HRN Restoration NEWS

December, 2008

ROOT PRODUCTION METHOD

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Recent RPM "Discoveries" at High Ranch Nursery:

Discovery #1:
On December 10, while I was out in the growing beds checking crops, I discovered something amazing on some recently potted **Western Redbud *(Cercis occidentalis*).** I just had to share this with you, as in the past we have had some less-than-perfect results with Western Redbud—mainly slow-to-root in the pot and slow top growth—"stagnation," as some growers may call it.

Ever since we started using RPM, or Root Production Method, we've had some startling results. Now, with some plants the RPM process had little effect on root quantity/quality, but some have been amazing. Since we have grown Western Redbud with limited success in the past, this really surprised me.

I have a habit of popping out the rootball for a quick check of the roots. The tops weren't impressive, but that's not always a good indicator of what goes on below the soil line. In picking up a pot—a 3 gallon squat *Cercis occidentalis*—and turning it upside down, I noticed right away roots coming out of the center drain hole on the underside of the pot. Some soil fell away from the top corners, but I was really surprised at the amount of white healthy roots showing up thickly around the whole bottom half of the root ball. This plant is definitely rooted well, even though the tops are small. As is, it would be a prime candidate for planting out.

So what? Well, what is amazing is that this was transplanted on September 18, from a 3" liner. I examined the roots on December 10—just 80 days later. And this is fall growth. The photos speak for themselves. I think the RPM process is working here!

Discovery #2:
At the Doty Restoration site, we planted some 1,000 4" liners of **Santa Barbara Sedge *(Carex barbarae).*** These were started from collected seed. I also planted some bottomless flats of plants dug from a site—6 clumps per 14" x 18" flat. I discovered that the roots/rhizomes filled out the flat pretty solidly. But what surprised me most was these up-to-16" long "super rhizomes" heading straight down below the flat. So…? What are these? Are they beneficial for a restoration planting to aid in faster establishment? Will it help the clump to "take off" and cover more area faster? If anyone has any answers to these questions, please let me know!
-John Nitta (916-652-9261 x 111, john@hrnursery.com)

We planted some flat clumps at the Doty site to compare it's growth to the 4" liners. Here the "super rhizomes" are spread out before backfilling. Only time will tell!

Doty Ravine Restoration Project

12-1-08

A first for High Ranch Nursery! This year, we contract grew some 6,000 plants—all natives—for a restoration project in Placer County. At the time of this writing, we are in the process of installing the plants on 20 acres of land. The land is owned by Placer Land Trust, and the project is being done by Westervelt Ecological Services, whom we are providing our products and services to. About a year ago, we started collecting seed on-site for some of the trees. We propagated and grew the plants during this past growing season.

I am truly excited about this project, as it utilizes all RPM grown plants. RPM, or Root Production Method, is a growing process that develops a plant with a high fibrous root system that is vigorous and establishes very quickly. High Ranch is the sole licensed grower on the West Coast that uses this process. In the Midwest, where RPM grown native trees are specified for restoration projects, success rate from plantings are almost 100%, as opposed to less than 30% survival for conventionally grown plants.

The installation will take about 4 weeks. Our crews have learned the system of installation, which includes using tree mat weed barriers and protective tree tubes. Only the grasses, that were from 4" pots, do not get the mat and tube. Before we started the installation, Mark Nitta, our Facilities Manager, rigged a watering system consisting of a 1,000 gallon tank mounted on flatbed truck, along with a generator/pump setup, to water the plants. We will continue to care and water the plants for a 30 day period after the installation is finished, if needed depending upon winter rains.

We will continue to monitor this planting through next season and several years to come, to see how well the RPM grown plants perform.

-John Nitta

Finished section next to the creek

Jose drills planting holes.

Eleodoro installs mat and tube on *Salix laevigata* (Red Willow).

***Quercus lobata* peeking out of the tree tube**

Mark waters in native *Carex barbarae.*