

# ETF News

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NEWSLETTER OF THE EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION

## In Praise of Conifers

By Whitey Lueck

Before prehistoric humans arrived here in the upper Willamette Valley, conifers already grew in abundance in this area. At that time, near the end of the most recent Ice Age, the landscape was much more open, with scattered groups of Engelmann spruce and mountain hemlock separated by extensive grasslands where mammoths, giant ground sloths, and other now-extinct animals grazed and prospered.



But times change, and plant and animal communities change. With the warming of this area's climate that began about 10,000 years ago, the spruce and hemlock headed up into the Cascades, where the cooler climate better suits them, and Douglas-fir moved into the valley—presumably from the south—where it persisted for millennia, despite the burning practices of area aborigines that kept much of this part of the valley in treeless prairie.

Douglas-fir now dominates local woodlands, and is joined sometimes by valley ponderosa pine, incense-cedar, and grand fir. But western hemlock and western redcedar—both of which are common farther north—are absent from our local forests.

The Euro-American settlers who began arriving in this area in the mid-1800s planted mostly native bigleaf maples along our streets because they were locally available, easy to transplant, grew fast, and developed broad-spreading, shade-providing canopies. But here and there, they also planted conifers. After all, conifers simply belong here, as they are perfectly adapted to our

area's winter-wet and summer-dry climate. Part of what makes Eugene special is our urban forest that is composed largely of broad-leaved deciduous trees, but that is punctuated with the lofty spires of firs and incense-cedars, as well as giant sequoias and other conifers.

These days, people seldom plant conifers in their yards. And although City regulations do permit the planting of conifers in the public right-of-way—with special permission of the City's Urban Forester—very few actually get planted. But that could be changing as people become more aware of the important environmental roles that conifers play. For example, unlike broad-leaved deciduous trees, evergreen conifers work year-round—producing oxygen and storing up carbon through photosynthesis, and providing important storm-water benefits by intercepting precipitation in their dense canopies.

Particularly in Eugene's South Hills, homeowners and developers need to be encouraged to plant conifers. Otherwise, our distinctive conifer-cloaked ridgeline may end up looking very different by the next century. When an older fir is removed, we need to consider replacing it with another fir or other native conifer instead of a Japanese maple or eastern redbud. Future Eugeneans will thank us for thinking ahead and ensuring that conifers continue to be a substantial component of our urban forest.

*(This article is adapted from one that first appeared in ETF's Newsletter in spring 2001.)*



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**To enhance  
community  
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the collaborative  
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Eugene's diverse  
and vibrant natural  
landscape**



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# President's Column



This is a wonderful time of year: The days are getting longer, spring is coming, and trees are beginning to bloom. This fall and early winter have been especially exciting for ETF.

In October, ETF's board of directors and supporters car-pooled to Portland to learn from Friends of Trees (FOT). Scott Fogarty's talk at ETF's annual meeting last February inspired us, and our meeting with FOT staff provided practical details about how their tree group works. We toured their headquarters, met their employees, and learned about their programs and organization. Since our October visit, we have continued to receive generous support and invaluable mentoring from Scott Fogarty and staff at FOT, for which we are grateful.

In November, I attended an exciting conference of the Partners in Community Forestry, also in Portland, thanks in part to a NeighborWoods Scholarship from the Home Depot Foundation. It was inspiring to hear

about tree projects taking place in cities across the country, and to learn more about how tree groups succeed. I was particularly interested in the work taking place in Portland and Seattle.

Also in November, ETF's planting coordinator, Jeff Lanza, and I spent a day training with FOT as crew leaders and participating in a neighborhood planting. At this event, over a hundred volunteers planted 120 trees in a few hours and gathered afterward at a neighborhood church for hot soup. Then in December, I spent a day meeting with City of Portland staff and going door to door with their tree canvassers to sign up residents for plantings. And in early January, I became an ISA-certified arborist. While I am a beginner at arboriculture, studying for the exam deepened my admiration for trees and my thinking about what trees need to thrive.

