Creating “Perfect” Boswellia

It was early 2000 when Frank Olvey approached me with the proposition of donating a couple of *Boswellia sacra* to the arboretum of Arizona State University (ASU). He had heard that ASU was in the process of certifying the Tempe campus as an arboretum because of its rich plant history and diversity. I was involved in this process, not only as the campus architect for over 20 years but also as an avid preserver of plant life on the campus.

Frank had grown *Boswellia sacra* at the University of Arizona (UofA) extension site in Maricopa, Arizona, for nearly ten years. After working for the Yemen government, Frank was able to bring a bag full of seeds upon returning to the USA. He began sowing the seeds by the thousands and by the time I met Frank the plants were nearly two and half meters tall and in fifteen gallon containers. He was interested in giving the plants some exposure and eventually he planned to sell them in the open market. It was during this collaboration that Frank also gave me three plants in five gallon containers for my own collection in exchange for assisting him with starting his plant sale.

That same year, Dan Mahr brought me his small *Boswellia popoviana* hoping that our favorable Arizona climate would give his plant a new growth spurt. I agreed to keep the plant as long as necessary and within a year’s time the plant was over 25 cm tall and back to a healthy state. As we had initially agreed, I took a number of cuttings for myself. I grounded the cuttings, and within one year all of them reached over a meter in height.

*Boswellia sacra*: This is one of the original seed grown plants I received from Frank Olvey and it was the pollen of this particular specimen that I used to cross-pollinate *B. nana* and *B. popoviana.*

The seed pod of *Boswellia sacra* is a 3-4 lobed pod with protective shells containing a single seed in each lobe. Seeds are brown and flat with a persistent wing. Once the seed pod ripens, the protective shell will fall off exposing the seeds.