TRANSCRIPT

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EPISODE NAME: UVM Extension’s Leonard Perry Visits Cady’s Falls Nursery in Morrisville

There are many great hardy perennials we can grow in the North. Today we are going to take a look at some of these and how to grow them. Hi, I'm Leonard Perry with UVM Extension. I'm in Morrisville at Cady's Falls Nursery run by owners Don and Lilla Avery. I asked Don why he likes to grow perennials.

Don Avery: I think that perennials for us is essentially a broad plant palette. A rich plant palette within gardening, farming and creating beautiful things on different levels as for the last three or four decades. I think that perennials gives us this great rich plant palette to create these illusions and these fantasies in the garden that we love so much.

Leonard Perry: One of the first plants I saw that came in was this incredible one here. I guess it a showy lady slipper. Can you tell us about this?

Don Avery: Yes. This is one of the lady slippers that is native to Vermont. It for many years, people coveted this plant. The belief was that it was impossible to culture this plant or propagate it. One of the interesting things that has happen in the last decade or so is that horticulturists have learned how to grow and propagate these plants. They take a plant that is fairly small in the wild that is stunning, plant it in the garden in the proper conditions and it explodes into a large, large showy plant. We found the opposite is true in getting difficult plants to grow, they are very, very easy to grow. We put them all around the garden. Just to prove that to ourselves. I think people are becoming more encouraged now, more daring. Customers have admired them for years. It was just taking that step and growing them in the garden and coming back with very good reports.

Leonard: One of the things that you mentioned was propagating these. I understand you propagate most of your plants. That is one of the things that makes you unique. Tell us about how you do that.

Don Avery: The lady slippers for the most part, we grow them purely from division, the same way we would grow a peony. We divide a plant, put it in the field, put it in a shaded bed for three years and we divide it. We divide it into two pieces and a division goes back into the field. It's very straightforward.

Leonard: Don you are talking about growing and I understand that is one of the things that makes unique among many nurseries around. You do start and grow most of these perennials yourself. Can you tell us about doing that.
Don Avery: Well, perennials are grown basically three methods more or less. One is from seed, one is from division and the other one is from cuttings. The lady slippers are grown in laboratories. The seeds are grown in certain small labs that specialize in that. We grow them strictly by division. We have established plants and we divide them. The same way we would with a peony or day lily. Something like that. Other plants are grown from cuttings in a fog chamber. They may never go in our fields. We have several acres of fields where we grow the more robust plants that require some years of growth before they become available for sale.

Leonard: Looking down at your fields it looked like you had a lot of something in bloom. Are those peonies?

Don Avery: Yes, the propagation beds of the peonies are in bloom right now. A magnificent moment out there when you see mass planting of the peonies.

Leonard: Another thing I saw were many dwarf conifers. I guess that is another one of your specialties?

Don Avery: The dwarf conifers are grown, 95 percent are grown by grafting. We do that in March. They go out in propagation beds for three years after they are grafted. Then we pop them up for sale, or we put them out in the field for another 5-10 years to turn into large specimens.

Leonard: One of the things I noticed too looking around your fields were all of these piles. What are those about? I understand you get that question too.

Don Avery: We are known for our piles. We have piles compost in every stage. Every bit of debris and leaf clippings and weeds that we have goes into a compost pile. Then we have compost that are specifically made for horse manure for our potting mix. Then we have bark piles and peat piles. Composting bark, soil, grit, and sand piles. We are a nursery piles I guess.

Leonard: So you do a many things here obviously in growing. You need all of these different raw materials?

Don Avery: Yes. I think we probably have thirteen different potting mixes. They need slightly different different ingredients for all of these.

Leonard: Different specialty for different plants? I guess that is the other thing that makes you unique you don't necessarily have the latest of the plants that have come out. But you do have some of the greatest plants I think. It shows that there are many perennials we can grow in the North Country.

Don Avery: Yes. Many of the new introductions are flashy. Some of them are worth growing, but in the long term have proved not to be garden worthy. We specialize in garden worthy plants. It sometimes takes a decade to decide whether something is garden worthy or not. We try some of the new flashy plants and some of them stay with us and some of them fade away. But we like to offer a solid offering in our catalog of proven garden worthy plants. Plants that we are very sure are going to prove to be garden worthy. Garden worthy means that something you put in the garden and you can grow it for a decade. It's not flash in a bucket.