In fall 2010, ETF will begin pilot plantings here in Eugene using the approach of Portland's Friends of Trees. These plantings will be larger and more volunteer-intensive, include yard and fruit trees, and be sponsored by ETF and local businesses. And they will foster increased neighborhood

involvement and responsibility. As described elsewhere in this newsletter, ETF's active and growing stewardship program now leads monthly work parties to care for and fill in past plantings. Come join us for a couple hours on a Saturday morning.

Learning from the Friends of Trees people helps us see what we need to do and how to do it in our home here at the other end of the Willamette Valley. This is where we will join with our longtime collaborators—the City of Eugene and many other local groups and individuals—to build the healthiest urban forest possible. Here we can create an example of how a mid-sized urban area can bring together people to plant trees and take care of an urban forest that takes care of us in return by providing wood, fibers, food, medicine, shade, cooling, beauty, inspiration, homes for beneficial insects and fungi, and all the other myriad benefits of a healthy forest.

*Erik Burke*

Erik Burke, President



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**Yes,** I would like to help ETF in its mission to protect and enhance the long-term health of Eugene's urban forest. I have enclosed a check for the following amount.

Here is my tax-deductible contribution:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Bigleaf Maple (\$1000)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Oregon White Oak (\$250) | <input type="checkbox"/> Oregon Ash (\$50) |
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Kindly make your check payable to Eugene Tree Foundation and mail this form to Eugene Tree Foundation, P.O. Box 12265, Eugene, OR 97440,

**or make your donation online at our website, [www.eugenetreefoundation.org](http://www.eugenetreefoundation.org)**

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Please send me the ETF Newsletter via e-mail.

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

# Meet The Pretenders

By Alby Thoumsin

No, I'm not going to talk about the famous rock band, but about some trees that have been given names against their will! When I moved from Belgium to the U.S. almost 18 years ago, one of the exciting parts about settling in Oregon was discovering trees growing wild here that I had only heard about back in forestry school. I bought myself an Audubon Guide to Western Trees and started hiking around, eager to finally meet these amazing trees.

One thing that surprised me was that some conifers share the same common name in English, but their scientific names are very different. Their common names suggest that they are related, but in truth they share only a few characteristics and physical attributes.

Please allow me to introduce: The false cedars! The name cedar has been given to four Pacific Northwest conifers: incense-cedar, western redcedar, Port-Orford-cedar, and Alaska yellow-cedar. In fact, these trees are not cedars at all! *Real* cedars—or more cor-

rectly *true* cedars—are native to both Asia and Africa, but some of them are commonly planted in Eugene as ornamental trees.

So now, let me introduce: The *true* cedars! Four species belong to the genus *Cedrus*: 1) Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*)—most often seen as the bluish variant called 'Glaucua'—from the Atlas Mountains of northwestern Africa; 2) Cyprian cedar (*Cedrus brevifolia*), which is closely related to...; 3) cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*), the tree that appears on the Lebanese flag; and 4) Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), often called simply deodar, which is obviously from south-central Asia. That's it. Only four true cedars on the entire planet, none of which is native to the New World.

You likely noticed that each of the true cedars has the same genus name, *Cedrus*. In an effort to properly name a tree—or any living thing in the animal or plant kingdom—one should always try to name it based on its scientific name, which is the best and most correct reference. So the real names of the false cedars mentioned above are: *Calocedrus decurrens* (incense-cedar), *Thuja plicata* (western redcedar), *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* (Port-Orford-cedar), and *Chamaecyp-*

*aris nootkatensis* (Alaska yellow-cedar). Note that only the last two share the same genus name—*Chamaecyparis*. None of them is a cedar—*Cedrus*—and yet we use that name on a daily basis to identify them.

