

# Eau Claire Area Master Gardener News



December 2020

## Mad Bucks Sledding Down Trees - Otherwise Known as Winter Tree Identification

by Ellen Terwilliger  
Mad bucks....sledding down tree trunks.... I had no idea that winter tree identification could be so thrilling. It's all about looking at trees in the forest and yards with a new perspective at this time of the year.

We can identify trees by their leaves, their flowers or their fruit during spring, summer and fall. We look at buds and bark during the winter. Now what about those crazy deer and going for a wild ride down tree trunks? That is how Jim Schweibert suggests narrowing down what tree you are looking at.



Photo by Ellen Terwilliger

Jim is a somewhat retired naturalist from Beaver Creek Reserve. He spoke to 25 Eau Claire area Master Gardeners on November 17<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. MAD BUCK stands for Maples, Ash, Dogwood and Buckthorn and Buckeye. These trees all have branches that are opposite each other. The rest of the trees have alternating branches. So when we are trying to figure out a tree, if there are branches that are alternating we know it is not one of the MAD BUCK species.

Jim also had those attending (via ZOOM) look at different kinds of buds, samaras, leaf scars and bark. Some bark is very smooth like young Basswood. Other bark is deeply fissured like cottonwoods. It can be up to two to three inches thick. The bark that is easiest to identify is Hackberry. You can identify Hackberry by the bark alone which is very corky and curvy. Older red oak develop long, unbroken ridges that run vertically on the trunk. You could sled right down the continuous ridges. Older silver maples have very distinctive shaggy bark. Birch trees have distinctive bark as well.

Today when I was walking by Sherman Creek I spotted white, yellow and river birch. River birch is very curly and peeling. White and yellow birch bark match their colors. I was excited to discover and confirm the yellow birch. When you scratch a young branch there is a distinctive evergreen taste and smell. The birch family can be identified by catkins (hanging male flowers that remain on through the winter).



Photo by Ellen Terwilliger

The buds give us clues as well. There are red buds, black buds, deer shaped buds, oaks have buds that are clustered. Leaf scars can be flat like a green ash or they might be curved.

(continued on page 3)

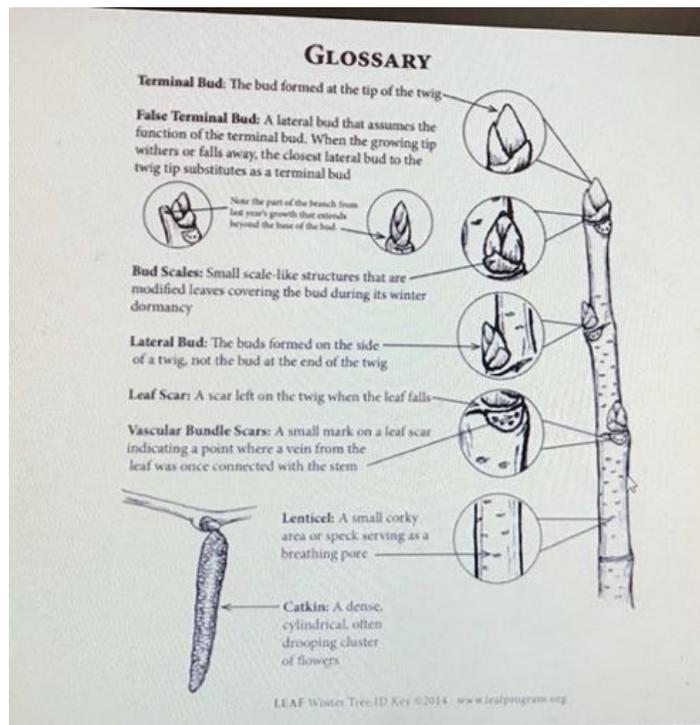


Photo by Jo-Ann Clark



## Local Master Gardener News

### Changing e-mail? Moving?

If you do, please remember to notify the ECAMGA and the newsletter editor of your new e-mail address and/or mailing address so you don't miss any Eau Claire Area Master Gardener happenings!



Email your new information to Carol Cox at [c7w6c2200@charter.net](mailto:c7w6c2200@charter.net) or notify her by snail mail at 1908 Hogeboom Ave., Eau Claire, WI 54701 (or call her at 715-783-0016 - cell).




**Bulletin Board  
Postings Stories  
and  
Opportunities!!!**

### ECAMGAV Annual Meeting To Be Held December 7, 2020

Because of the proximity of the Christmas holiday to the Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Association Volunteer usual meeting date, the regular monthly meeting will be held on Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm via ZOOM.

The meeting agenda will include announcing the 2021 Board results, presenting the Digger Award and the Photo Contest awards as well as a discussion of dues and volunteer and educational hours.

Then the fun will begin – actually the “fun” activities will require that the members do a bit of preparation ahead of time as we have a SCAVENGER HUNT to help members become more familiar with the MG website. In addition to the culmination of the Scavenger Hunt, there will be holiday games and activities to round out the evening.

Andy Heren has sent out an email with the links for the scavenger hunt as well as the ZOOM link and password. If you did not get it give Andy a call. So, put the time and date on your calendar and we will meet on the internet and enjoy electronic fellowship, fun and games.



*“When you're green with envy, you're ripe for trouble.”*

*-Anonymous*

### ECAMGA Board

ECAMGA BOARD MEMBER CONTACT INFO		
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**Note:**

The ECAMGAV Board minutes may be accessed at <https://www.eauclaireareamastergardener.org>.



