OSU MG Study Group Diagnostic Show-and-Tell Highlights: February 4, 2019

Prepared and photographed by Elizabeth Price (Except where noted)

Join our friendly OSU MG Study Group on the first Monday of each month from 1 to 3 pm for Diagnostic Show-and-Tell. Have fun while learning! We explore bugs, diseases and more.

Below are a few samples of what MGs brought to our last session.

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***Chamaecyparis thyoides* 'Red Star' (Atlantic white-cedar)**

Chamaecyparis thyoides is native to the East Coast of the United States ranging from southern Maine all the way to the pan handle of Florida. It favors boggy, swampy and riparian areas. Its foliage is typical of at least half a dozen genera in the cypress family (Cupressaceae): flattened overlapping scales that adhere tightly to the twig. This is adult foliage.

As saplings, all cypress family plants start out with juvenile foliage that is typically described as awl-like. In most genera, a transition from juvenile to adult foliage occurs within a year or two; so the juvenile foliage is rarely seen. However, certain genetic mutations can trigger a plant to retain juvenile foliage throughout its life cycle; those in the horticultural trade keep an eye out for these oddities as a source of new and novel cultivars.

The 'Red Star' specimen Diane brought in is one such oddity, discovered in the early 1970s by a plantsman in Tennessee. (This plant also goes by the names of 'Rubicon' and 'Ericoides'). In addition to its compact, dense form, this cultivar is known for the rich bronze tones the foliage takes on in winter, a trait also often seen in the species. Given time 'Red Star' can reach 15-25 feet in height; so, without some pruning, Diane's specimen will outgrow the spot it occupies by the front door. Its tolerance of wet conditions is another useful trait it shares with the species.

NOTE: These cultivars with fixed juvenile foliage can be maddeningly difficult to identify without a plant tag, as they bear zero resemblance to the species.

For more information: American Conifer Society OSU Dept. of Horticulture Landscape Plants

Pillar-shaped cultivar with juvenile foliage due to a genetic mutation.

NOTE: The image of the potted plant is by Diane Cleven.

***Camellia sasanqua* 'Apple Blossom'**

Linda brought in a stunning and highly fragrant *Camellia* flower from a shrub that's been flowering since December. The flower petals and glossy green leaves were in perfect condition, showing none of winter's ill effects. Linda says this shrub has a more open form than other *Camellias,* which allows one to admire its structure. It is about 10-12 feet tall and performs well in her yard with morning shade and afternoon sun.

Many might be surprised to learn that the *Camellia* genus is also home to the tea plant, *C. sinensis*, another species that helps bring cheer to Pacific Northwest winters (at least at my house). The tea plant's white flowers are similar to those of *C. sasanqua*. A trait all plants in the tea family (Theaceae) share is numerous stamens; depending on the species, 20-100 stamens crowd the flower's center, adding a bright focal point.

For more information: Encyclopedia Britannica: Theacea

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