



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

Box 216
Inver Grove Heights, Minn. 55075
(612) 455-6204

ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 125

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

A CHRISTMAS TREE at ORDWAY

There are no evergreens at Ordway. Oaks, yes - they're everywhere; and birch and aspen and box-elders and ash, even one or two maples ... but no evergreens. This is not really "conifer country" and one does not expect white pine and the like such as thrive a little farther north. However, we are on the northwest edge of the range of the Eastern Red Cedar and there are some nice clumps of this tree immediately north of us; indeed, there are two splendid specimens on the peninsula on the far side of River Lake but here at hand we have no evergreens - until a short time ago.

One summer ('80) I came upon a small spot, no broader than the palm of my hand, in the lawn consisting of a green clump not unlike club-moss. I had run the mower over it several times and indeed thought it was a club-moss. After further inspection and thought I decided to spare this little clump any further shearing until I could determine its identity more accurately. By mid-'81 it showed itself to be a nice example of a Red Cedar, rising to a height of about 20 cm. I surrounded it with a small barricade to protect it from the inroads of mowing and from inadvertent trampling and it did so thrive that by the advent of autumn it showed that typical dark maroon-green tinge which gives the species the "red" part of its name. The deep snows of '81-'82 completely covered the little plant and I felt some anxiety for its reappearance in the spring.

It did survive its sub-nivean winter, probably aided by the protection the snow gave it against the harsh elements of the Minnesota winter. As the advent of spring began to reduce the snow-pack there did appear once more the welcome green tips (it was St. Patrick's Day when I noticed it). So has it been in the following years and as this is written the tree measures 135 cm. in height and has assumed well-proportioned form which makes it a graceful addition to our surroundings. Each spring it has shown the delicately-green new growth at the end of its branches and as autumn advances into early winter its entire foliage takes on its reddish winter color as it prepares for the severe months which will affect it before its re-emergence the following spring. Its form and size are such as to make it appear like a planted Christmas tree but it holds no lights or tinsel, no adornment other than the snow dustings it receives and the occasional perching of a small bird.

I hope it will stay many more years here and remind us of the recurrent cycle of nature's beauty.

R. J. CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist
Katherine Ordway Natural
History Study Area.

August 31, 1984