

## OUR GREEN PHILOSOPHY

We consider ourselves conservationists with this strong sentiment at heart: it is of the utmost importance that we act as stewards of the land. We have great respect for the natural world and attempt to live our lives in accordance with this deep love.

- At Quackin' Grass Nursery we employ IPM (Integrated Pest Management) methods. Our cultural practices engender production of clean plants – balanced fertilizer, plenty of water and proper lighting help to make the difference. We also encourage beneficial insect populations. Usually we approach occasional marauding insects with light oil sprays during the growing season. We actually use chemical-based pesticides very rarely and only when absolutely necessary. We never broadcast spray, only specifically targeting an affected plant or group of plants which may have a persistent problem when benign efforts have failed. We also tend to carry plants that exhibit good disease resistance. One great incentive for us not to incorporate the use of treacherous chemicals is that we live above and drink from the aquifer that also serves the needs of the nursery!
- We enthusiastically encourage customers to return empty plastic pots which housed the plants that you have purchased from us. This is another instance of recycling at its best. One footnote: we do not accept annual six-packs or like containers as these items are not generated here. We do not use them as we do not as a rule sell annuals.
- In the age of global warming and increasingly expensive energy we have conscientiously implemented frugal use of electricity and fossil fuels. In fact, we have always been “green”; having been born of frugal stock I learned at an early age to always turn lights off when leaving what was about to become an empty room; always turn off the tap while brushing teeth and like energy and water-saving methods. In my years here at Quackin' Grass I have never recycled paper. Rather, it is used as weed suppression in the gardens then covered over with wood chip mulch – recycling at its most energy efficient, I

think. We recommend this method to customers. Although inks have become more “green” it is perhaps not wise to line beds of herbs, medicinal plants, food plants/vegetables with many of these materials, particularly glossy magazines. We also recycle wood ash – yes, we use a wood stove in the basement to cut our dependence on fossil fuels. Wood ash is gently “sweet” and well-used on daffodils, clematis and any plants that prefer a higher soil Ph.

- We compost all kitchen waste as well. We “sheet compost” in an area that will become a future garden (actually an extension of an existing one). The waste includes tea bags, coffee grounds, Kleenex and all vegetable matter. And though unconventional we do include animal fat and bones. The reason: we have a vibrant small mammal population that forage these items. These animals include opossum, raccoon, and skunk. I do find birds in this area, too, some mornings when I am dumping yesterday’s scraps. Fox, coyotes, red squirrel and bobcat are not uncommon visitors to the nursery.
- Also, on the environmental front, we continue to plant the display gardens with thought towards attracting native bird, bee and butterfly populations. In that we have displaced some habitat from them as we developed the nursery we do attempt to give back to our winged friends in plantings, food and nesting opportunities. Many of the perennials planted in the gardens are both food and nectar sources for hummingbirds, caterpillars, butterflies and moths. We also do feed the birds during the winter months, both seed and with a corn meal, flour and lard mixture pressed into holes in one of our “woodpecker feeder logs”. It is always great joy observing who arrives at the feast. Quackin’ Grass has become a virtual bird sanctuary reflected in vibrant populations of native birds. We are proud of our efforts in this regard.

## THE BIRDS at QUACKIN’ GRASS...

### **The Usual Suspects – *or* common sightings and/or residents:**

Great Blue Heron

Mallard Duck

Turkey Vulture  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Mourning Dove  
Tree Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flicker  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Pine Siskin  
American Robin  
Northern "Baltimore" Oriole  
Junco  
White-throated Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
Cedar Waxwing  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Colorado House Finch  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Wood Thrush  
Veery  
Carolina Wren  
House Wren  
Northern Cardinal  
American Goldfinch  
\*Yellow Warbler  
\*Black and White Warbler  
Eastern Kingbird  
Common Yellowbird  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Eastern Phoebe  
Eastern Wood Peewee  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Eastern Bluebird  
Blue Jay  
Gray Catbird  
Tufted Titmouse  
Black-capped Chickadee

Northern Mockingbird  
American Crow  
Wild Turkey

\*(regarding Warblers: I suspect we have many more here than we know. Certainly many pass through during migration.)

**Occasional Sightings:**

American Woodcock  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Coopers Hawk  
Pileated Woodpecker  
American Kestrel (Sparrow Hawk)  
Rufous-sided Towhee  
Vesper Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Wood Thrasher  
Purple Finch  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Redpoll  
Scarlet Tanager  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Vireo (unspecified)  
Common Grackle  
Canadian Goose

**Rare Sightings:**

Ring-necked Pheasant  
Common Nighthawk  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
\*Great Gray Owl  
Northern Goshawk  
Bald Eagle  
Bobolink  
Indigo Bunting  
Ovenbird  
Brown Creeper

\*(Regarding owls: I expect we probably harbor more here than we know.)

**Unfortunate Suspects: Non-native invaders**

English House Sparrow

European Starling

**OUR INVASIVE PHILOSOPHY**

Connecticut now has an invasive law, a legal mandate on the books. We at Quackin' Grass Nursery have strongly felt that scientific research conjoined with education would have been the most efficacious and least expensive way to resolve any questions swirling around alleged "invasives".

Any plants not presently on the Connecticut invasive list but those that we believe are a potential problem we no longer offer; for instance, we no longer sell *Euonymus alatus* cultivars.

We also do not and never have sold Norway Maples. They are not yet outlawed and it is perfectly legal for nurseries to continue offering them. However, we feel Norway Maples may be a problematic species; the reasons: its fecundity, fast growth and enormous size of adult trees make it possibly a true threat to wooded areas. This coupled with the potential ability to adapt and possibly bridge succession forest communities are the reasons we will not offer them. Furthermore, large-growing native maples with even greater ornamental character in more seasons than the Norway Maples are abundantly available and make splendid alternatives. However, it must be said that if we find a source for the dwarf and miniature cultivars of Norway maple, which may set no seed as they are settled into "genetic juvenility", we will offer them to customers as these are not an invasive threat.

At this time it is also known that the genetic make-up of wild Barberry populations in Connecticut is largely composed of *Berberis thunbergii* (Japanese Barberry) with occasional stray *B. vulgaris* (Common Barberry). There have been natural hybrids between the two species as well known as *B. x ottawensis*. In this we have voluntarily stopped offering certain Japanese Barberry selections – those deemed to form profuse seed annually. We still carry gold selections and some dwarf purple cultivars as these have demonstrated in tests at UConn to produce many fewer seeds. Some of the golden selections in particular set little if any seed. 'Golden Devine' in a three year period at the planting fields of UConn set no seed at

all. Gold-leafed seedlings that do sprout tend to be weaklings. These particular *Berberis thunbergii* selections are clearly not the purported “invasive threat” that some would have you believe and we continue to offer these cultivars to customers who desire them. Furthermore, it is still a legal crop in the state of Connecticut.

We will also be making available to customers who want them some very new cultivars from Professor Jonathan Lehrer who is now teaching at Farmingdale State College on Long Island, NY. There are several that have unusual habits or colors never before seen in this great group of garden “doers”. Two have been named: ‘Red Hot’ and ‘Lava Flow’ will soon be available. It is important to remember that it is legal to offer *all* Japanese Barberry cultivars for sale in the state of Connecticut.

There is a pending list of plants that are in question but have not yet been banned. Those that we do not believe are “invasive” we continue to make available to customers who demand them. We hope that common sense, science and education will eventually answer any questions that still surround the invasive debate. Thank you.