

Plant Lover's Almanac

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For: December 24, 2016

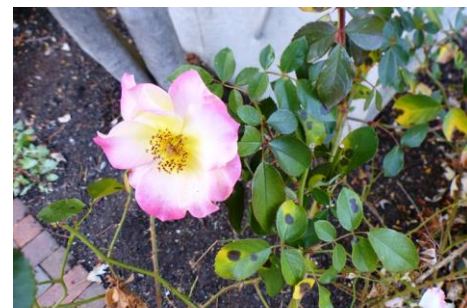
It is almost the time of year for one of Shakespeare's most timely truisms:

*At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth;
But like of each thing that in season grows.*

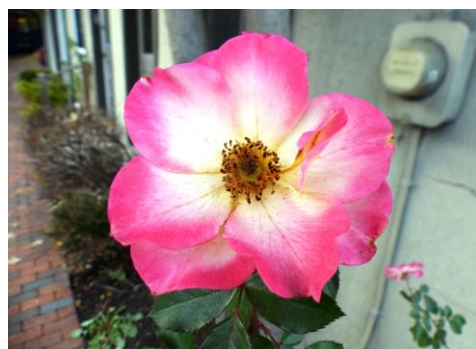
From: "Love's Labour Lost"

Yet. This morning it is not yet Christmas. And though the weather outside is dreary, my mind it dreams so clearly, to remember a blooming rose, ere these days before it froze.

Roses abloom on days as recently, in fact, as early December when in German Village in downtown Columbus, roses were still blooming during the OSU Nursery Short Course. Now they are assuredly blasted. Those blossoms remain in recent memory, though, as does my horticultural admonition to conferees: Leaves with attendant black spot disease, leaves that will fall to the base of the plant and lurk into next season, fouled by developing spores of the black spot fungus, these will fuel next season's rose black spot fungal infections. Out, out, black spot. Remove those leaves. Now, or at least before the roses leaf out in Spring, 2017.



Late-blooming rose with black spot disease (JC)



Late blooming rose in December (JC)

A Rose By Any Other Name. Speaking of roses for this one last day for the season, one of the questions I posed in one of my recent BYGLQuest plant quizzes, BYGL being Buckeye Yard and Garden Line (www.bygl.osu.edu), was:

Name five plant species (with Latin binomials), with common names that include "rose" that are not true roses in the genus *Rosa*. I had a few names in mind, but reader's responses were epic, including:

Oh, what a stocking-full of answers I received. First, let us remember that a biological plant **species**, at least technically speaking, is a group of plants reproductively isolated from another species, though even self-respecting species sometimes ignore the books and cross anyway, such as Oriental planetrees and American planetrees crossing to create the London planetree. A plant **genus** is a group of related species, for example different species of maples, and a plant **family** is a group of related genera, say

The most common answer from questees for "a rose that is not a *Rosa* was:

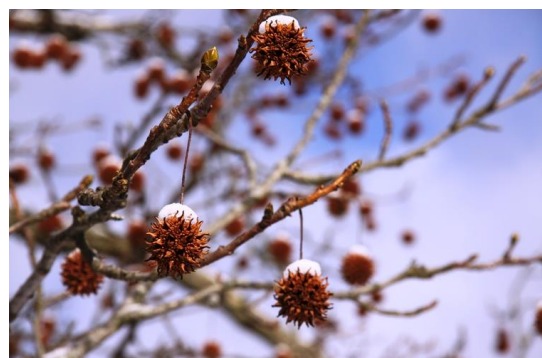
Rose-of-sharon, *Hibiscus syriacus*, in the Malvaceae or cotton family. Close behind were rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, in the Lamiaceae, the mint family, and a confusing group of species in the genus *Helleborus*, in the Ranunculaceae, the buttercup family. My favorite answer was the rock-rose, a member of the dogbane family, the Apocynaceae, *Adenium obesum*, ho-ho-ho.

A Tree for All Seasons. Sweetgums are a favorite of mine. There are variegated sweetgums. There are upright sweetgums. There are those who are driven to distraction by sweetgum fruits, cool though they are – especially in the winter with their fashion-wise toboggan looks during snowy times.



Sweetgum leaves in the snow (JC)

