

For: August 8 Garden Q&A:

From: Jim Chatfield

Q. What is this lovely ball-shaped white flower? – Jerry W., Lancaster

A. I get this question a lot this time of year, especially from those frequenting wetland sites and in moist woods or those who visit botanical gardens or arboreta. The plant is *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, or buttonbush, a member of the Rubiaceae, the coffee family. The flowers and resulting fruits are quite beautiful, little frilly balls of white. It is a native plant that is being used more and more in native plant landscaping and is an important woodland plant for wetlands.

Q. – Yikes, what is this plant with giant leaves? – Debra S., Cleveland

A. – That is more or less the reaction many have when they see these giant seedlings of *Paulownia tomentosa*, the princess tree, empress tree or foxglove tree. This tree has lilac-purple flowers that are very attractive and resemble foxglove flowers, though they are in different plant families, *Paulownia* having its own family, the Paulowniaceae. Native to China, this exotic tree (up to 50 feet and more) once received Great Britain's Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit. Named for the Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna of Russia, it is still unusual enough in northeast Ohio to be given the royal treatment by many who are attracted to the spectacular floral display and huge leaves (sometimes as large as exercise balls) of young seedlings.

However. It is a significant invasive in states to our south and it is in reality becoming an invasive here in natural areas. It grows like a, like a – weed! It produces an incredible number of seeds. And, at a recent siting in Wayne County 2 year old seedlings were already up to 15 feet tall with huge saucer-like leaves. Resist before it is too late.

Q. – What is one of the symbols of the reigning national championship football team? – Jim C., Doylestown

A. – Alright, the questioner *c'est moi*. I propose a challenge. I am in search of pictures of the O-H-I-O of trees. I have a good "O" from trees pruned for power lines. "I" should be no challenge with columnar trees we have at Secrest Arboretum in Wooster. But, an "H"? All my life I have searched for an "H" that's a tree. I have a book for you, I bet you've guessed its name, if you can send such an image, such an image to me.

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