Since the initial success with their tree program, the "Side Discharge" bucket has found its way into several other processes at the farm. Shrub

potting was the next obvious step. "Instead of buying a large, expensive shrub potting machine we opted to use the 'Salad Shooter,'" said Chris. The discharge speed as well as volume of mix can be easily adjusted by the operator.

Traditional field tree production still continues at Waldbart's, and they have found uses there as well. "For several years we have been using compost as a top dressing to increase the humus levels in our fields. We can drive through the tree rows and accurately spread the proper amount of compost right where it is needed."

Although they can't "set it, and forget it," the "Salad Shooter" has proven to be a valuable investment. It is a tool that saves time, reduces waste, and increases overall productivity for their nursery operation. 



OUR NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE!

HOME PAGE



We are excited to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website located at the web address www.carltonplants.com. The site has new features and an updated look and feel. A few of our goals with the new website were to make it fast, easy to navigate and user friendly. In addition, we wanted to have an easy way to request an order any time – day or night.

Listed below are some of the new functions you'll find on the Carlton Plants website:

- Homepage – At a glance, see upcoming events, featured tools and quick links to get where you want to go with one click.
- Request an order online – click on the plants you would like, check the availability, view a description and picture (*Details*) and find a substitution – all on the same page. Hit submit and your request goes to a sales representative who will follow up with a phone call.
- Click on *Resources* to watch 21 detailed pruning videos.
- Hover over the *Resources* tab and click on Newsletter to view archived publications of the Plantline dating back to 2008.
- Read about our processes and conservation practices, care and handling suggestions (in English and Spanish), job opportunities, internships, shipping and terms and volume rebates. Download a credit application.
- Finally, you can view territories and connect with your inside and outside sales representatives.

We will continually be expanding our online content including next up – *Active order viewing*.

We hope you will find this site easy to use. Please take a few moments to look it over and give us your thoughts.

START EXPLORING! 

Carlton Plants LLC Field Reps



CA,OR,WA,British Columbia
Joe Dixon, Hort. Sales & Serv. LLC
jdixoncp@frontier.com
Ph: 800-442-1459
Fx: 800-442-1460



CO,ID,MT,NM,UT,WY,Alberta
Steve Carlson
scarlson@carltonplants.com
Ph: 800-442-1458
Fx: 800-442-1462



IA,MN,ND,NE,SD,WI,Manitoba
Gary Bills
gbills@carltonplants.com
Ph: 800-442-1457
Fx: 888-909-1312



AR,IL(So.),KS,MO,OK,TX
Tim Wommack Nursery Sales LLC
timwommack@sbcglobal.net
Ph: 800-489-8733
Fx: 314-721-0899



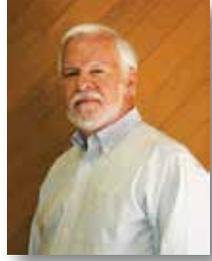
IL(Northern),IN,MI
Gary Eggenberger
geggenberger@carltonplants.com
Ph: 800-442-1455
Fx: 800-442-1456



KY,OH,WV
Adam McClanahan
amclanahan@carltonplants.com
Ph: 800-442-1453
Fx: 800-442-1454



ME,NH,NY,PA,VT,Nova Scotia,
Ontario, Quebec
Will Steller
wsteller@carltonplants.com
Ph: 800-865-6484
Fx: 800-865-6489



AL,GA,NC,SC,TN,VA
Dennis Niemeyer
dennis@ncwildflower.com
Ph: 800-525-3597
Fx: 800-525-3598



CT,DE,MA,MD,NJ,RI,Long Island NY
Ed Gregan
egregan@carltonplants.com
Ph: 866-991-8307
Fx: 866-991-8308

VISIT US AT THE WINTER TRADESHOWS

Montana Green
Billings, MT
January 6-7
Booth 24C

Green & Growin
Greensboro, NC
January 14-15
Booth 723

Illinois Landscape Show
Chicago, IL
February 3-5
Booth 1042

MANTS
Baltimore, MD
January 6-8
Booth 809

Idaho Hort
Boise, ID
Jan 20-22
Booth 302

Great Plains Expo
Sioux Falls, SD
February 8-9
Booth 13

CENTS
Columbus, OH
January 11-13
Booth 2218

The Western
Overland Park, KS
January 21-22
Booth 316

Pro-Green Expo
Denver, CO
February 10-12
Booth 1016

Northern Green
Minneapolis, MN
January 13-15
Booth 1332

Great Lakes Trade Expo
Grand Rapids, MI
January 25-27
Booth 714

Norcal
San Mateo, CA
February 11
Booth 643



CARLTON PLANTS LLC

14301 SE Wallace Rd

PO Box 398, Dayton, Oregon 97114-0398

Phone (503) 868-7971 • (800) 398-8733

FAX (800) 442-1452