

Plant Lovers Almanac

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Discoveries abound this time of year, from killdeers laying their seeming dangerously exposed eggs on the ground in the Rose Garden at Secrest Arboretum, to tuliptrees exposing their at-first tiny tulip-shaped leaves to a new year of eating the sun. Buckeyes unfurl their prehistoric-looking flower buds and ribbed leaves, and serviceberries now join the sun along the rocks of the Ledges in Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Students that I learn with in the Sustainable Landscape Maintenance class on the OSU campus traveled to New York City two weeks ago, and experienced for the first time the trees and herbaceous perennials and grasses and views along the High Line Park in southwestern Manhattan and the views of Central Park reflected in the windows of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is the time of year for everyone to be out enjoying and rediscovering springtime. Visit northeast Ohio locations but also explore Ohio, from the Hocking Hills to Lake Erie. But remember, put your natural defenses on alert as well, there are also the perilous plants of spring; poison ivy reveals its attractive but awful urushiol oils to make us remember those too-close encounters.

Speaking of discoveries...

Plant Discovery Day

It is May, so Secrest Arboretum's Plant Discovery Day must not be far behind. In fact it is next Saturday, May 10. Secrest Arboretum is located on the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center campus of Ohio State University in Wooster. Plant Discovery Day is a great chance to buy and see herbaceous annuals and perennials, herbs, shrubs and trees, to access your inner child at the Bug Zoo, to stroll around the landscape gardens of Secrest, and to enjoy what may be the peak in Crablandia, with scores of crabapple types displaying their aromatic blooms from snowy white to coral red. Some years the peak is past, but the best time for viewing the annual crabapple show at Secrest this year will be over the next week, including Plant Discovery Day and Mother's Day next weekend.

As for the 21st annual running of Plant Discovery Day on May 10, there is free admission and parking, and the programs commence in the morning with the official hours extending from 9:00am to 3:00pm. There are silent auctions and a live auction of rare plants at 11:00. Learn about, experience, and perhaps buy such plants as: weeping katsuratree, shagbark hickory, sourwood (an acid-loving tree, also known as the lily-of-the-valley tree for its panicles of creamy white flowers). Check out the 'Secrest' baldcypress, propagated from a witches-broom years ago at the Arboretum. 'SnowconeTM Japanese snowbell, CandymintTM crabapple, Slender SilhouetteTM sweetgum, Burgundy BlushTM redbud: you get the idea – there will be a lot of cool plants to see and buy, along with the usual garden favorites.

All the while enjoy the 110 acres of Secrest Arboretum and the inside and outdoors Plant and Art Sales at Fisher Auditorium at OARDC in Wooster. There are great bargains and all the proceeds go to supporting Secrest Arboretum (secrest.osu.edu). As Secrest curator and director Kenny Cochran notes: *"Delight in the beauty, discover research-based information, hear and see the birds, and smell the flowers."*

The Last Name That Plant Contest

The last Name That Plant puzzler was probably the hardest to date, but there was a winner. Mark West of Uniontown (a two-time winner) identified the “two for one” pictures of red maple flower buds resting on a swamp white oak leaf in a wet area at Johnson Woods Nature Preserve near Orrville. It was an appropriate match, since another name for red maple (*Acer rubrum*) is swamp maple, and both plants were doing swimmingly in this wet area. We sometimes forget that maples have flowers, but they can be quite attractive in reds (Japanese and red maples) and chartreuses (Norway and sugar maples).

Of course the next stage is the ovary of female flowers ripening around fertilized eggs (that become seeds), with this ripened ovary being designated a fruit, in the case of maples, termed a samara, but popularly known as little helicopters that spin their way soilward from the tree canopies above. At any rate, Mark West will receive his copy of *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. I confess to being a bit behind on my prize mailings, but fear not, I never do today what I can put off until tomorrow, but the future payoff always eventually arrives.

The New Name That Plant Contest.

The new plant puzzler is a native woodland tree that is finding its way more and more into the horticultural nurture of nature. Chartreuse flowers are opening now, and will give way to a range of variable shaped leaves come summer and a fall foliage feature of yellows, oranges, and even some orange-reds and even purples depending upon the genetics of the individual plant and the particular expression of the pigments and light reflected for a particular individual of the species. The picture this week comes from the High Line Park in New York City two weeks ago, so now flowers are open and leaves will soon arrive. Remember the winner will be the first to e-mail or text me at chatfield.1@osu.edu. Phone is 330-466-0270.

This weekend and next, come forth and feel the sun and the burgeoning greenery that is emerging yet again, and enjoy the art and science of nature and nurture. Let it flow through and within and from you. As D.H. Lawrence wrote of his art: “*Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me.*”