

Plant Lovers Almanac

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Jim Chatfield

Ohio State University Extension

Cranberries and pumpkins, fruits of native plants both, are about to take center stage for upcoming fall feasts, but before we call Autumn quits and set our sights on Thanksgiving and the winter to follow, let us enjoy the last remnants of fall. Before our cold front this week beech foliage was golden against the blue sky at Furnace Run Metro Park, presaging its winter cloak of marcescent gold-fading-to-silver leaves that remain on the trees until spring, with our local black squirrels taking in the scene.

The fragrant, camellia-like blossoms of franklinia paired with its purples and oranges and reds of fall foliage at OSU's Secret Arboretum in Wooster, even as late as this past week. Ginkgoes did not have their one day of showering golden foliage this year that sometimes occurs when frosts, rain, and wind conspire to undress the tree from one morn to night. It was a more prolonged period of weeks of lemon-yellow changing to spun-gold of foliage matched with the "golden apricot" fleshy arils that surround the Chinese cuisine-beloved nuts inside. Beware of their odor, though, which is usually enough to dissuade gatherers. Even if you have a forgiving nose and do decide to rashly collect the ginkgo nuts inside, be aware that the flesh contains urushiol, the same chemical that incites our immune system with poison ivy. So, collectors - glove thyselfes.

Check out those remnant fall leaves from striped maples and the last few colorful oak leaves, not to mention that last blackberry of summer we noted at Lois Rose's Cleveland Heights gardens last week. Speaking of, roses, even a few rose blossoms made it until earlier this week. True, we are entering a new season for plant lovers, though it is not so much the end of youth and of life that Shakespeare so thusly noted in Sonnet 73:

That time of year may'st in me behold

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,

Bare ruined clouds where late the sweet birds sang.

- William Shakespeare

With gardening the Autumn of life is not really so sad or final. Gardening, and tree leaves will renew, so let us prepare for seasons yet to reprise. One of the off-season reminders of this involves reading books to remind us of spring to come. Here is one more book review for your holiday purchases.

Garden-pedia, by Pamela Bennett and Maria Zampini is a handy dictionary of garden and landscape terms is designed to help those who grow plants to better understand common horticultural terms. The over 200 terms, replete with over 100 color photos and additional illustrations are meant to teach, to provide perspectives on terms such as "volcano mulching" and why this is not conducive to root health. Common plants are included, but always to illustrate commonly-asked questions.

The entry for “hydrangea” explains the differences in pruning for hydrangeas that develop from new growth vs. those types developing from last season’s growth. “Disease triangle” defines how to use this concept for practical garden practices such as the use of rose hosts resistant to black spot, sanitation and preventive fungicides to control this pathogen, and managing environmental conditions conducive to disease through practices promoting leaf drying.

More extensive side bars explain key distinctions between soil texture and soil structure. Understocks and grafting are explained, the practice of balled-and-burlapped trees is covered. The idea for the book starting with Maria Zampini needing to explain basic terms and practices to new hires in the nursery and was expanded by Pam Bennett’s experiences with teaching home gardeners and Master Gardeners a common ground of terms needed to understand garden resources. From binomial nomenclature for species on up to plant families and why it matters to a context for exotic invasive pests and plants and the term “aggressive” for native plants that may also cause problems in certain landscape contexts, this book helps us all to rethink what we think we know.

The book (\$16.95) will not be available for the holiday tree, but can be preordered through Amazon and Barnes & Noble and gift cards will be available to order the books that will ship in early January.

Full disclosure: I work with and admire Pam Bennett and her efforts as OSU’s Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator and many other roles, and Maria Zampini for her garden writing and speaking and the innovative green industry marketing business she runs with her father Jim Zampini, UpShoot LLC.

To close: “Heed these words of the Roman scholar Cicero: *“If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.”*”