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The legacy of trees

On August 6, 1945, a plane dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

That bomb created an enormous fireball that destroyed everything within a one-mile radius, and left black ash and radiation for an even greater distance and time.

Through the devastation, one remarkable thing survived: the ginkgo. Its leaves were singed, and outer branches and bark were burnt to a crisp. But by the following spring, 170 ginkgo trees, now known as “A-bombed trees,” were blooming again.

They continue to grow and flourish to this day and are a reminder that even through humanity’s darkest moments, nature has a way of withstanding our destruction.

When I saw that this April issue was dedicated to trees, I immediately started thinking about which trees stand out to me and why? A good friend of mine, Rick Cate, immediately said to look up this ginkgo story within minutes of asking him what tree is “cool.” I was blown away.

A little closer to home, I learned that a bristlecone pine somewhere in the White Mountains of California is about 5,000 years old, which makes it the oldest known non-cloned organism on Earth. The tree’s location is a secret, but its other close relatives are scattered throughout the mountains and share a close ancient birth-day. I’ve sold that species for years!

Although the ginkgo and the bristlecone pine have incredible stories, some trees are simply known for their beauty, character, survivability, or even a cool name.

And who was the person lucky enough to discover it? That is something that always amazes me. There are an incredible number of trees in this world, but there are still more discovered constantly and even more that have yet to be created.

We are lucky to be surrounded by some incredible propagators who were instrumental in introducing new varieties. Where would we be without Talon Buchholz, **Iseli Nursery**, or **Wells Nursery**, to name just a few?

To think of yards without a *Picea pungens* ‘Iseli Fastigiata’ or a *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* ‘Green Arrow’ (first introduced by Buchholz)



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is almost unfathomable. And **J. Frank Schmidt & Son’s** Red Sunset Maple (*Acer palmatum* ‘Franksred’) graces landscapes across the country. The thousands of maple varieties have some of my favorite names, like ‘Red Dragon’, ‘Autumn Moon’, and a beautiful new variety, ‘Pink Panther’, introduced by Cristy Nursery.

Some people are just drawn to introducing new varieties. My husband and I are both more interested in growing things that others have introduced. We are honored to carry them at our nursery. Our 5-year-old, however, is the opposite.

A couple years ago, he saw a maple seedling that we have at our nursery that was unnamed. He asked what the name was, and when he learned that it didn’t have a name yet, he was in complete shock. “But, why? It is so pretty.”

I told him if he wanted to name it, he could, but he would have to help me cut scion wood so we could graft it and begin its legacy here at **Columbia Nursery**.

Ever since then, he has checked on his “babies” throughout the heat waves and ice storms, and cut more scion wood for propagation. Every time he sees a truck leave, he asks if his maples are on it. They have a few more years, but when you see ‘Pancakes and Maple Syrup’ hit the market, you’ll know it came from a child with a passion and desire to continue this legacy of discovery.

So, who will be next? And what will it be? I hope we see many new and young up and coming propagators that will satisfy the thirst we have for new and “cool” trees. ☺

Amanda Staehely