

Cascading Creations

Weeping without tears!

By David Dunn
Rideau Woodland Ramble

In our woodland gardens, we contend with two big realities. The primary colour is green, and the growing direction is upright. Most trees, plants and shrubs reach for the sky. This poses the challenge of looking for ways to break up this monotony, and provide some relief. Your eye responds to changes in colour, direction, light, and texture.

There are many ways to achieve this relief, but one of the most provocative ways to weave **cascading forms** of plant material into the landscape. These shockingly different forms of plant material demand attention and quickly become key specimen plantings around which to plan feature gardens. In some cases these weeping forms can also be a different colour and texture, thereby intensifying their impact in the garden. For example, a weeping blue spruce adds colour, form and texture into a leafy green space.



Where do they come from?

Weeping forms can be seen with almost any plant. These are mutations from the normal growth habit that have been discovered in nature, and selected for that habit and propagated. This is no different than selecting for dwarf growth habits, or a specific colour. Every year we discover new and dramatic weeping forms.

A World of Choices

In 2007, you can now find weeping lilacs, weeping pea shrubs, weeping mountain ash, weeping locust, and weeping conifers of all sorts. Some of the more dramatic forms include a procumbens blue spurge that has the goal of creeping along the ground (great to train along a split rail fence), or the dramatic Hillside Creeper Pine, that has to be seen to be believed!). There is a gorgeous weeping larch that is grafted at a certain height and weeps in all directions. It's called "Varied Directions", and has the benefit of changing colour in the fall before it drops its needles, and therefore adds fall interest.



Placement

Consider locating a weeping selection in a spot in the garden that allows it to be the centre of attention, and therefore the highlight of that location. It can be the element that attracts your eye to a bed, around which you can plant secondary plants that are complementary. In other situations, a weeping form can be located amongst other planting just to contrast with the other forms. In this case, rather than being the centre of attention, the weeper is the complement to the whole look. Both approaches are equally valid.



Management

Weeping trees and shrubs that do not have the ability to maintain a strong central leader need to be staked. In this way, you decide the height and impact of the plant. These weeping specimens will weep from the location they are staked to....so you can have a weeping larch that is 2 feet, or 10 feet high...you decide. In some cases some have created natural arbors with weeping specimens, or allowed a weeping or procumbens form to creep along the ground for effect. There is no one way to use these wonderful forms. One thing to remember...a weeping form is a natural form found in nature, not a problem plant or diseased plant.



Consider a cascading form in your garden for dramatic cascading impact, weeping forms or spruce, pine, larch, hemlock, willow, locust, ash, cedar and so on.

Dave Dunn
Rideau Woodland Ramble
We will **capture** your imagination!

Rideau Woodland Ramble (613-258-3797) is open from April to November 7 days a week from 9am-5pm, and carries a range of cascading plants for sale that can be seen in their display gardens www.rideauwoodlandramble.com All Photos by Dave Dunn 2007