

# *Small Conifers*

A presentation by Robert N. Cowie, Jr.  
A.S.A., Horticulture, Ohio State University  
Director of Operations, Retail Division

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5157 Akron-Cleveland Road  
Peninsula, OH 44264

330-650-4969  
[robcowie@suncrestgardens.com](mailto:robcowie@suncrestgardens.com)

Dwarf or small conifers offer us a multitude of dramatic and unusual shapes, sizes, colors and fun textures for year round visual interest in our gardens. They provide permanent evergreen structure suitable to all gardens, while combining perfectly with perennials, groundcovers, trees and grasses.

### **I. What Are Dwarf/Small Conifers**

Dwarf or small conifers are a selection of a plant species that differ from their parent plant, typically trees. They often differ from their parent plant in many ways: size, shape, color, texture, and habit. We want to use the words "dwarf" and "miniature" very loosely; these plants are often simply smaller versions of their parent plants. They are smaller because they grow slower; there is not a predetermined maximum size or width. Like all woody plants, they continue to grow through their entire life span. Because they grow slower, their branches and needles are smaller, often creating a misshapen or contorted habit. These smaller characteristics allow us to use these plants in ways we could never use their parent plant.

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Growth per year</u></b>	<b><u>Size in 10 – 15 years</u></b>
Miniature	less than 3"	2 – 3'
Dwarf	3 – 6"	3 – 6'
Intermediate	6 – 12"	6 – 15'

\*General Conifer Size Categories from the American Conifer Society

### **II. Where Do Dwarf/Small Conifers Come From**

Dwarf or small conifers are not naturally occurring; they are cultivated using one of several methods.

- A. They are selected from huge crop plantings of the parent plant, where a single mutant plant may be found to be genetically different from the group.
  - Seedling Liner Production
  - Nursery Production
  - Christmas Tree Production
  - Timber Industry
- B. Many are collected in the wild from unusual growths or "witch's brooms" on the parent plant. Seeds or cuttings are collected from this mutant growth. They are then grafted, grown and evaluated for their characteristics.

However they are selected, these single plants are then used as a parent plant for grafting or cutting wood to grow 'clones' of these genetically different plants. After years of trial and evaluation, those plants that are determined to have value may be named, patented, put into nursery production, and eventually sold in retail markets.

### **III. Using Dwarf/Small Conifers**

1. Components of the Landscape:
  - Accent
  - Specimen
  - Groupings
  - Screening
  - Texture
  - Color
2. Trough and Dish Gardens—typically the miniature varieties
3. Bonsai
4. Rock Gardens
5. Railroad Gardens and Miniature Landscapes
6. Container Plantings and Seasonal Pots
7. Interior Decorating, Holiday Decorating

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Abies balsamea</i> 'Nana'	Dwarf Balsam Fir	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i>	Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Jade'	Jade Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Contorta'	Contorted Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Nana'	Dwarf Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Nana Lutea'	Nana Lutea Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Kosteri'	Kosteri Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Verdoni'	Verdoni Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Golden Sprite'	Golden Sprite Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> 'Fernspray Gold'	Fernspray Gold Hinoki Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis pisifera</i> 'Boulevard'	Boulevard Sawara Falsecypress	
<i>Chamaecyparis pisifera</i> 'White Pygmy'	White Pygmy Sawara Falsecypress	
<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Mother Load'	Mother Load Juniper	
<i>Juniperus squamata</i> 'Blue Star'	Blue Star Juniper	
<i>Juniperus communis</i> 'Compressa'	Compressa Common Juniper	
(Juniperus continued...)		

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
<i>Juniperus communis</i> 'Gold Cone'	Gold Cone Common Juniper	
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> 'Shimpaku'	Shimpaku Chinese Juniper	
<i>Picea orientalis</i> 'Shadows Broom'	Shadows Broom Oriental Spruce	
<i>Picea abies</i> 'Little Gem'	Little Gem Spruce	
<i>Picea abies</i> 'Formanek'	Formanek Weeping Norway Spruce	
<i>Picea abies</i> 'Pendula'	Weeping Norway Spruce	
<i>Picea glauca</i> 'Conica'	Dwarf Alberta Spruce	
<i>Picea glauca</i> 'Jean's (John's) Dilly'	Jeans Dilly Dwarf Alberta Spruce	
<i>Picea pungens</i> 'Fat Alberta'	Fat Albert Blue Spruce	
<i>Picea pungens</i> 'Sester Dwarf'	Sester Dwarf Blue Spruce	
<i>Picea pungens</i> 'Montgomery'	Montgomery Blue Spruce	
<i>Picea pungens</i> 'Globosa'	Globe Blue Spruce	
<i>Picea pungens</i> 'Prostrata'	Prostrate Blue Spruce	
<i>Pinus mugo</i> 'Pauls Dwarf'	Pauls Dwarf Mugo Pine	
<i>Pinus mugo</i> 'Teeny'	Teeny Dwarf Mugo Pine	
(Pinus continued...)		

Botanical Name	Common Name	Notes
Pinus densiflora 'Umbraculifera Compacta'	Compact Tanyosho Pine	
Pinus parviflora 'Glauca'	Japanese White Pine	
Pinus strobus 'Blue Shag'	Blue Shag Dwarf White Pine	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Pendula'	Sargent Weeping Canadian Hemlock	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Gracillus'	Gracillus Weeping Canadian Hemlock	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Bennett'	Bennetts Dwarf Canadian Hemlock	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Summer Snow'	Summer Snow Dwarf Canadian Hemlock	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Gentsch White'	Gentsch White Dwarf Canadian Hemlock	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Moon Frost'	Moon Frost Dwarf Canadian Hemlock	
Tsuga Canadensis 'Coles Prostrate'	Coles Dwarf Canadian Hemlock	
_____	<b>Small Deciduous Trees That Work Well with Dwarf or Small Conifers:</b>	_____
Acer griseum	Paperbark Maple	
Acer Palmatum 'Dissectum'	Cutleaf Japanese Maple	
Corylus Avellana 'Contorta'	Harry Lauder's Walking Stick	

**Additional Resources that may be helpful for you:**  
[www.stanleynursery.com](http://www.stanleynursery.com)    [www.iselinursery.com](http://www.iselinursery.com)    [www.comifersociety.org](http://www.comifersociety.org)