

A Sneak Peek at Taltree's Newly Installed Dwarf Conifer Collection

by Foy Spicer, Horticulturist at Taltree Arboretum and Gardens



Taltree
arboretum & gardens

Taltree Arboretum & Gardens in northwest Indiana is set to open a two-acre miniature train garden in spring 2011. While the idea of tiny towns, garden-scale trains and Civil War scenes will attract a whole new set of visitors, it's the collection of dwarf trees that have plant-enthusiasts atwitter.

This is an exciting addition for Taltree as soils could be mixed and tailored to create areas with the well-drained soils conifers need to thrive. Taltree horticulturalist, Patty Stimmel, researched thousands of plant options. She went on an expedition to specialty nurseries on the



Cephalotaxus harringtonia 'Korean Gold'
Photo by Foy Spicer

West Coast with Richard Hitz of Hitz Design and Nancy Marshall of Small's Landscaping to acquire distinctive woody plants. They procured hundreds of species and varieties including many *Chamaecyparis*, *Larix*, *Picea*, *Pinus*, *Tsuga* and *Cephalotaxus*.

Here's a sneak peek of three of the conifers in the Railway Garden.

Cephalotaxus harringtonia 'Korean Gold'

This showy dwarf plum yew has gold-tipped needles that hold their color all summer before aging to green with winter. A slow grower, this bush should reach its full size—8' x 3'—in 10 to 15 years. It is marginally-hardy in Valparaiso, Indiana (Zone 5), and it has therefore been placed in a sheltered location near the limestone quarry vignette.

Pinus parviflora 'Adcock's Dwarf'

The beauty of this dwarf Japanese white pine is its fine texture, created by short, dense clusters of needles and the unusual grey-green cast which is the result of particularly large stomata. 'Adcock's Dwarf' generally starts off vertical and spreads over time. The compact growth habit makes it a useful specimen for the Railway Garden.

Picea omorika 'Kuschen'

Normally Serbian spruce is pyramidal in shape, but this dwarf is a rotund meatball. The globe habit needs no pruning to be maintained. Growing about one to three inches a year, it should plump up to a foot

tall and foot and a half wide when mature.



Picea omorika 'Kuschen'
Photo by Foy Spicer

This shrublet is near a knee wall where visitors can admire its bristly form up close.

Taltree Arboretum & Gardens is south of Lake Michigan approximately an hour outside Chicago. For more information about Taltree's Railway Garden visit taltree.org.

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A view across the Railway Garden to the depot building. This photo was taken at the end of October when 90 percent of the plants had been installed. The final 10 percent will be installed next spring. Photo by Foy Spicer

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