Leonard: Don, I know you have a lot in bloom in these trial beds. Where you try all of these. Why don't we go take a look at those.

Don Avery: Sure, let's go take a look.

Leonard: I see we are getting a little summer sprinkled in the garden, I guess that is great for plants.
Don: Yes, that's what we like.

Leonard: The thing I was wondering, we just walked past a rock garden and in it was cactus. One I didn't know you could grow cactus, I guess it likes the rain too!

Don: They are all Native American cactus. Called the printa we grow as large paths. They are very easy to grow. Grow them in an elevated site above that freezing and thawing layer in winter and soil that has rock and gravel in with it. In the winter time they desiccate and dry up and look completely dead and in the spring they come alive again. They are perfectly fine.

Leonard: Now certain variety, special variety so a punch of cactus.

Don: They are cactus that are native to New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and they were sighted in Vermont years ago.

Leonard: That's amazing.

Don: Some of them live all the way to the Arctic Circle on the West coast.

Leonard: That's amazing. I noticed that also in the trees, that looks like a shade garden over there?

Don: Yes, there is a garden under the maples and the oaks over there. Many of the spring wildflowers are over there. The early lady slippers and in the summer it has got a group of hostas. It is a nice cool place to visit in the summer.

Leonard: Right over here it is a great plant with red leaves. Can you tell us about that?

Don: This is leggaleiria brit marie crawford. It is one of the new introductions. It is one worth growing. It holds a deep purple foliage through the summer. It wilts a bit in full sun, but a first class plant and it holds that foliage well through the summer.

Leonard: Like a lot of the legga leirias so that really need a moist soil in order to do well?

Don: It absolutely needs it if it is going to get any sunshine on it.

Leonard: I have a bit dry soil, I don't have this one, but my others get a bit dry and tend to wilt.

Don: They are OK if they are kept in full shade, but if they are in the sun, they need plenty of moisture.

Leonard: One I think that might do well in somewhat dry soil is this blue grass here?

Don: Yes. It's a spiky blue grass that we have used to as a repeat along the edge of the formal border.

Leonard: Hearty and good size. That is about as big as it gets.

Don: It gets a couple feet tall. It gives a nice sort of formal look.

Leonard: One of the nice combinations I like here is you have a white peony that. The standard type peony. Tell us about the whiter shrub behind it.

Don: That is a Japanese Willow. It's interesting that the new growth is white with a flush of pink. It grows like crazy. About two or three feet per year. So every year we cut it back. And it flushes up
again. If you let it get too high and you can't shear it, then you need to go down and cut it with a chain saw and let it come up again. If you don't keep control of that plant it will get out of hand.

Leonard: Especially the ones that are ten times that size. I know mine is getting pretty big! I should probably whack it back a little more. Be ruthless with it. Not hurting it! We talked about the peonies, but over on the other side I see a yellow peony. What is so special about that?

Don: That is one of the intersectional or the hybrids. They are hybrid between the common and not so common and not quite so hearty tree peonies. We have the heartiness of the more common peonies and we get the unusual colors of the tree peonies. In this case that yellow is unknown in the evasive peonies.

Leonard: It is just a beautiful plant. I notice you have a couple others around. Different colors as well.

Don: They come in all shades of flashy pinks and whites with flashy pink centers. The interesting thing is that they bloom over a period of about three weeks. Where the more common peonies bloom in a flush of about a week. These repeat bloomed slowly over a period of a period of time.

Leonard: Blooms open up different ones, slowly over time.

Don: Some will have seed and others will just be opening. I should say seed pods.

Leonard: Right behind those it looks like a gas plant. Just an old fashioned plant, but a good hearty plant?

Don: Yes, it is a perennial but acts like a shrub in a sense. It is very handsome and very long lived. Can be a solid background in a perennial garden. Very easy to grow.

Leonard: Have you understood what the reasons are why it is called a gas plant? On a still night it gives off a gas that you can light with match and get a little flame? Have you tried that?

Don: It does. Yes, we have. It has to be the hottest evening in the middle of the Summer.

Leonard: And a very calm one! I haven't had any luck yet. So I am glad to know that it does work. I guess there are purple and white forms of that.

Don: Yes. What you are seeing there are seedlings. They are seed around the garden. The pink and white to remain.

