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Fall is finally fading, but many trees and shrubs of green are still changing their colors this weekend, after which for months - not to be seen. So, dodge those raindrops and enjoy the luminous sugar maples, the burningbushes, the multicolored sweetgum leaves. And, still basking in the Buckeye victory last weekend, let us begin this Almanac with a short dissertation upon that most graceful of buckeyes – the bottlebrush buckeye, *Aesculus parviflora*.

*“No better plant could be recommended as a lawn shrub”*, according to W.J. Bean, as quoted in Michael Dirr's *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*. *“Bottlebrush buckeye, is my favorite shrub”* from an unnamed source in Holden Arboretum's Plant Profiles.

I concur. Palmately compound leaves with 5-7 leaflets, lovely in spring, summer and fall. Multi-stemmed shrub to 10-12 feet with layered tiers of branches. Suckering habit that results in wonderful groundcover colony to complement mass plantings.

And the flowers are the real door prize. Creamy white 4-petaled flowers with protruding stamens with pink to red filaments. Overall effect of upright panicles is glorious in early summer. Pollinators, from butterflies to hummingbirds love bottlebrush buckeye. Fruits smaller than the average buckeye, but interesting.

Best soil is moist, organic, well-drained: what else is new? Partial to full shade. Slow to get started but worth the wait. Few pest and disease problems; low susceptibility to *Guignardia* leaf blotch disease. Reportedly not a favorite for deer palates.

In recent years buckeyes were reclassified to the Sapindaceae, the soapwort family. Bottlebrush buckeye is native to the southeast United States and found and described by early plant explorer William Bartram in the Carolinas and Georgia in the 1770s. Many gardening awards in the U.S. and the Royal Horticultural Society (Award of Garden Merit).

In early October, with a group visiting the Coastal Maine Botanic Gardens, Sequest Arboretum curator Joe Cochran exclaimed: *“I spy a pink-flowering bottlebrush buckeye!”* Yowzer. And in October. I asked expert in all things buckeye, Pablo Jourdan of the OSU Horticulture and Crop Science about this – and here is what he wrote:

*“I am not entirely surprised by the late bloom. I have on occasion seen such plants blooming in October in protected areas in central Ohio... I think there is variability for bloom time and, with seed propagation the common way of producing this plant, the chances of such variability being expressed is a bit greater.”*

As to the pink color: *“I have not seen that color in our local bottlebrush buckeyes. I was at that garden a couple of years ago in the summer and noticed their bottlebrush buckeye plants but did not see any pink display.”*

*“Perhaps seed could be collected and we could try some vegetative propagation as well”* Will do.

Speaking of that *Guignardia* leaf blotch disease, of which bottlebrush buckeye is less susceptible than its other buckeye cousins, plant disease, let us pose some additional plant disease questions:

What are the host ranges of other common diseases? What are control strategies for managing oak wilt disease? What do we know about beech leaf disease? Does rose rosette virus affect 'Knockout' roses? Which crabapples have good genetic resistance to apple scab disease and how does this compare to 20 years ago? Does apple scab on the fruit matter (as seen on the lead slide for this bygl-alert)?

What is a phytoplasma, anyway, and what do bugs have to do with it? How do fungicides work and what works for what? Is that crown gall on the hickory tree at Secrest Arboretum? What is the disease cycle for a range of important plant diseases in the landscape and community forests?

Questions, answers, conundrums, diagnostic profiles, a diagnostic walk in the almost-winter plantscape: come join us at Secrest Arboretum for a full day of probings of your phytopathological knowledge, including new and emerging disease problems.

Not to mention an excellent lunch and gourmet snacks. All for \$40. Program will be taught by OSU Extensioners Erik Draper and Jim Chatfield. Registration coming next week; check it out then at:

[agmr.osu.edu/Chatfield](http://agmr.osu.edu/Chatfield)

And, there might even be a bit of point-counterpointing between Mr.'s Draper and Chatfield. This is a long-standing plant pathological tradition. In the early 1900's J.C. Arthur was unimpressed with Roland Thaxter and accused him of being a "mere squirt-gun botanist" relative to his touting of Bordeaux mixture fungicide and other fungicides.

Thaxter saw the world different, and once said: "Original research is a precious slow coach and is not wanted by the constituency for which the [Research] Stations are created. They do not want pure science; they want mud pies, the sloppier the better." Hmm.

Then, as now, scientists could occasionally be a bit uncivil. Thaxter once sent two reprints of a *Phytophthora* paper he had written to H.G. Farlow. The reply:

*"I am glad to have two copies of your papers...one copy to feed the little pigs in the laboratory [graduate students], and the other I keep for the capacious devouring of the old hog himself."*

This was a bit harsh, but questioning is key to the development of knowledge, science is a continual process of trying to better describe our natural world, ever building upon what was previously considered to be accepted truth.

But let us end on a less contentious note, we of the Buckeye State. This from recent Nobel laureate Bob Dylan:

*"Well my heart's in The Highlands wherever I roam  
That's where I'll be when I get called home  
The wind it whispers to the buckeye trees of rhyme"*

Anon do I reply/The time it now is nigh/Autumn leaves shall soon fly/for the victorious –Buckeyes.

