

## A History of Innovation and Discovery: Fairview Evergreen New Plant Introductions

During the course of our 100 years of growing the finest ornamental nursery stock available in our green industry, we have proudly originated and introduced many new evergreen cultivars to the trade. We provided all of these plants to the trade openly, with no patent or royalty fees attached, nor restrictions placed upon others who wished to grow these new varieties. We hoped these new plants would add beauty and diversity to the palette of landscape selections available to property holders wishing to enhance the aesthetic value of their homes and businesses. We believe our plant introductions have accomplished this goal for decades, and continue to do so today.

We are often asked to tell the stories of how some of these Fairview Evergreen introductions came to be. What better time than our 100th anniversary, then, to share some of the history behind just a few these popular and time-tested Fairview Originals! Much of the history here comes courtesy of D. Garth Hetz, our recently retired third-generation president, and Neil Hetz. We are fortunate that Neil, the youngest of our five second-generation owner-operators, made detailed notes about these introductions as we were developing and trialing many of the older ones. Neil passed away in 2007, but we will be forever grateful to him for his contributions to the nursery, not the least of which was serving as an unofficial company historian.

Our founder Frank C. Hetz made the original selection of **Juniper chinensis Hetz's Columnaris** from a bed of Juniper chinensis seedlings in the 1930s. In those days FEN grew a lot of seedlings from collected seed. This one showed early promise because of its vigorous upright habit and nice medium-green color. It also displayed two types of foliage - scale and needle type, and produced small blue berries later in the season which added to its appeal. The Hetz Columnaris first appeared in our retail catalog in 1942. Since then it has become very popular in the trade. Some of our Canadian nursery friends started calling it the Fairview Juniper years ago, and that name for it is probably as common now as Hetz's Columnaris.



**Thuja occidentalis Hetz's Winter Green** was first offered for sale in our Fall 1950 wholesale catalog, with the following description: "This is new - first offering. This was a winter selection chosen primarily because of its deep green color and glossy foliage, apparently having some *Elegantissima* parentage. It is a rapid grower and a good pyramidal tree." We believe that the plant was selected from some *Pyramidalis* seedlings which had cross-pollinated with some *Elegantissima* (gold-tipped arborvitae) that we also grew. The *Elegantissima* parentage can be seen in the lustrous, almost shiny dark green new growth. Its narrow upright habit shows its *Pyramidalis* parentage. The Hetz Winter Green is a vigorous grower and will get quite tall. It has a strong central leader and is less likely to be damaged by heavy snows than some of the other dark green arborvitae.

**Thuja occidentalis Fairview** is a selection made by A. Leroy Hetz in the 1970's. Fairview Arborvitae, as it is known in the trade, also came from *Pyramidalis* seed. It is similar in habit to *Thuja occ. Nigra* (Dark Green American Arborvitae), but displays a more compact, formal look. We have listed them for sale for the past 20 years or so, although they have yet to become as big a seller as our other arborvitae. We believe this would change quickly if customers took the chance to sample them. The Fairview is truly an outstanding selection, with uniformly symmetrical growth, excellent snow load resistance, and rich foliage color.

We first find **Thuja occidentalis Hetz's Midget** listed in our 1942 retail catalog with this description: "This is a new, very dwarf globe, tight, compact and with a good green color. After ten years it will not exceed 12 inches in spread." It must have been one of the first selections that Frank Hetz made for him to have established that in ten years it wouldn't exceed 12 inches in spread! We think he probably selected it as a seedling from *Thuja occidentalis* (American Arborvitae). Over the years we found they don't grow as well in the field as they do in containers, where we can control the soil mix and watering. We sell them only in pots today. We have seen the Hetz Midget Arborvitae listed in catalogs all over this country as well as Canada and Europe.

Leroy Hetz discovered the original **Taxus media Fairview** yew in a block of *Taxus cuspidata* spreaders sometime around 1950. How it got there no one is certain, but he liked the plant and began to take cuttings from it to propagate. We then lined them out and grew them as specimens. When these also proved superior we started propagating heavily. Left untrimmed the Fairview will grow into a vase-shaped spreader, but we found early on that it can be trimmed into a beautiful low globe or mound, which is the shape our customers prefer. It's a male - no berries, but lots of pollen buds in the spring. It is quite winter hardy, and will tolerate the hot sun and drying winds of places like our Kansas City market. We first listed Fairview Yews for sale in the mid 1960's, and over the years they became one of our best sellers.

Leroy Hetz also discovered **Taxus media Sun-burst**, probably around 1960, in a block of Japanese Upright Yews. Yes, the original Sun-burst Yew was an upright! Leroy took the plant home to his yard where he could watch it and take cuttings from it. In 1964 we decided to grow it commercially, and gave it the Sun-burst name. In the beginning we took both terminal and side-branch cuttings, so we had both upright and spreading Sun-burst yews. Eventually we decided to drop the upright form and grow only the spreaders. The plant gets red berries, but not a lot unless it's under stress. It has a beautiful golden yellow color on the new growth, and needs to grow in full sun to show its best color. It takes on a rusty appearance in winter. It is a relatively slow grower, and can easily be kept under control by shearing once a year. It will provide that splash of color in the landscape that everyone is seeking today.

