

## Plant Lovers Almanac

For: April 19, 2014

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For one brief shining moment this past weekend, there came a few star magnolia flowers, just birthed, only to be blasted, this past Tuesday night. Winter just does not want to give it up this year. But the star magnolia trees themselves will be fine, and there are later blooming magnolia species. As ever, each season and each year has its winners and losers.

Alas, many European and hybrid grape types are lost for the season and in some cases for seasons to come. Peach flower buds are lost, and thus the future for this year is lost as these flowers will not become fruits. Forsythia bloom is spotty. At least it shall be a learning experience, as we find out which plants are hardiest. For example our native eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) appears to have fared much better than Chinese redbud (*Cercis chinensis*) cultivars such as 'Don Eglof' at Secret Arboretum in Wooster.

During the periods when the sun does come out and it warms up, it is quite glorious, as the OSU Master Naturalist volunteers learned a week ago during their program at Stan Hywet. Spicebush was ready to pop out, silver maples were in glowing bloom lit by the sun, and the turtles were out basking in the warmth. The time to revel in springtime for more than a few days in a row soon shall arrive for man and beast.

Speaking of reveling, I am most enthused by the quality of the students at Ohio State University. Along with my co-horts, I teach a class on main campus, titled "Sustainable Landscape Maintenance", Horticulture and Crop Science 3410. For their recent midterm one of the essay questions was "What is your definition of sustainable landscaping?" Here is the answer by student Lindsay Davidson:

*"Ken Cochran said in his lecture, 'You must learn to be a practicing ecologist.' That statement hit home. To landscape sustainably, we must look at the built/constructed landscape as an ecologist would look at a prairie or old growth forest, or wetland. Recognizing that there are hundreds or thousands of pieces that fit together to create a complete puzzle of an ecosystem is the first integral step in sustainable landscape design. Removing or changing of any individual piece alters the puzzle in some way.*

*Balance would be the key pillar of my landscape business. The ultimate goal would be to create landscapes that are cost efficient, have minimal or positive effect environmentally, have purpose being both functional and aesthetically pleasing, and finally serve as a positive example and educational tool for others. I want my business to not only develop and practice a "land ethic" but to educate and encourage others to do so too. Theodore Roosevelt said something along these lines: 'A nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which must be passed on to future generations undiminished.' My business would aim to do just that.*

The future of horticulture and for plant lovers is bright. Could any of us have written so skillfully and with such ecological perspective on a midterm exam – or at all? Mostly not, but theoretically we could have, since the perspectives of environmental stewardship are not new. Two of the books the students read as part of this class, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) and Jen's Jensen's *Siftings* (1939), both teach us of the land ethic. Here is an example from Aldo Leopold:

*"That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten."*

And from Jens Jensen:

*"The city of tomorrow will demand the living green as a most important part of its composition – the buildings in a garden. Man does well to study nature's way, and if a man is to be successful in city planning, it will be man and nature, not just man."*

And now...

### **The Last Name That Plant Contest**

Our last Mystery Plant was a multi-stemmed shrub or small tree that is a wonderful harbinger of spring, with its chartreuse-yellow flowers that emerge before the leaves, truly representing the sunny-side up-ness of the season. It is starting to bloom now in northeast Ohio. And it is corneliancherry dogwood, *Cornus mas*. The individual flowers are tinier than flowering dogwood, *Cornus florida*, which are yet to come in several weeks, but the overall effect is just as spectacular if less well-known. The first to respond (6:10am) was Gordon Matthews of Stow, Ohio.

Gordon, ever a good sport, wondered if he was eligible, since he arises early for his work as a professional tree lover with the Davey Tree Expert Company. I say, of course, all for the better. The Davey Tree Expert Company, the largest residential tree care company in the world is an important component of the over \$10 billion dollar Ohio green industry, which is a crucial aspect of Ohio's economy and environment. In fact, Greg Ina, Davey's Vice President for the Davey Institute, gave a guest lecture to the Sustainable Landscape Maintenance class this very week. So for Gordon, a copy of Aldo Leopold's conservationist classic, *A Sand County Almanac*. E-mail is chatfield.1@osu.edu. Phone is 330-466-0270.

### **The New Name That Plant Contest**

For this week's contest: a puzzler, straight from Johnson Woods Nature Preserve near Orrville. This week it is a two for one. Our picture depicts plant parts from two separate plants, one leaf and one flower mass. Be first to identify both plants correctly, and you will be the winner. E-mail is chatfield.1@osu.edu. Phone is 330-466-0270.

To close: from Jens Jensen in *Siftings*:

*"Our departed friend, our great western poet, Vachel Lindsay, had honored us with a visit. It was early morning when he called us to the open door where he was standing looking out over a clearing. There*

*was a peculiar light over this little sun opening, caused by the reflection of the sunrise. The clearing was bordered by a simple composition of hardwoods with a few hawthorns, crab-apples, and gray dogwood scattered on the edge. The light had added an enchantment to this simple composition, and Lindsay, watching this, said to me, "Such poems this I cannot write."*