

# Plantline

August 2012

A Newsletter from Carlton Plants LLC

## Finding Space in Tight Places

By Chris Irving

**U**pright, fastigate or columnar trees will continue to create sales opportunities for some time to come. Long ago our industry trended in this direction as opportunity arose for filling narrow spaces throughout large, sweeping projects. This niche helped established a commodity tree group that still offers very positive tree sales today.

The past 15 years have seen a transformation by growers towards defining selections to satisfy the growing market for filling smaller spaces and tighter areas. This niche is only growing among the varying consumer groups. The transformation

has resulted in a plethora of new selections and introductions.

So when you think upright, fastigate or columnar, it no longer revolves around just Carpinus, Quercus, and Fagus.

The fun centered around these staples has exploded, making everyone's choices for product diversity that much more interesting.



Quercus Kindred Spirit



Quercus Regal Prince

It is obvious many of the newer oaks (including Kindred Spirit® & Regal Prince®) are in a world by themselves and should be respected as a great new class for long term stature throughout our country.

Some other more common considerations include Acer rubrum 'Bowhall', Acer platanoides Crimson Sentry, Cornus mas 'Golden Glory', Ginkgo Princeton Sentry®, and Populus tremula 'Erecta' – all of which continue proving their merit. Yet still, if you're interested in newer, more unique items there is Koelreuteria paniculata Golden Candle™, Cercidiphyllum Red Fox, Eucommia Emerald Pointe™, Amelanchier Rainbow Pillar®, Liquidambar Slender Silhouette, Liriodendron 'Arnold', or Malus Marilee®, Velvet Pillar and Adirondack. All of these trees harness great potential.



Slender Silhouette

Many of these selections offer more positive attributes besides their upright form. In fact, disease resistance, three season characteristics, drought tolerance, root development, or a shorter overall stature can be among these qualities. Part of the reason behind such qualifying standards is the demand from a buying public for 'perfection' in the final product. We all are interested in improving what we can offer. And in pursuit of that goal we spend considerable time and energy networking with industry colleagues to test, trial and select items we believe offer the buyer true longevity and value for their investment. Keeping the details of these actions in mind as we each strive for future resilience can only benefit our industry as a whole.

May the upright, fastigate and columnar be with you on this journey!

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You're Invited!

## Old Dog, New Tricks

Finding Efficiency in Unexpected Places

By Allan Elliott



Mark your calendars for our Annual Open House. This year the date is August 22<sup>nd</sup> at our main office facility.

Tours will be held all day as well as an equipment display area.

Enjoy a delicious NW traditional Native American style salmon and barbecued chicken dinner with all the trimmings starting at 5:30 p.m.

Come relax with a cool drink, enjoy live music and a visit with your nursery friends.

Be sure to leave your business card or name and nursery at our raffle box table for a chance to win one of our fun prizes.

We look forward to the day and hope to see you!



**O**n a Sunday morning in spring of 2012 several people met at a freshly prepared 20 acre block. Our task was to lay out the field for planting Monday morning. This involves marking the rows and plant spacing with a tractor and groover/marker. Rows are then counted and labeled to designate which varieties are to be planted in conjunction with the planting charting (guidelines). This requires counting the marks in each row to determine quantity. Although I had observed this process for years, it only took me one length of the field and back to realize what a huge waste of time and money this was, not to mention utilization of people. Fast forward ten months. Randy, the Carlton shop manager takes on the task of developing an automated counter to count and tally the quantity of marks per row where plants can be planted.

Here is the process in Randy's own words:

- The first challenge was to find an electric counter that would operate on 12 volts DC current. This greatly reduced our choices; however Grainger did off a digital counter that operated within 4.5 – 28 volts DC. This counter was reasonably priced at \$27.00 and was relatively simple to wire. This counter can count up to 9999 units and can be reset with a momentary 12 volts switch.
- The second challenge was to protect the digital counter from the elements. This was accomplished by modifying a weather-proof electric switch box and cover, then integrating the fuse holders and the reset switch into the same weather proof box.
- The next step was to find a triggering switch that would signal the counter each time a marking paddle passed by. The problem was that we use 9", 12" and 15" marking wheels that were fabricated over a period of several years. These wheels had too much variation in size and shape. This would not allow the use of a conventional proximity switch that was the intended switch for our counter. After some experimenting, we found that we could trigger the counter with a simple momentary micro switch. This gave us more options for a triggering switch. We settled on a spring loaded micro switch. The flexibility of the spring stem allowed us to compensate for the wide variations in our marker wheels.



Mounted electric counter





Trigger switch and marking paddle

- The last challenge was to mount the spring switch to trip at each paddle with minimal motion. Too much motion at higher ground speeds would cause the spring to bounce and send a false signal to the counter, which would cause an excessive count per row. With much trial and error, we settled on a common mounting design that could be used on all four of our row marker implements. This design allowed for simple vertical adjustments that could be made in the field every time that a spacing wheel was changed. This bracket also incorporated travel limiters and rubber bumpers on both sides of the spring stem to reduce spring bounce and false signaling.
- We outfitted three tractors with the digital counter boxes, and designed the mounting so the boxes could be unplugged and removed during the off season. We then installed the spring switches on all four of our row markers, and used a common wiring plug-in so that any of the row markers could be used with any of the three tractors.
- After the first season, the system seems very accurate with only minimal adjustments made in the field. We had only one component failure and that was a spring switch. The spring stem had come loose from the micro switch and was easily repaired in the shop and then kept for a spare.



