

## Leaves, Limbs, Needles and Boughs

by Fred D. Opperman

Along with highlighting a tree this month, I thought I would update you on the nursery business. If ever there was a classic example of the laws of "Supply and Demand" in action, that situation exists today in the nursery industry. Over the past several years, hundreds of thousands of shrubs, shade trees, ornamental trees and evergreen trees have been planted in the Chicago-area and midwestern nurseries. An extremely strong construction environment more than justified the expansion programs undertaken by many commercial growers.

It is not surprising therefore, that as construction activity has slowed, nursery inventories are building, and price competition is becoming evident. The winner in this situation is anyone who has set aside funds for plant material purchases. The value that is obtainable in today's marketplace is unprecedented, and, for the next year at least, it promises to get even better. There are, of course, many items that are not in abundant supply, and this will be discovered in the shopping process. But for someone who has even a moderate degree of flexibility in his plant buying program, there is an excellent opportunity to dramatically stretch the buying power of his budget.

This month we will get back into the needles and boughs. I haven't highlighted this family of trees yet in my monthly articles. This tree is truly majestic and grows so well in our area that more people need to add it to their landscape plans.

*Abies concolor* — (a'bez kon'kul-er) — White (concolor) Fir.

**Leaves:** Curving outwards and upwards or almost vertically arranged on the stems, 2 to 3" long and 1/12 to 1/10" wide, flattened, glaucous on both surfaces, apex short-pointed or rounded, upper surface slightly convex, not grooved, with faint lines of stomata, lower surface with 2 faint bands of stomata separated by a green band.

**Buds:** Large, broadly conical, blunt, covered with a resin which conceals the scales, light brown.

**Stem:** First year, glabrous or minutely downy, yellowish green, second year, grayish or silvery.

**Size:** 30 to 50' in height by 15 to 30' in width, can grow to 100'.

**Bark:** Smooth on young stems except for resin blisters, 4" to 7" thick on old trunks, ashy gray and divided by deep irregular furrows into thick, horny flattened ridges.

**Cones:** Stalked, cylindrical, 3 to 6" long, and pale green before maturity often with a purplish bloom.

**Culture:** The best fir for the midwest and east; transplanted balled and burlapped; while withstanding heat, drought and cold equally well, it prefers and makes best growth on deep rich, moist, well drained gravelly or sandy-loam soils. Dislikes heavy clay soil. Can tolerate light shade.

**Diseases and Insects:** None serious.

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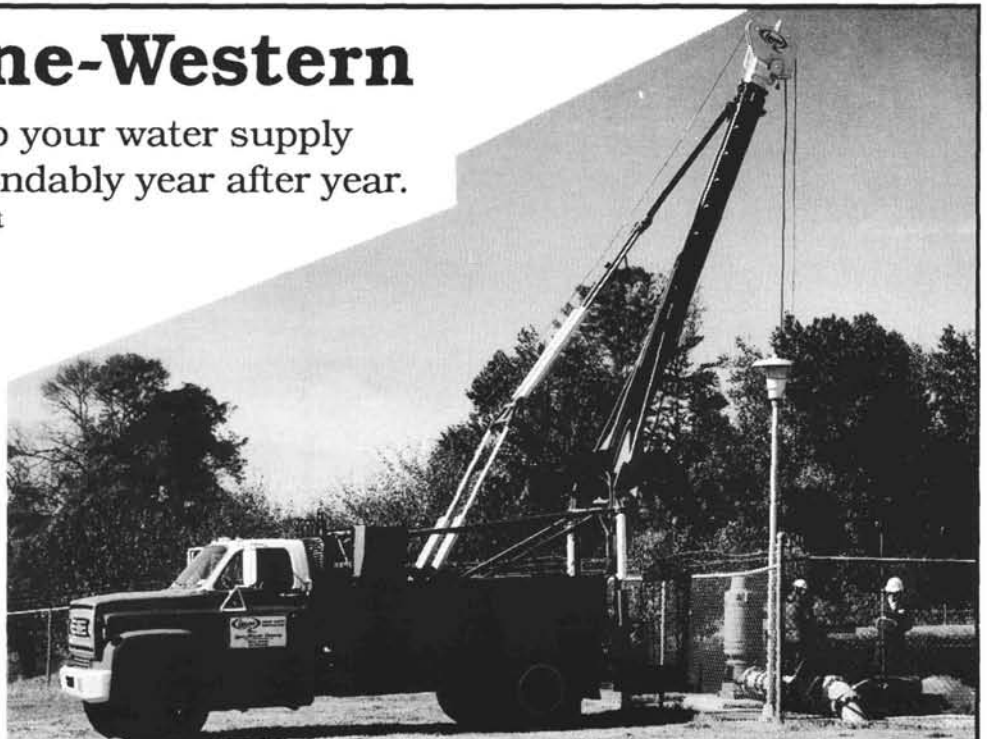
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