Kicking Off the 2011 Growing Season

This year’s growing season will begin earlier that usual. That is because the 2010 - 2011 harvest season concluded earlier than ever before. The last day of harvest was February 4th, which was 3 weeks earlier than usual. As soon as the last plants went down the processing line, planning started on the Spring transplanting schedule. Delivery of the transplant plugs was moved up to late February so that transplanting could begin in early March. Before transplanting can begin, ground is prepared by sub-soiling, plowing and cultivating. Then a pre-plant fertilizer blend is incorporated. When everything is ready, a 10 person crew is hired to run the transplanter. If all goes according to plans, approximately 250,000 plugs will be planted within 2 weeks. An earlier transplant schedule results in a longer growing season. It also permits other activities to start sooner.

Spring seed sowing is one such activity, but its scheduled start date is set in stone, which is early May. That is because most of the species of spring sown seeds go through a stratification process to break seed dormancy. Stratification periods range from 30 to 120 days and once the process has started it must proceed to the pre-determined sowing date. Early May is chosen since that is typically the earliest soil temperatures warm enough to allow germination to occur at a reasonably fast rate.
Celebrate Arbor Day and Earth Day

There is a lot happening in the month of April: Major League Baseball starts, Easter and Passover celebrations, paying income taxes, and Earth Day and Arbor Day. Out of all of these auspicious events, it is Earth Day and Arbor Day that are nearest to us at the PMC. While both days have a lot in common, there are some fundamental differences in their origins and they are celebrated on different dates. Below are their histories and some examples of how they are celebrated in this country and around the world. The PMC has supplied seedlings for Earth Day and Arbor Day plantings for years and would like to help continue and expand tree planting whenever and wherever we can.

Arbor Day

The advent of Arbor is credited to Julius Sterling Morton. He settled in Nebraska in 1854. With a background in politics, journalism and agriculture, he understood the importance of trees on the Nebraska landscape, and knew how to promote it. He set an example of himself by planting orchards, shade trees and windbreaks. His position on Nebraska’s Agriculture Board was ideal for proposing that a special day be set aside for planting trees and increase awareness of the importance of trees. The first Arbor Day was celebrated on April 10, 1872. Prizes were offered to counties and individuals who properly planted the most trees. It was estimated that over 1,000,000 trees were planted that day.

Since then, Arbor Day has spread throughout this country and over seas. In 1970 President Richard Nixon proclaimed the last Friday in April as National Arbor Day. The Arbor Day Foundation was founded in 1972. It has promoted tree planting through numerous programs such as Tree City USA, which has over 3,400 communities participating. Tree City USA, has been involved in planting 20,000,000 in the past 20 years.

Earth Day

The roots of Earth Day are not as deep as those of Arbor Day but they have spread far and wide, and are of a more diverse nature. Like Arbor Day, the inception of the idea can be traced back to one person. Senator Gaylord Nelson from Wisconsin, began to consider planting the idea of environmental preservation into the political limelight in 1962. That was the year that Rachel Carlson published ‘Silent Spring.” He approached President Kennedy and the Attorney General Robert Kennedy with the idea of going on a conservation tour. They liked the idea, and went on a 5 day, 11 state tour in 1963.

The Earth Day seed took another 6 years to germinate. In September, 1969, Senator Nelson was at a conference in Seattle and announced that in spring of 1970 everyone was invited to participate in an event on the behalf of the environment. On April 22nd, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks and auditoriums to show their support. Republicans and democrats, rich and poor, young and old, and rural and urban people alike joined together.

The organizers of this year’s Earth Day have set a goal of people undertaking 1 Billion Acts of Green world-wide. An act of green can range from recycling, to installing energy efficient light bulbs, to planting trees. Last year over 1 million trees were planted in conjunction with Earth Day, and organizers hope to do the same this year. The same number of trees were planted on the 1st Arbor Day.

Teddy Says.... “It is well that you should celebrate your Arbor Day thoughtfully, for within your lifetime the Nation's need of trees will become serious. We of an older generation can get along with what we have, though with growing hardship; but in your full manhood and womanhood you will want what nature once so bountifully supplied and man so thoughtlessly destroyed; and because of that want you will reproach us, not for what we have used, but for what we have wasted.”

President Theodore Roosevelt. Arbor Day Letter to the School Children of the United States. April 15, 1907
Arbor Day rekindles enthusiasm for tree planting in all of the states in the US. Many of these tree planting events include their state’s tree. Each state has designated a native tree as its State Tree and a flowering plant as its State Flower. They are designated through legislation by each state and the process was political and contentious at times. Listed below are State Trees and some State Flowers for several states in the western US. The US also has an official National Tree, which is the Oak, although no species is designated.

