

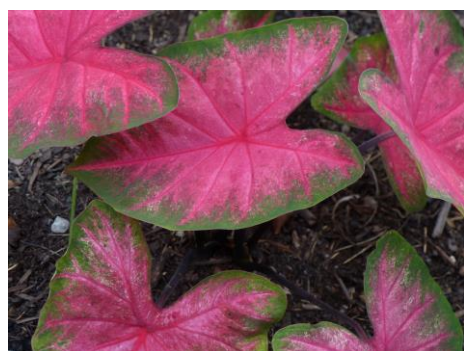
Plant Lover's Almanac

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For: August 20, 2016

Rain is very spotty throughout northeast Ohio with flooding in some areas, welcome relief in others, and still almost stone dry elsewhere, such as near Doylestown where I live. It is still a lovely summer though with wonderful blue-sky, white puffy-cloud days, and great sunsets, now even more interesting with the lengthening of the late day rays as the end of summer beckons. Since it was so dry in Doylestown, though, I decided I might as well take off for Fort Worth Texas to do a workshop for arborists last week. Of course it was the frying pan into the fire as, amidst drought which really means something there, me and my colleagues were greeted by their hottest day of the summer – a mere 104 degrees.



Caladium 'Rosy Pink' (JC)

Dry heat, of course, but still. There were several plants, though, that really got my attention. The first was a hot-weather lover, caladium, a tropical plant becoming ever more popular here throughout Ohio. The second was, by its absence - roses. Before a little trip to Texas though, a moment to reflect on what is happening right now in northeast Ohio. Earlier this week I enjoyed the beautiful planters created by the E.F. Pouly Co. in front of Smith Dairy.



Orrville planter with banana (JC)

There were Santa Cruz begonias, Colorstar Dark Blaze coleus, Orange Frost New Guinea impatiens, many more flowers and foliage plants, and – bananas. Again, that southern tone; I guess the heat got into my brain – must be the Olympics. Also this time of year: honeylocust trees that are sea green against blue skies, despite our drought. A lacebark



Honeylocust in Wooster (JC)

elms towers above a streetscape in Wooster, replete with its cinnamon-colored blistering on its exfoliating bark.

Thanksgiving in August is in our backyard as our wild turkeys grow up and prance out upon our dead ash tree before its final roost. And then there is slime – slime mold that is, and even an eerie image on our backyard pin oak tree. But that is for later; first, those caladiums and roses.

Oh Caladia! Years ago, OSU Agriculture College Dean Bobby Moser wanted the Ag Quad next to Howlett and Kottman Halls in Columbus to be planted so that football fans would not park cars there on fall Saturdays. The solution, led by Professor Claudio Pasian may be seen in all its colors and textures now with the OSU Extension Horticulture Trial Gardens on the Ag Campus there. The entire array of flowers and foliage is spectacular now (and will still be come football Saturdays), but one of the true standouts of those trials that I noted recently was a range of cultivars of *Caladium*. Hearts and arrows of

patterned and freckled leaves of intense colors, about 18 inches tall and wide. Wow: ‘Fiesta’ and “Burning Heart’. ‘Pearl’ and ‘Rosy Pink’. Many more; come on down.



Caladiums on Fort Worth, TX Street (JC)



Caladium trials at OSU in Columbus (JC)

The genus *Caladium* is in the Araceae, the arum family, with cousins such as jack-in-the-pulpit, skunk cabbage, philodendron, and many more. Caladiums are tropical plants, largely grown in Florida in the U.S., sold in pots or as tubers.

They prefer shade or partial shade, planting in mid-spring or later with harvest of tubers before frosts if you want to overwinter. Enjoy them for their visual virtues but do not eat (as if you would), as caladiums contain calcium oxalate crystals. Now that I am attuned to them, I see caladiums everywhere: in hanging baskets at the East Fourth Street District in downtown Cleveland, and in colorful landscape beds in Fort Worth Texas,

including the red-blushed cultivar ‘Strawberry Star’. Another example of red foliar coloration was not so appreciated, though in Texas, nor in Ohio.

The Reddened Rose of Texas. “Rose rosette is an epidemic, and North Texas is the epicenter,” said David Forehand of the Dallas Arboretum: “This is a game changer for roses, I’m sad to say.” This was in a July article in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram by Sara Bahari, reflecting the anguish felt by Texans regarding the demise of so many of their beloved rose gardens.



