

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
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Trees and Shrubs for the Landscape

Famous plantsman J.C. Raulston, decried the overuse of certain plants, recommending diversity. If you plan to add trees or shrubs to your property this year, consider using trees that are not over-planted. Scotch Pine and Austrian Pine trees are over-planted and dying to diseases on these two-needle pines.

Here are some great substitutes to replace some of our more common species suggested by Master Gardener Joe Volk from Berks County.

The limber pine, *Pinus flexilis*, was one of the professor's favorite piné. It is a tough tree, hardy, and as its name implies, you can almost tie a knot in its branches. When wet snow builds up, breaking branches of other trees, a Limber pine

branch just dips downward, dumping the snow.

Two cultivars, 'Vanderwolf's Pyramid' and 'Glauca', both are really out-standing. Another attractive feature of Limber pine is the fuzzy formation of needles on the trunk, which you could almost mistake for a witch's broom.

Chamaecyparis nootkatensis: Alaska Cedar somewhat resembles the arborvitae and is particularly good planted near water or a moist area. 'Green Arrow' is an extremely narrow cultivar which provides a tall narrow accent plant for the garden.

Sciadopitys verticillata: The Umbrella Pine is not actually in the *Pinus* family. The needles are thicker and form whorls like the ribs of an umbrella.

Abies nordmanniana: Nordmann Fir is attractive, grows big, and unlike most firs,

does well in this area. *Abies concolor* (Concolor Fir) and *Abies koreana* (Korean Fir) also do well. *Abies koreana* 'Horstmans Silberlocke' may be the most unique fir of all. The needles, instead of being straight like other firs and spruces, form a round coil with the pale blue underside exposed.

Picea omorika: The Siberian Spruce maybe the most handsome of all the spruces. Try the cultivar 'Pendula.' Its only drawback is its slow growing. In some locations this could be an advantage.

Other favorite landscape plants include the Weeping White Pine and the Curly-Needled White Pine (*Pinus Strobus*). When White Pines are afflicted with tip blight, you have to cut off the tip and tie a branch upward to form a new tip.

'Jeddeloh' is a favorite hemlock. It naturally looks like it was 'cloud-pruned.' 'Coles Prostrate' lies flat on the ground and is really striking but needs part shade. One of the most beautiful evergreens, the Weeping Hemlock, grows into a giant, green waterfall.

Although a Hemlock tree in nature is frequently an understory tree, it grows three times faster and thicker in full sun if well watered and mulched.

Any questions regarding the above article can be addressed to Tom Becker, Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717)840-7408.*

Select Toys For Learning

TUNKHANNOCK (Wyoming Co.) — Toys are more than just fun for children. They are the tools for learning. Through toys, children learn about their world, themselves, and others. When children play with toys they build muscles and the skills to control their bodies, thinking skills, communication skills and they learn how to relate to others.

The foundation of all learning in math, reading and mathematics comes from play. Here are a few ways that toys are helping your child to grow and develop.

- When your child plays with blocks, your child is learning to figure out how things of different sizes and shapes can fit together. This is very good for developing later math skills.

- When your child plays with a pop-up toy he figures out how things work and learns about cause and effect. He develops thinking skills.

- When your child plays ball, she builds muscle control and strength.

- When your child pretends to be a grown-up, he learns to cooperate with others. He builds imagination, creativity, and problem solving skills.

- When your child draws with crayons, she develops hand muscles needed for learning to write.

Remember that good toys are not necessarily expensive, and children do not need very many.

It's better to have a few toys that are really appropriate for your child than lots of toys.

SUPERHERO PLAY

Remember as a kid how much fun it was to pretend to be a superhero, and be powerful enough to do anything that you wanted to do?

When children begin pretending to be superheroes, adults are worried that accidents will happen. Sometimes this play gets out of hand and someone gets hurt. What should a parent do?

Keep in mind that this type of play gives children the chance to feel powerful and show off their new physical abilities. Superhero play can help children feel strong and capable in their real life as well as in their pretend play.

At the same time, children are learning a very negative message — to use violence to solve problems. When carefully supervised by adults, "superhero play" can help children improve their language skills, encourage creativity and teach them to work together to solve problems. When children begin pretending they are superheroes, parents can help them make the most of it.

Make it clear that physical aggression is not acceptable. Encourage children to talk to each other when a play problem happens. This helps preschoolers learn to use words rather than fists to solve a problem.

Suggest ways that superheroes can be helpful that don't involve fighting bad guys. Superheroes can make use of their superpowers by rescuing cats from trees, taking sick babies to the hospital and saving houses from fires. Superheroes are not "super" just because they are strong, but because they can be kind and helpful.

Point out the difference between movies, television and real life. When you see actors pretend to fly from the top of buildings or jump up after being hit by a car, explain to your child that this is just pretend and that in real life people who do heroic acts rely on their own strength and wisdom.

COMPUTER PLAY AND YOUNG CHILDREN: WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Over the last 10 years computers have changed life in America.

Computers will become increasingly important in the lives of our children. Today, many parents are confused about computers and their children. Some want to expose their children to computer play to help them to learn about computers. Others are fearful that this exposure could harm their children's development.

Carefully supervise the use of the computer by young children. Parents must carefully select computer software and must monitor closely children who have access to the Internet. In order for the computer to be valuable and not harmful to young children, parents need to monitor the quality of the experience and the amount of time children are spending.

SELECTING QUALITY COMPUTER SOFTWARE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Quality software is designed so that children will be active rather than passive users. Rather than just simply being a worksheet requiring memorizing, good software for children challenges them to think for themselves.

Software uses pictures and spoken instructions rather than written ones so that children can do things for themselves.

Good software is fun for children, engages their imagination and allows them to experience successes.



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