**Alaska State Tree - Sitka Spruce (Picea sitchensis):** Stands of Sitka Spruce are an impressive sight. Trees can grow to over 200’ and their trunks can reach 10’ in diameter. Historically, its wood has been important to a number of industries including ship building and aircraft construction. It is still a valuable wood for musical instruments such as pianos, violins, guitars, as well as wind turbine blades.

**Idaho State Tree - Western White Pine (Pinus monticola):** Western White Pine was once a common tree in the mountains throughout the Northwest. Its numbers were decimated by the disease White Pine Blister Rust. The population is fortunately rebounding as a result of breeding programs aimed at developing trees that are resistant to it. Today most seedlings are propagated from seeds that come from blister rust resistant seed orchards.

**Idaho State Flower - Mock Orange or Syringa (Philadelphus lewisii):** Mock Orange is a medium-sized deciduous shrub that can be found throughout the Northwest. It can grow to 10’ tall and spread 8’ wide. It is covered with masses of white flowers in early through mid-summer that are sweetly citrus scented. Mock Orange is the most commonly used name in Washington and Oregon, but it is called Syringa more commonly in Idaho.

**Montana State Tree - Ponderosa Pine (Pinus ponderosa):** Ponderosa Pine, or Yellow Pine, is found primarily in the intermountain region of the Northwest. There are some pockets west of the Cascades. It is easy to identify with its long needles and exposed large diameter long, straight trunks. Trees grow over 200’ tall with trunks that can reach 8’ in diameter.

**Oregon State Tree - Douglas Fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii):** It is little wonder that Douglas Fir is the State Tree of Oregon. It is ubiquitous west of the Cascades and is the predominant species in the timber industry. Periodic recurrence of catastrophic wildfires resulted in almost pure Douglas Fir stands north of the Umpqua River. Clear cutting, combined with slash burning, has helped maintain its dominance in many stands.

**Oregon State Flower - Oregon Grape (Mahonia aquifolium):** It is understandable why Oregonians selected Tall Oregon Grape as their State Flower. It is commonly distributed throughout the state, often occurring in extensive thickets. These almost pure stands turn into large swaths of bright yellow when they bloom in April and May. By late summer, they give rise to clusters of purple edible berries. This evergreen can grow to 8’ tall.

**Washington State Tree - Western Hemlock (Tsuga heterophylla):** Western Hemlock is commonly found growing throughout coastal and mountainous regions of the Northwest. It is often an understory species in a seral community, or a dominant species in a climax community. It can reach 200’ tall with trunks over 3’ in diameter. Its timber is valued as an all-purpose material. The primary use for Hemlock is in construct, but better lumber grades are used in finishing applications, and its wood is excellent for pulping.

**Washington State Flower - Pacific Rhododendron (Rhododendron macrophyllum):** Pacific Rhododendron is a beautiful understory broadleaf evergreen flowering shrub. It can grow to over 15’ tall and spread equally wide. They can form thickets that create an amazing floral display in late spring. Blooming is most profuse in openings or edges where some light can reach them.

**Wyoming State Tree - Cottonwood (Populus spp.):** By selecting Cottonwood as its State tree, Wyoming has shown that it appreciates what it does for the State, even if it is not considered a high stature species by some. Cottonwood is a very important species in the riparian zone and a functional riparian zone is critical to maintaining water quality and species diversity. Those are some of the things that helps Wyoming continue to maintain its reputation as a great place to enjoy the outdoors.
It’s Not Too Late To Get Bare Root Plants

There is still time to get plant materials for the Spring 2011 planting season. Plants are being held dormant in our cooler, and will remain available and viable until mid-May. It is still fine to plant bare root plants and live stakes through April and early May.

There are a few things to consider with later season planting:

- Keep the plants in cold storage until close to planting time.
- Prevent the stock from drying out while planting.
- Watering the plants after planting if there is not any precipitation, or ample soil moisture.

It is difficult to predict exactly what species will still be available by the time this newsletter is published. A few likely ones are Shore Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Yellow Alaska Cedar, Quaking Aspen, Red and Blue Elderberry, Salmonberry, Douglas Spirea, Low Oregon Grape, Paper Birch, Indian Plum and Vine Maple. There will also be a few species of Willows available for live stakes as well as Black Cottonwood. Contact us to receive the latest availability list and any other helpful information.