Rose rosette symptoms (Joe Boggs, OSU Extension)



Rose rosette disaster in Fort Worth (JC)

As I noted, fellow OSUers Erik Draper, Pam Bennett, and myself were in north Texas at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden last week for our pre-walkabout before for annual Tree Diagnostic Workshop that we do for the International Society of Arboriculture. We noted something peculiar about the fabled Fort Worth

Arboretum rose gardens, fabled as in on the National Registry of Historic Places. Fabled as in the fact that in the 1940s, half the roses produced in the United States were within a 10-mile radius of Tyler. Yet, yet, in this rose garden: NO ROSES.

It is a sign of the times: rose rosette virus, a plant pathogen vectored by a microscopic, eriophyid mites (*Phyllocoptes fructiphilus*), has resulted in roses here being replaced by beds of hibiscus (look sort of like roses from afar) and purple fountain grass and blue phlox. As local rosarian and arboretum gardener Tim Henson, noted:

“Stems covered with thorns. Leaves crinkled and puckered. Deformed buds with multiple shoots that turn a hue of red. [variable on different rose taxa] You plant a bush and four months later have to rip it out. The disease is everywhere.”

Also noted in the Star-Telegram article: *“Southlake is removing and replacing more than 5,400 rosebushes in medians and parks because of the disease. Costs could reach \$500,000, city officials have said.”*

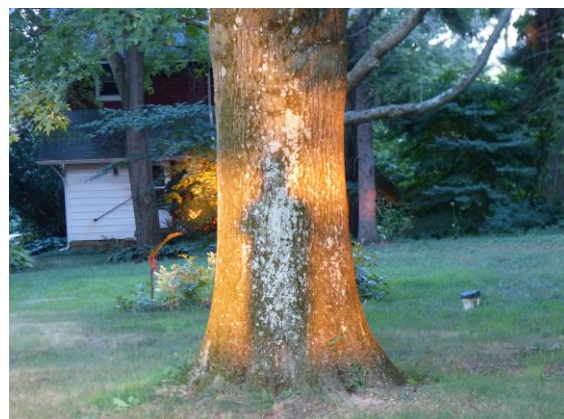
What to do? We do not have virucides and the mite vectors are very difficult to control with miticides. The strategy they have adopted, noted by another Fort Worth Botanic Gardens horticulturist we talked to the next day was: the removal, destruction and disposal (already accomplished) of the systemically infected roses (including the roots), hoping to reduce populations of mites over the next months, then replanting, modestly, with roses intermingled with other plants. As the Texas rosarians noted: *“All of these rosebushes planted together creates an interstate highway for the mites... They can have a field day.”*

Certainly this is a new way to look at rose gardens for many rosarians – no monocultures! Rose rosette epidemics are typically a number of years in the making and the problem is now certainly severe as well here in Ohio, though perhaps not as cataclysmic as that described for north Texas.



Crape myrtle blooming against the blue sky in Texas (JC)

in Orrville this past Wednesday. It was on the organic mulch. It was on a fallen maple leaf. It was on a few turfgrass plants near the mulch. Was it infecting everything, from long dead organic matter (mulch), to recently dead organic matter (the fallen leaf), and on living organic matter (turfgrass)? No, in this case, this slime mold



LichenMan! (JC)

So the yellow rose of Texas is doing poorly these days, but Texans do have the wonderful blooms and bark of crape myrtles, in our lifetimes perhaps not to rule in northeast Ohio, but coming on strong as our climate warms. They will survive in northeast Ohio now, though still may die back in tough winters.

But back to the dark side – that slime mold. It seemed to be creeping along the ground under a maple



Crape myrtle and their lovely bark in Fort Worth Texas (JC)

is not “parasitic” on living organic matter, just “saprophytic” on already dead organic matter, including mulch that had landed on the turfgrass blades. Nevertheless, once again John Updike’s poem *Ode to Rot* applies. Let rot proclaim its revolution!

Oh: one last thought: that eerie image on our pin oak, with lichens (symbioses between fungi and an alga), the waning sun of a summer day, and (that ghostly shape), a shadow of – mysterious me, the photographer.