

A Tree to Consider

by Sharon Burch

What is the difference between a small tree and a large shrub? The Central Gardens Arboretum Committee selected the widely accepted definition of a tree as being a woody plant with height potential of 15 feet or greater. However, there are also dwarf trees, which is a definition of the plant subject of this article. But, be forewarned: some would say it is but a shrub.

Harry Lauder's walking stick, *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', is one of the newer members of our arboretum. And even though it might not be a tree we should examine it as a possible plant for your yard. The walking stick is not picky about location, light, water or soil and is resistant to most diseases and pests. There are few selections you could make for your garden that could be more tolerant and forgiving of poor treatment. Truth be told, I had one of these trees survive a few winters ago in a wheelbarrow half filled with ice. My husband was certain I had killed the poor little thing, but, alas, it survived and is thriving.

This deciduous plant is slow growing, reaching heights of five to ten feet and spreading eight to twelve feet. And while it is a lovely little plant while leafed out, its true value is revealed after autumn leaves have fallen. Your eyes will be drawn to it with its curiously tightly curled corkscrew limbs all winter long. In fact, you will probably visually lean on Harry Lauder's walking stick all the drab winter long.



Harry Lauder's Walking Stick (Corylus avellana 'Contorta')