Once in the field there were minor adjustments made to fine tune the system. The initial automated counts were off by eleven from the inventory personnel count. After the adjustment the difference was one. At that point, the question is who's right and does it matter? The equipment operator worked out the details of starting and stopping at the proper points and resetting the counter by pushing a button from the cab of the tractor. He also keeps a small notebook and records the count from each pass from the readout. The row counts can be relayed to the field manager on paper every 40-60 rows or every pass over the radio.


The benefits were immediate and significant:

- Real time information is available as the field is laid out. Counts now come in as the field is marked vs. waiting for a counting crew to make the counts. This allows the field supervisor to chart or lay out the field on paper as they mark.
- Spacing changes can be made more accurately as the field is marked.
- Has cut in half the time it takes to ready a field for the planting crew.
- Reduces the chance of human error in the counting process.

The overall cost of parts for the project was about \$115.00 per planter. The initial design, procurement and installation required several days of shop time. After that each additional set-up took a half day.

The savings are as follows:

- Supervisor's time reduced by 50% to lay out the field for planting crew.
- 3-4 people doing counting were eliminated allowing them to perform other inventory or nursery functions.

Overall the costs were recovered on day one. The remaining month of planting and thereafter was gravy. Our thinking had changed from reasons it couldn't be done to "there must be a way". Talented people and positive attitudes prevailed. 

What good is the warmth  
of summer, without the  
cold of winter to give it  
sweetness.

~John Steinbeck

# HORSECHESTNUTS

By Catie Anderson

**A** group of plants that is finally being recognized for its usefulness in today's landscapes is the majestic genus *Aesculus*. These are sometimes known by their common names of Buckeye (the nut looks like a deer eye), Conkers (the nuts are used in a game called Conkers) or Horsechestnut. The name Horsechestnut has many different stories associated with it, one being that the tree is as strong as a horse and another that the nuts were fed to ailing horses. But, today *Aesculus* is grown chiefly for ornamental purposes.



Pictured above left to right: *A. Autumn Splendor*, *A. Briotii*, *A. Ft. McNair*

When the *Aesculus* are harvested from our fields they are six years old so great care is taken when digging, transporting, storing and shipping to prevent breakage. They are not overly picky about soil conditions or pH. These long lived plants have no serious pest problems and are hardy throughout most of the U.S. and some are even native. Although slower growing, they are considered a good alternative for Ash.

## Pick your favorites

Numerous new varieties on the market offer unique flower color, hardiness, and beautiful fall color. They transplant well, are easy to grow and require little maintenance. Most are good shade or specimen trees and they come in multi-stem shrub and spreading forms as well. Assortments of heights from 8 to 50 feet are available so there's one for all spaces. If you haven't tried *Aesculus*, now is the time to take a good look at something different and quite unique in an ornamental tree.

Horsechestnuts are fairly uncommon in the trade, but we have a nice variety to choose from. Check our availability and online catalog at [carltonplants.com](http://carltonplants.com).



## AESCLUS VARIETIES WE OFFER:

*Aesculus x arnoldiana* 'Autumn Splendor' – yellow flowers, great fall color

*Aesculus x carnea* 'Briotii' – dark rosy red 10" flower panicles

*Aesculus x carnea* 'Ft McNair' – resistant to leaf blotch fungus, dark pink flowers

*Aesculus x* 'Homestead' – panicles of yellow/red flowers

*Aesculus hippocastanum* *Baumannii* – double white flowers with pink flecks, fruitless

*Aesculus parviflora* – multi-stem, native to U.S., white fragrant flowers

*Aesculus pavia* – multi-stem, native to U.S., striking 6" red flower panicles

*Aesculus octandra* – native to U.S. – yellow flower spikes

## MULTI-STEMS



*A. parviflora*



*A. pavia*

### Did you know?

Yellow buckeye wood is the softest of all American hardwoods and makes poor lumber. It is used for pulpwood and woodenware.

The Champs-Elysees in Paris is lined with rows of Horsechestnuts.





# Happy Trails to Dick and Dave



Dick Bocci and Dave Cox will be retiring this year and because of their many years in key roles both here and outside of the nursery, we felt it was appropriate to acknowledge them in the Plantline.

## Dick

Most of you have come to know Dick through his 50 years of involvement in this industry. After graduating in horticulture from Oregon State, Dick began his career working in production and naturally moved into sales.

Dick has maintained a strong connection with production that has benefited the company both internally and externally. Over the years he has generously shared his knowledge with customers and fellow growers.

Dick has served our industry on many state and national committees and has helped countless people succeed in their businesses. In addition to being blessed with people skills, Dick is consistently positive and professional. He is a mentor to many who have come to know him. His approach in his career and in his life is one we would all benefit to strive for and achieve.

## Dave

Dave Cox also graduated in horticulture from Oregon State and began his career growing specimen trees.

He started working for Carlton in 1980 and after working in sales for several years, his passion for production brought him back into the field managing inventory and quality control.

Dave's attention to detail has made him a natural in his position. With his involvement in sales, he has also been a strong bridge connecting production.

Dave has enjoyed sharing his years of experience with our sales staff and customers offering many pruning demonstrations and providing a wealth of growing advice.

Dave and Dick have worked together closely for many years. Their efforts and contributions have had a major impact on this company and our industry, they are gratefully respected and appreciated.



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## Budding Demonstration at the Farwest Show!

Carlton Plants Booth #19055

Stop by our booth at the Farwest show and watch a chip budding demonstration.

We will be budding selected varieties of Crabapples on to our SproutFree® rootstock.

Questions are welcome. Samples given away!

Thursday August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1:00 – 2:00

Friday August 24<sup>th</sup> 1:00 – 2:00