

March, 2010

News from the Canadian North:

So far we are having a more than mild winter with an ample amount of snow cover though I would not mind any extra inches of snow. When I say mild it means anything from -20 Celsius and up. We did have a few colder days of -30 but it never lasted. Concerning exotics I think they will fair well and not get any winter injuries.

Exotics in my area are not fashionable in that they are not favoured over the ordinary abies we find planted in the fields. Very few growers have exotics but of the ones that do, they continue to plant year after year. The most popular of the exotics are the Koreanas mostly as a replacement plant for where the Fraser no longer grows. The major concern for the growers is how to market the exotics to the wholesaler or retailers. Most would ask me if they could market the Koreana as a Fraser. Others wonder if the Koreana, or any other type of exotics, would bring in the same price as the Fraser or the Balsam. Will they have to discount the price of the exotics in order to convince the buyer to purchase them? What if the buyer doesn't want to have exotics? It is hard to analyse the market when there is little on the market to start with. As a Choose and Cut operation, I know that when I talk to the clients about the coming of other types of conifers such as the Koreana, Meyeri, and the Vetichii, they are more than anxious to try something new. I am not as sure as wholesaler on how well it will go with the retailer. If he is use to selling a certain amount of Frasers and/or balsams, will he want the take the chance to sell something new?

What I have observed while buying stock for my conifer garden was the enormous amount of Koreanas on the market. Some small, yellow in color, tall and skinny, etc all of which were destined for gardens. So if the nurserymen are acquainted with the Koreanas maybe the change in their purchasing habits would not be so hard. Usually clients go to the garden center inquiring on anything new during the spring, will they do the same for their Christmas tree?

If you have any experiences with marketing your exotics as a wholesaler, please tell us.

Larry Downey