TREE SEEDLING DESCRIPTION CODE

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We have long known that a 2-year-old seedling from nursery A will differ from one produced in nursery B. Even seedlings shipped from the same nursery may differ from year to year.

Where does this leave the field man? He wants a tree tailored to his need. It must be sufficiently vigorous to survive the conditions peculiar to a given site. Over the years reforestation men have developed experience with the kind and quality of stock needed in their area. Their next job is to get that kind and quality of stock from the nursery. Experience has taught that ordering by age class is not enough.

Now a more specific ordering method has been developed. This makes for better communication between nursery and field. The following Forest Service system of seedling description codes was taken from a recent Pacific Northwest Region release.

Tree Seedling Size - Description Code

The description code is a letter followed by four sets of digits that describe how and when the seedling was grown, and some of its physical characteristics:

1. *Method of* growing
   —Letters denote the following:
   B = bareroot
   C = container
   BC = bareroot transplanted to container
   CB = container trans planted to bareroot
   BT = bareroot transplant
2. *Height*
   —Measured to the nearest centimeter.
   —Measured from the cotyledonary node to the tip of the terminal bud; on damaged trees to the highest live point on the central stem.
   —Averaged for each lot. Ten trees are usually taken at each point for inventory purposes at the nursery.
   —Desired accuracy is 75 percent of the trees to fall within plus or minus 25 percent of the lot average.
3. *Caliper*
   —Diameter measured to the nearest millimeter.
   —Measured approximately 1 centimeter above the cotyledonary node where the stem is round, avoiding internodal swelling.
   —Desired accuracy is 75 percent of the trees to fall within plus or minus 1 milli meter of the lot average.
4. S*hoot/Root Ratio* (reciprocal of the root-shoot ratio)
   —Measured by the volumetric method.
   —Only live tissue is used.
   —Roots are washed before measuring.
   —Averaged for each 50-tree lot.
5. Year Seed Grew
   —The calendar year in which the seed made the first growth is coded as two digits.
   —If the seed was sown in April of 1976, the code would be 76. If the seed was sown in November of 1975, the code would be 76.

For example, a container seedling 40 centimeters tall, with a caliper of 6 mm, a shoot/root ratio of 1.6, from a seed that grew in 1976 is coded as follows:

C - 40 - 06 - 1.6 - 76

This is not intended, nor should it be used, as a culling or grading standard. Culling and grading rules are made applicable to each tree lot and sometimes to each customer, as it is he who has determined the use he will make of the seedling. The purpose of this tree seedling size-description code is to enable field personnel to describe more precisely the seedling desired and the nursery to describe more accurately the seedling produced.

This system is particularly useful when buyer and seller negotiate contracts. In addition to specifying quantity, the buyer can order seedlings with specific dimensions as well. The nurseryman can hasten or retard growth to "meet specs." Both nurseryman and buyer may agree on specifications and delivery dates and/or penalties for failure to meet quantity and quality standards. This helps reduce the possibility of misunderstanding.