

February, 2010

Hello from Minnesota,

We are having a rather normal winter here, with occasional bouts of snow and cold. We could use a little more snow but you have to be careful for what you wish for. We had one of the best selling seasons in years here in the Midwest from what I here from everyone I have talked to.

Most of the trees sold here are Balsam and Fraser Fir. In the past couple of years there have been a couple exotic species that have come onto the market in Minnesota. One is the Siberian Fir and the other is the Meyer Spruce. The Siberian Fir has soft flat needles and has great needle retention. It is a little slow to start out in the field, but when it gets its 'feet' down will put out over a foot of growth a year. It has a tap root system much like a Turkish fir or Concolor fir.

Because it has a tap root it seems to do well in dry years. On the tree lot it has its own distinct look and when customers have found out where it is from they are very interested in it. People do like to have something that is unique and from a different part of the world. They have sold for \$75 on a precut lot in Duluth, so they do get a premium price in our neck of the world.

The Meyer Spruce has been around a little longer here and it is gaining popularity also. I have heard a lot of comments on this tree concerning its good needle retention. Most people when they see Spruce the first thing that comes to mind is sharp pokey needles all over the floor. This is not the case with a Meyer Spruce. It has just as good needle retention as a Fraser Fir with a lot of people having the tree break bud in their house and putting out new growth.

One problem with the Meyer Spruce is that it does break bud a little early in some areas. I had an issue with it this spring when it got very cold right before bud break and there was a lot of aborted buds. Some of the Meyer Spruce had only one or two buds break on six foot tree.

By June though you could see that the tree was growing new buds to replace the ones that were damaged. They did not break bud and grow out, but they are ready for next year. It looks like they put out several buds for everyone that was aborted.

I will take pictures of them this spring when they open.

Anyway both of these trees look to be viable trees for the Christmas tree and landscape market in the Midwest.

Thanks and I hope everyone gets plenty of spring rain for the upcoming planting season.

Michael Laine

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