



## *The Blue Meyer*

By Bob Girardin

This is my third article on this amazing rare Chinese spruce (*Picea meyeri*). The name Blue Meyer was coined by my good friend Bill Sayward from Itasca Greenhouse in Cohasset, Minnesota. The reason I am writing about Blue Meyer is that I strongly feel we have a winner in this rare Chinese spruce.

Darrell Russ from Norfolk, CT, who is one of the pioneers with the Exotic movement, was the person who first put me on to this great tree. As the head forester for the Great Mountain Forest in Norfolk, CT, he had an opportunity to watch this Chinese spruce grow to its present height of over 50 feet.

I purchased my first plugs of Blue Meyer from Itasca Greenhouse in 1991. I put them in my transplant bed until the Spring of 1994, when I field planted them as P+3. Once established, they averaged a foot or more growth per year. In 2000, these trees are presently over 6 feet tall.

After observing this species for seven years in the field on many different sites both heavy and dry, this tree is a survivor. The feedback that I have received on this tree from growers all across the country and Canada support my conclusions. My observations on this rare Chinese spruce are as follows:

1. Beautiful, blunt blue-green foliage
2. Medium growth rate
3. Self-shaping with a minimum of shearing
4. Upright branching habit
5. Does well under drought conditions
6. Does well on both heavy and light soils
7. Responds well to fertilizer
8. Heavy bud set
9. Responds very well to shearing
10. No evidence of disease
11. Very few insect problems (One out of 400 trees had a white pine weevil problem)
12. Does not break bud early
13. Can withstand temperatures ranging from -50°F to 100+°F
14. Needle retention is excellent
15. Does well on heavy clay soils
16. Transplants easily (I had a 100% survival)
17. Some trees tend to grow wide
18. Does very well as an interplanted species

I feel the future for this Exotic spruce is as a living Christmas tree. Its dense, self-shaping appearance makes it a perfect candidate for the live tree market and as an ornamental planting and a beautiful 7 foot Christmas tree without much shearing.

This spruce should be part of any exotic planting and is the perfect candidate for areas of the county that experience a wide fluctuation of temperatures like the upper Midwest, and also those microclimates that have a wide range of soil conditions.