

## Plant Lover's Almanac

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**Kenny's Garden.** A neighbor walked by and wondered "Where did all these hostas come from?" "Would you like some" was the answer and a discussion for a new friend's garden makeover is now in the works. A pawpaw patch had developed under the mother tree and I casually called the young plants "seedlings", and was immediately corrected – these were shoots from roots, not seedling products of the birds and the bees. A shoot had died back on the seven-son-flower tree; perhaps this would be useful for the upcoming Secrest Arboretum plant diagnostic workshop – it was put to good use just yesterday. A "Fan Salmon" lobelia with electric flowers, the curl of 'Silberlocke' fir needles, the bicolored curl of silver lindens – all were noticed and appreciated.



*Kenny Cochran and his pawpaw patch (JC)*



*Kenny in his garden (JC)*

All of this from a trip this past Monday to Kenny's Garden. As in Kenny Cochran the retired curator of OSU's Secrest Arboretum at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster. "Retired" as the curator, not as a gardener. I have written before of Kenny's garden and so this is a bit of an update of this Cuyahoga Falls native now living in Wooster who has inspired countless plant lover's, including the Summit County Master Gardener Volunteer class that will be visiting his garden soon to glean from Kenny's knowledge and horticultural passion which continues to grow and prosper.

**Smorgas-Gourd.** I was walking down the road in Smithville O-H-I-O and such a fine sight to see. It's a gourd, my lord, staring back at me – from twenty feet up a telephone tree! Attached to a vine, there it was, vaguely cucumber-like, twirling up the pole. Though I am no expert – but was it possibly some type of bottle or Kalabash gourd? Well, if you really want to know, my friend Chris Voise can help, and all you have to do is travel to the Delaware County fairgrounds in central Ohio in a few weeks.

Chris is asking for volunteers to help with the 54<sup>th</sup> Ohio Gourd Show. Again, I knew that gourds, usual and unusual, are staples of county fairs, but a whole show of gourds – wow. It is coming October 7-9. According to their website: "Food, gourds, gourd art, art and craft supplies, music and special programs are



*Gourd high on a pole in Orrville (JC)*





The gourd (JC)

featured. Programs and presentations throughout the weekend will present information about gourds, gourd art and gourd music.” And you do not really have to volunteer, you can be an attendee for just five bucks a day – seven for the entire weekend!

Gourds, by the way, are in the Cucurbitaceae, the plant family that also includes the luscious cantaloupes we are all now enjoying and seem better than ever this year, watermelons and many other melons, pumpkins, edible squashes of infinite variety, and (burp), excuse me, cucumbers. Most of the plants we call gourds are from the genera *Cucurbita* and *Lagenaria*, with *Lagenaria siceraria* being the bottle gourd.

Gourds are commonly found in archaeological sites and were clearly used for thousands of years as containers for water and as musical instruments; from drums, to nose flutes to – maracas. They have been used in agriculture for purple martin houses to encourage these insect-eating birds, and of course their genetics and that of their relatives are used directly in food crops for animals and humans. They are obviously widely used in art and in crafts, but I am way out of my element here, certainly in depth and breadth – I must learn more about the myriad types and uses - at the Gourd Show.

**Trees To Add.** I was chatting this past Thursday with Dave Bienemann, the new municipal arborist of Warren, Ohio in Butler County. I had given a talk on “How Good Trees Go Bad”, noting how relying on only a few species or genera (related species) continue to plague urban forests. The list is legend, from Callery pears, which have now become invasives to using too many maples in urban forests, just like there were too many ashes (being decimated by emerald ash borer) and once too many elms (decimated by Dutch elm disease).

Dave transformed the Bowling Green urban forest while he as there and now looks at what the composition of the same in Warren. There are 151 different species on the city’s trees, which is good diversity, but of the 15,000 trees there are 2000 Callery pears, and the next four most prominent species are all maples (silver, Norway, sugar and red). Again, too vulnerable. So, what does Dave plan to begin working into the profile (but not too many): three trees that I admit to loving. These are Kentucky coffeetree, baldcypress, and sourgum.



Baldcypress tree (JC)

All are medium to large trees, so they will not work well with overhead power lines, but where their sites are appropriate, they will shine. Kentucky coffeetree is a real standout in winter with its bold, coarse form and its tolerance of tough urban sites. Baldcypress loses its needles in October and November but provides a sea green look from Spring to Fall and is able to tolerate both (reasonably) wet and dry sites. Sourgum is arguable our best tree for fall color, with its leaves changing from lustrous green to intense reds and oranges. We would all do well to plant these trees. And now, for something to avoid:

**Beware of Omphalotus.** Sounds like Monty Python or something the recently lost Gene Wilder might say. Anyway, I was driving home in northern Wayne County the other day, and on a bank, under an oak tree, there were some electrifyingly-orange mushrooms cascading down a small slope. I had to stop and take a look. Delightful as they looked to the eye, these were jack-o’-lantern mushrooms, probably *Omphalotus olearius*. This mushroom may cause serious gastric distress to those



Jack-o’-lantern mushrooms. **DO NOT EAT** (JC)



Jack-o'-lantern mushrooms. **DO NOT EAT** (JC)

who partake. It is a reminder that you really need to get a positive identification before taking a chance on nature gone wild.

I reminisced of another September weekend when I got a call from someone eagerly about to have a feast on an orange mushroom they had found, hoping their find was – golden chanterelles, *Cantharellus cibarius*, a delightfully tasty mushroom fact *Omphalotus*, and thus anything but delightful or edible.

What were a few tell-tales in this case of the Mistaken Mushroom? Golden chanterelles are more yellow than the bright orange mushrooms that are the jack-o'-lanterns. Secondly, and more fundamentally, jack o'lantern and

another look-alike, false chanterelles (*Hygroporopsis aurantiaca*) have true blade-like gills that can be detached from the cap. Chanterelles have false gills, forked wrinkles that descend the stem of the mushroom and which do not detach without tearing from the cap. Chanterelles also occur singly or in small clusters with single stems rather than in large groups with stems attached to each other for jack-o'-lanterns.

Tricky, but something you can eventually learn. Foray with fungal aficionados and check out the many good published mushroom guides, such as the Audubon guide and many of the materials on the fungal web. Take your time. And if you want to learn still more about mushrooms and other fleshy woodland fungi join the Ohio Mushroom Society ([ohiomushroom.org](http://ohiomushroom.org)). Relax. OMS. OMS. OMS. But remember the mantra: *There are old mushroom hunters/and bold mushroom hunters/but no old, bold mushroom hunters.*



Chanterelle mushroom (JC)