Leonard: That’s great. Next the blue you talked about the shrub effect. It's the false indigo. Another several new ones coming out, I saw a yellow one you had as well.

Don: There are many different color of shades of blues, yellows, and whites. Some of them are hybrids and some of them are species that haven't been grown commonly before. In the Midwest they grown many of them. That is where they are doing all the research on this and introducing them. That one is just the old fashioned one that makes a shrub like affect with those pea like flowers.

Leonard: Those are nice pods in late Summer.

Don: Nice pods later on that give it another attraction.

Leonard: That I think it likes to be where it is doesn't like to be moved. Is that correct?

Don: If you are moving it, you want to get at it with a backhoe to dig it up.
Leonard: Because it is a lot deeper.

Don: You have to get out there and dig it up.

Leonard: One other plant I want to mention is too is the perennial geraniums. I see you have a few around. That is a great group of plants I like.

Don: There are many perennials. That one is called salvia blue. It has a nice haunting blue flower, but after it is finished blooming it has a nice foliage that holds up through the summer. It just gives a nice foliage with the brighter flowers that come on later in the summer.

Leonard: Again these are the perennials, not the annual geraniums. There are so many good ones. We have to go down to the pond I think to take a look at some of your other plants.

Don: Yes, let us go.

Leonard: Don, on the way here, we passed a picture plant in bloom. Is it?

Don: Yes, that is what that is. Our native picture plant. They are carnivorous plants. The insects land in them and drown and absorbed by the tissues of the picture plant. What you are seeing there are the blooms. Most people associate those fancy dark red flowers are the real surprise.

Leonard: They stand out against all the other greens in the bog. What makes the difference between a bog and a pond?

Don: A bog is an isolated wet area that is dominated by sphagnum moss. It is very nutrient and acidic. Where our pond here has water running through, lots of nutrients, is more akin to a swamp than a bog.

Leonard: So was this pond here, or did you make this.

Don: Interestingly enough, this pond was just a farm drainage ditch years ago to drain the barnyard. When we got here, it was filled with willows, weeds and things. We cleaned it and over the years and cultivated it.

Leonard: You have added some nice things and that is one group of plants especially showy! Those are primrose?

Don: Yes, those are Japanese Primroses. Years ago, we planted a half dozen plants there and they have seeded and now there is hundreds and hundreds of them all different colors.

Leonard: A wonderful mix of colors here. One that is not quite as colorful, but one of my favorites is the Ladies Mantel. I love the way the drops of water can stay on the leaves. A subtle chartreuse, yellow in the foliage.

Don: Those plants just appeared there. They seeded from somewhere else in the garden. We thought they looked nice there, so we just left them.

Leonard: That is one thing about design you can just leave many things that just seed. It is not necessarily a weed, it can be very attractive and make some nice combinations.

Don: Many can seed in and make some real nice surprises.
Leonard: We have been walking around and I can see from here are weeping plants. Looks like larch too, but other conifers, can you tell us about those?

Don: It is one of the things that fascinates us. We propagate a lot here are these weeping trees. Spruce and pines and things, the thing about the weeping trees is they don't have the instinct of the inclination to grow up on their own. Often what we do is we train them up in the air and let them weep down. As we get this wonderful cascading effect, these great sculptural effects. The main center of the garden is the weeping larch and that has three different trunks on it. It weeps all the way down from fourteen tall. Over in the other garden we saw the weeping spruce that has a large skirt coming out from it. There are many ways to treat them. They can be a fascinating center point of the garden.

Leonard: Great, they are definitely are a focal point. They are gorgeous now. Naturally though without training up, they would be lower. You have many other dwarf conifers that are that way?

Don: Those plants can be used as a ground cover if you had a place where they could go out where the weeds won't get into them to bad. We have many other plants that are very slow growing that we sometimes refer to as dwarf. Those can also be the spruce, firs, pines and larch. All of these have dwarf forms.

Leonard: There is a lot more I would love to see here, but we are out of time. How can people come here? Do you have certain hours that you are open?

Don: Yes, we are open every day except Monday. Later in the year we are also closed on Sunday. We have a website with all the information: www.cadysfallsnursery.com. The phone number is: 802-888-5559.

Well, Don thanks again for spending all of this time today.

And thank you for watching today on Across the Fence. For UVM Extension I'm Leonard Perry.

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