

Apsheronsk/Mezmai-Guamka

GEOGRAPHY

Apsheronsk Forest District covers 115.000 ha of the Northern Caucasian Mountains in Russia. It is situated about 90 km from Krasnodar and 70 km from the Russian Black Sea Coast. 35.000 of the 115.000 ha are *Abies nordmanniana* in various concentrations. Mezmai and Guamka, neighbouring forests in the District, were recently joined under the name Apsheronsk/Guamka. They are situated in the Eastern and Southeastern part of the District behind the crest of the Lago Naki Mountains with altitudes up to 2.100 m, sheltering the area from winds from the Black Sea.

TYPE, SHAPE AND GROWTH

Levinson & Abies have chosen comp. 44-46 in Mezmai as primary area for seed collection. Mezmai Forest is comprised of beautiful, slender *Abies nordmanniana* trees mixed with deciduous trees, situated in an altitude from 950 to 1.100 m. The forest hasn't been logged for years, and contains a variety of ages of *Abies nordmanniana*. Both Mother trees and regeneration show good shoot form and well covering forward leaning needle-positioning. The needles are a bit shorter than Ambrolauri. This might be stimulated by good soil and fertilization. During the last few years we have collected seeds from Guamka, the neighbouring forest of Mezmai. The trees in Guamka show the same good shape and growth as the ones in Mezmai. We expect the grown Christmas trees from seeds from Guamka to have characteristics in shape and growth, same as Christmas trees from seeds from Mezmai.

RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE

The Apsheronsk provenance as such hasn't - to our knowledge - been field tested in Denmark or any other Western European country. The sheltered living conditions characterizing the area thanks to the Lago Naki massif is vital to our focus on this provenance. It means that the temperature in wintertime may drop to minus 30-35 °C, which should make this provenance more winter hardy in comparison to the Georgian types. In nurseries it has been established that the provenance has late budding - at the same time or later than Ambrolauri. This late budding is also seen in grown Christmas trees with a height from 150 to 200 cm. The trees show satisfactory shape, shot form, needle-positioning etc. and have a nice colouring. If a chance to field test Mezmai and Guamka material should arise, we will be happy to attend.

SECURITY OF ORIGIN AND DELIVERY

The Apsheronsk provenance, with the surname "Lago Naki", has been known in Denmark for more than 15 years. As mentioned above Lago Naki is the massif that shelters Mezmai and Guamka from the Black Sea winds. The company Abies Frø, which now is a part of LEVINSEN & ABIES, has traded with seed from Apsheronsk/Mezmai since 2003. The provenance has been well received by the market and further acknowledged during the meek harvests of 2006 and 2008. Results of these transplants that will become grown Christmas trees within a couple of years are expected to even further improve the status of the provenance.

We have established a cone storing facility in Mezmai, functioning as our base in the area, including for recruiting local people for the harvest. For a long time we have set the standard for secure and traceable collections in well-defined collection areas and presence during the harvesting process, so also in Mezmai/Guamka. It ensures the further traceability through the cleaning process leaving no doubt about the security of origin for the end user.

WORTH KNOWING

During the last few years Russia has made structural changes to its forest districts. Decisions now are centralized, also concerning harvesting licenses for *Abies nordmanniana*. The process of acquiring a harvest license for a certain district has not yet been reestablished. However, we've managed to secure a harvesting license until the new system is established. Despite the merging of Mezmai and Guamka, we will continue to collect the cones from the two areas separately.

Ulrik Nyvold og Børge Klemmensen