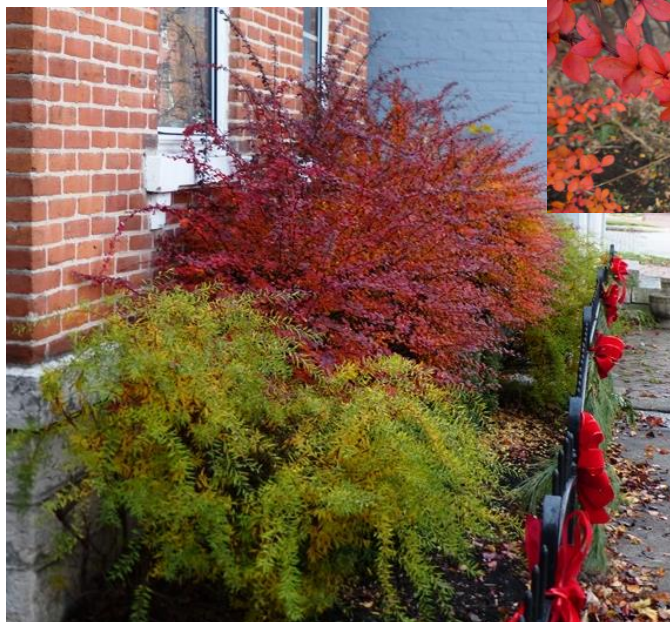
There are the multitudinous fall colors of sweetgum. There are the winged stems of many sweetgums. There are the truly wonderful monoecious flowers of sweetgum. There are sweetgums in the snow. There are sweetgums that range from Florida to states north of Ohio. *Liquidambar styraciflua*, you of the twice-named gum, we barely know ye!



Sweetgum with fruits frosted in snow (JC)

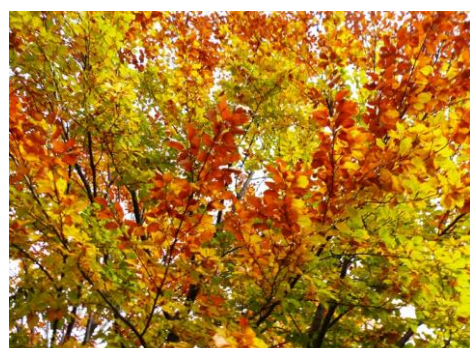
Last Vestiges of Fall: Lest we forget, Autumn passed us by only earlier this week. So, finally here are a few true colors of plants earlier this December – the last vestiges of Fall.

Barberry (*Berberis*) fall foliage is quite colorful, and while fact-checking a bit, I was surprised to learn that the Berberidaceae family also includes two of my favorite wildflowers, *Podophyllum* (may-apple) and *Jeffersonia* (twinleaf). As to barberry, there are native and non-native barberries and you find many non-native cultivated barberry seedlings in Ohio woodlands. European barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*) was a major issue when black stem rust of wheat disease was a major contributor to wheat shortages following World War II. European barberries are alternate hosts for the wheat rust fungus (*Puccinia graminis*) and Rust Buster clubs were popular at the local grange to bring in barberry pelts, so to speak, in order to break the disease cycle.



Left: Fall foliage for barberry; Right: Close up of barberry fall foliage

Photos by Jim Chatfield



Fall foliage for beech (JC)

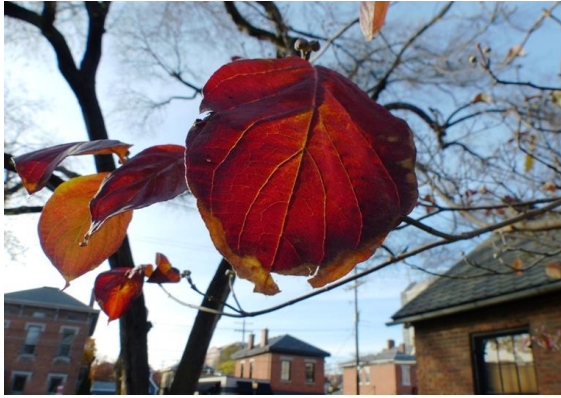
Beech (*Fagus*) fall foliage? I admit that I never think of it much in the context of fall color, except for the fact that American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) foliage is marcescent (remains into the winter) in woodlands, turning from golden to silver, before being replaced in the spring with soft green new foliage. Yet, European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), the beech planted horticulturally, was glistening with orange-reds in German Village.



Clematis fruits (JC)

Clematis achenes (fruits) with their hairs and oils can be quite irritating to skin and poisonous to some animals, but they are also quite spectacular in the summer and fall. I admit that I

have not followed them into the winter so do not know how long they persist – teach me, please! The genus *Clematis*, with all its hundreds of species is in the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae).



Late flowering dogwood leaf (JC)

Flowering dogwood *Cornus florida*) is best known for its large creamy-white bracts of spring, its spring and summer foliage and its bright red fruits, but fall foliar color is also outstanding, and last week just a few spectacular leaves remained on a tree I have been watching through the season at German Village near the Pistacia Vera parking lot.

For those wondering of what I speak when I mention Pistacia Vera in German Village in Columbus, it is the most exquisite of pastry shoppes: egg nog eclairs, French macarons, pate de fruits, rye croissants, pistachio daquises, and the like. Take 71 south. And the name? *Pistacia vera* is the Latin binomial for the pistachio tree.

Finally:

As noted above, BYGL items can be assessed at www.bygl.osu.edu at any time and with a weekly update, but if all you want for Christmas is your bygl-alerts to pop up immediately on your e-mail and phone, subscribe as follows:

- Send an e-mail message to: bygl-alert@lists.osu.edu
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And now our long March to May's new-fangled Mirth.