Maybe they were originally called cedars because their wood color and aromatic qualities are similar to the true cedars...? But they are in fact very different. True cedars have stiff and relatively long and sharp needles; on second-year and older branchlets, the needles grow in whorls or rosettes atop stubby little wooden spurs, and are aligned along the tops of the branches. *The Pretenders*, on the other hand, have flat, scale-like needles pressed closely to the shoots. I could give you more details for distinguishing them, but I'm running out of room...and anyway, that's what Tree Walks are for!

My tip today? Be ready for the spring newsletter—I think I'll try to confuse you with something else (haha!).

Until next time!



Alby Thoumsin is a certified arborist.

## Winter-Blooming Trees

By Whitey Lueck

Many people have the impression that, during the winter, trees—especially broad-leaved deciduous ones—are completely dormant, or at least they won't be producing flowers until the longer and warmer days of spring. But thanks to relatively mild winters here in western Oregon, it's possible to find at least one species of broad-leaved tree—and sometimes several or more—in bloom during any given month of winter.

In December, the long, dangling, pollen-bearing catkins of European filberts begin to develop—and the tiny, magenta female flowers do, too, though they're not nearly as conspicuous. And in January, we begin to see

the first elm flowers.

Yes, you have to look closely, but you certainly don't need a microscope to see their flowers.



Most of the trees that bloom during the winter have relatively inconspicuous flowers that are wind-pollinated. But trees with showier and insect-pollinated flowers—such as the earliest magnolias and some of the flowering cherries and plums—are already in

bloom some years in mid-February or definitely by March, which is of course still "winter."

Sometimes, the flowers of winter-blooming broad-leaved trees are killed during one of our occasional cold snaps. But many of these trees produce their flowers over a period of several weeks so that, even if some of the flowers are killed by cold, others won't be. And even if all of the flowers happen to be killed one year by extreme cold, there's always next year, since trees are long-lived perennial plants that will have multiple opportunities to reproduce during their lifetimes.

So get outside and take a closer look at what's happening in the world around us. There are signs of spring everywhere, even if it's only early February!



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## Upcoming ETF Work Parties and Planting Projects

ETF is developing a stewardship campaign to train a core of volunteers to lead crews at plantings as well as to inspect, water, weed, mulch, and prune trees. This year we are focusing monthly work parties on the section of Amazon Creek from Jefferson Street to Chambers Street. We are also working with other neighborhood and community groups and the City of Eugene on planting and stewardship projects. Come join us on Saturdays for a couple hours of hard work as well as fun. No experience necessary. All events occur rain or shine.

For information on these events and future plantings, contact Erik at 541-915-1601 or erikb@eugenetreefoundation.org.

• **February 6th** (completed)

Assist neighborhood and Volunteers in Parks with the restoration of Spring Creek by planting trees and understory shrubs, and removing blackberries and English ivy.

• **February 13th** (10am to noon)

ETF and City of Eugene Stream Team will have a planting and work party along Amazon Creek near Blue Heron Bridge. We will plant and mulch 40 native trees and remove blackberries. We'll meet on the east side of the parking lot of the Albertsons at 18th and Chambers, and work along the south bank of the creek. Stream Team will provide gloves, tools, and refreshments.

• **February 20th** (9am-noon)

**Campus Re-Leaf**, an ETF/NeighborWoods project. About 15 streetside trees will be planted. Meet at East 15th Avenue and Kincaid Street.

• **February 27th** (9am to noon)

ETF volunteers will join the Stream Team and other groups to plant 300 native trees along Amazon Creek near Bertelson road in west Eugene. Turn north on Bertelsen from West 11th Avenue, and look for the event sign.

• **March 6th** (9am to noon)

An ETF/NeighborWoods project in South

University Neighborhood. About 30 streetside trees will be planted along Emerald Street between 20th and 24th Avenues.

• **April 10th** (9am-noon)

ETF/NeighborWoods **Arbor Day Celebration** and **Trees-for-Concrete** project. Twenty or more street trees will be planted in front of the Eugene Weekly office and in the surrounding neighborhood.



Maintenance work at Westmoreland Park on January 23, 2010.