During the 1930's Fairview Evergreen grew both upright and spreading types of *Taxus cuspidata* (Japanese Yew) using seed imported from Japan. With the advent of the World War II era, we could no longer get Japanese seed, so we started to pick our own seed at the nursery, and from the yew hedges around our homes. The seedlings that were produced from this collection of seeds were, as the saying goes, "like cats and dogs." The seed was



Neil and Leroy Hetz

cross-pollinated by whatever variety of yews happened to be in the vicinity. There were long-needled and short-needled seedlings, spreading types, columnars, pyramids...every sort one could imagine. We planted them all in one block to see what they would do. Out of all of them we selected two beautiful columnar types which we decided to propagate.

**Taxus media Citation** is a vigorous, vertical growing yew with long velvet green foliage. The base of the tree is rather narrow, but it tapers out to form a straight-sided, flat-topped plant that requires very little shearing to keep its form. They are female and do berry, heavily when stressed by adverse conditions. We were very proud recently when the Missouri Botanical Garden honored Citation with their Plant of Merit(r) distinction. **Taxus media Majestic** has the same history as the Citation. It does have a Majestic growth habit, it wants to reach right up to the sky! It's a faster grower than Citation, but it does share many of the same characteristics. Its long green needles hold their winter color a little better than Citation, and it also produces red berries. Both the Citation and Majestic make beautiful hedges or striking specimen plants. We started selling these in B&B grades in the mid 1970's; thus we trialed them about 30 years before getting these trees on the market. That sort of patience in introducing new plants is hard to find these days!



Garth Hetz with Hetz Blue Juniper

In the early 1930's, we purchased 100 Juniper californica seedling liners from a grower in California. All the liners except one proved to be not hardy in our zone 6 Pennsylvania climate. We will probably never know how this one plant, the original **Juniper chinensis Glauca Hetzi**, came to be among these liners. Perhaps the seedlings had been cross-pollinated by some nearby Juniper chinensis, or perhaps this one was actually a Juniper chinensis seedling that was mixed in. Maybe it was just a mutant Juniper californica. When the plant was examined by experts in Holland later on, they identified it as a chinensis, or Chinese Juniper. We found that the plant could be readily propagated from cuttings in our greenhouse. At one time we grew 50,000 annually. Known in the trade as Hetz Blue Juniper, the plant is a vigorous, arching spreader with steely blue foliage. Left untrimmed, it will grow to be 15 to 20 feet wide and 10 to 12 feet tall. Fortunately it takes to shearing very well and can be used in a confined space if trimmed seasonally. It will grow nicely almost anywhere in the US.

Fairview Evergreen started propagating **Juniper chinensis Glauca Hetzi Staked** as the fastigate form of the Glauca Hetzi in the late 1960's. There had been some more upright growing forms of the Glauca Hetzi among our liners for many years. Since we have to stake them to get them to grow upright, anything with a more upright habit of growth will be easier to grow. We selected what we thought was the best of the upright types and started to propagate it for our Staked upright Glauca Hetzis. The branches grow about 70 degrees upright, so we continue to have to stake and tie the plants to get a nice upright form. The foliage

is a little bit finer, less coarse than the regular strain of Glauca Hetzi. It takes us about eight years to grow these to saleable B&B size.

In the 1940's and 50's we grew a lot of Ilex crenata Convexa, Japanese Holly, from seed. As is often the case, we found that the seedlings had many characteristics different from the parent plants. We selected two types that we thought were particularly attractive to propagate from cuttings. Since they were almost identical, they were grown together. One particularly severe winter, some of the plants were severely damaged, while others were unhurt. From then on, only this winter-hardy strain was propagated. It was named **Ilex crenata Hetzi** - Hetz Japanese Holly. It is a spreading plant similar to the parent Convexa, but with larger leaves. It is hardy in zone 6 and above, and is widely used in the US wherever the climate permits. The plant adapts well to shearing, and can be given a very formal look or allowed to spread out to its natural form.

We continued to grow Japanese Holly from Convexa seed through the 1950's, and in the late 50's Neil Hetz selected some of the best upright growers and we began to propagate them from cuttings. **Ilex crenata Northern Beauty** was the best of these selections, and first appeared in our catalog in Fall 1965. Northern Beauty has glistening, rather small, round, very convex leaves, and grows naturally into a very broad pyramid with strong terminal central growth. It takes well to shearing and can be trimmed into a broad upright form, or into a globe or mound. We trim it into a mound to minimize winter damage above the snow line, which can occur during our harshest Lake Erie winters.

Our most recent introduction is **Taxus cuspidata Nova**. We trace the history of this yew back to the mid 1970's, when Leroy Hetz took side-branch cuttings from a block of Taxus Capitata. Several unique forms came from this, including two similar columnar types that appeared promising. Of these two, one grew wider than the other and was in that way also unique from our established columnar yews. We continued to propagate this plant and trial it in the nursery and with customers in some of our coldest markets. The result was the Nova, which we have been selling for about 10 years now. It's a fast-growing, very winter hardy yew that has already become a favorite among many of our customers in colder climate zones. It has shorter needles than our other columnars and has a rich, dark green color that holds well through winter.

Introducing new plants is a tradition that dates to the very beginning of our history as a family nursery. We are always tinkering and trialing new selections that we believe hold promise for the green industry, and thanks to our long history of success in this area, we're sometimes asked by other nurseries to test their introductions as well. New plants - they're part of what makes this business so rewarding and so much fun!



Ted Hetz with Ilex Northern Beauty and Ilex Hetzi