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137 YEARS  
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## The eloquence of trees

The discovery along New Brunswick's Fundy coast this summer of the oldest red spruce ever recorded is tremendously interesting, especially for gardeners who love trees and try hard to protect their place on our planet.

The 445-year-old red spruce, found by Mount Allison University student Ben Phillips, is 40 years older than the next oldest red spruce, which was previously found in New Hampshire, U.S.

The spruce that Ben discovered started growing before 1560, at the same time that some of the first Europeans started to explore North America.

The excitement that this find generated was proof once again of the infinitely rich, if sometimes contrary, relationship between human beings and trees.

Our literature is full of references to trees and writers have been at their most eloquent when describing them.

In "The Pine and Fir Woods," Mary Wollstonecraft writes: "I have often mentioned the grandeur, but I feel myself unequal to the task of conveying an idea of the beauty and elegance of the scene when the spiral tops of the pines are loaded with ripening seed, and the sun gives a glow to their light green tinge, which is changing into purple, one tree more or less advanced, contrasting with another."

In "Nature's Lore," poet William Wordsworth expressed his belief that man could learn much from the forests.

"One impulse from a vernal wood,

May teach you more of man,

Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can."

The writer Walter Savage Landor said: "Old trees in their living state are the only things that money cannot command."

Charles Dickens' forest was described in "Monotonous Desolation." He wrote: "On they toiled through great solitudes, where the trees upon the banks grew thick



BILL ROBB

Trees in our gardens, like this exquisite Japanese Red Maple photographed in New Brunswick's Kingsbrae Gardens, add form and glorious colour, especially in the autumn.

and close and floated in the stream, and held up shriveled arms from out the river's depths, and slid down from the margin of the land; half growing, half decaying in the miry water."

Whether the trees in your garden are growing or decaying, young and beautiful or old and gnarled, you likely have a special fondness for them that is deeper than for any other plant.

If you haven't planted trees, think about what would add form and character to your garden now.

If the beauty of the Japanese maple shown here entices you, you might be surprised to know that despite its delicate appearance, it is really quite a hardy tree, seldom damaged by insect pests or air pollutants. The Japanese maple, or acer palmatum, includes a diverse variety of hybrids with various leaf shapes and colours that go from light green to deep burgundy.



**Bill Robb**

THE CONTEMPLATIVE  
GARDENER

This tree thrives best in moist, well-drained, fertile soil. Plant them in the spring after the danger of frost has passed. Prune them in late fall or winter, while they are dormant, removing any dead or damaged branches.

■ *The Contemplative Gardener*, written by Bill Robb, appears each Thursday in the Times & Transcript. Bill can be reached by e-mailing to [robbe@timestranscript.com](mailto:robbe@timestranscript.com) or by writing to him care of the Times & Transcript, 939 Main St., Moncton, N.B. E1C 8P3.