### ECAMGVA

2020 Calendar

All meetings during the COVID19 pandemic will be held by Zoom invitation.

**December 16: Annual Holiday Party via ZOOM**

**December 31:  
Volunteer hours due**



To keep up to date on the latest guidance from UW Extension relative to the COVID19 situation go to: <https://wimastgardener.org/2020/03/20/halt-to-master-gardener-program-volunteer-activities-2/>



## Events



**Beaver Creek Reserve**  
**S1 County Road K**  
**Fall Creek, WI 54742**  
**715-877-2212**

### The Little Free Library Needs Your Help!

Isn't it fantastic! The Little Free Library is running out of books! Please donate your gently used books to share with readers throughout the Chippewa Valley and beyond. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the Wise Nature Center. You can leave them at the front door during business hours and a staff member will grab them. We are open Monday-Saturday from 9:30am-3pm and Sunday from noon-3pm. Thank you to all that have donated or left books in the Little Free Library.



*Mad Bucks...continued from page 1...*

I think we all feel pretty overwhelmed when we first walk through a forest. Jim's advice - start with one tree and get to know that tree well so that you can identify young and older versions. Then learn another. Pretty soon they become old friends. I walk with a friend down by Sherman Creek. We take a clipboard with the handout that Jim provided, and we use it to help us identify what tree it is. Jim is happy to have you send photos if you are stumped – (pun intended). We all need to branch out in our horticulture knowledge. This is a fun way to engage on outdoor walks during the winter. Thanks Jim Schweibert for an engaging and educational evening.

Next month's educational meeting will be a bit earlier due to Christmas and will be on **December 7<sup>th</sup>**, again via ZOOM. Andy has sent out the link inviting all members to the meeting. If you did not get it give him a call. See you there!

### A SHORT COURSE IN HUMAN RELATIONS

The six most important words:  
**I ADMIT THAT I WAS WRONG.**

The five most important words:  
**YOU DID A GREAT JOB.**

The four most important words:  
**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

The three most important words:  
**COULD YOU PLEASE...**

The two most important words:  
**THANK YOU.**

The most important word:  
**WE.**

The least important word:  
**I.**

Anonymous

*My "Garden Question of the Summer: "Instead of blood, why doesn't the mosquito suck the fat?" - Anonymous*



## Bits and Pieces

### *The Christmas Tree...* by Carol Cox based on info on [www.history.com](http://www.history.com) website

Whenever we think of Christmas now days, we immediately think of Christmas trees. The use of evergreens in holiday and religious celebrations dates back to ancient times. In those times, trees and plants that remained green year around had special meaning to people during for those ancient people during the long dark days of the winter season. Like today, these ancient peoples decorated their homes - inside and out - with evergreen boughs and trees. Those ancients thought that these evergreens would help keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits and even illness.

December 21/December 22 is called the winter solstice with December 21 being the shortest day of the year and most of these ancients celebrated around this winter solstice. The Egyptians believed the sun was a god and explained winter in terms of the sun god having become weak and sick. The winter solstice was then celebrated because it was a sign that the sun god greenery reminded them that the sun god was well.

The ancient Egyptian's god, Ra, and wore the sun as a blazing disc solstice, when Ra began to recover, green palm rushes symbolizing

was depicted with the head of a hawk in his crown. So, at the winter they decorated their homes with the triumph of life over death.

The Romans celebrated Saturn, the god of agriculture, and homes and temples with evergreen Europe the Druids (the priests of temples with ever green boughs Vikings and Scandinavians had the winter solstice and the use of



Saturnalia in honor of the god did much the same decorating their boughs. Meanwhile in Northern the ancient Celts) decorated their symbolizing everlasting life. The similar celebrations centered around evergreen plants and boughs.

The Germans are the ones credited with starting the tradition of Christmas trees as we now know them sometime in the sixteenth century. At that time devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Also, it is widely held that Martin Luther, the sixteenth century protestant reformer was the first to introduce lighted candles to the tree after he had watched the stars shining above the evergreens.

The first record of Christmas tree in America was in the 1830s by German settlers in the Pennsylvania area although trees in German homes had probably been a tradition as early as 1747.

Despite that, as late as the 1840s most Americans still saw the Christmas tree as a pagan (continued on page 5)

**Christmas Trees continued from page 4...**

*symbol. It is not surprising that the Christmas tree was so late to be adopted in America as, not only the Christmas tree, but also other festive Christmas customs were held to be pagan by the early New England Puritans as they held Christmas to be sacred. In fact, William Bradford, the pilgrims second governor wrote that he tried hard to "stamp out pagan mockery." Back in England, Oliver Cromwell had also preached against "those heathen traditions that desecrated that sacred event." And, in 1659 the General Court of Massachusetts enacted a law making any observance of December 25 (other than a church service) a penal offense and people were fined for hanging up decorations. That continued into the nineteenth century when an influx of German and Irish immigrants pretty much undermined that Puritan legacy.*

*Back in England with the ascension to the throne of Queen Victoria (and her German Prince Albert) and an 1846 sketch published in a popular London newspaper which portrayed the royal family seated around a Christmas tree, that staple of our modern Christmas celebration came into its own. Since Victoria was very popular with her subjects (and what became fashionable in Britain, soon became fashionable to fashion conscious East Coast*



*Americans. Then, by the 1890s Christmas ornaments were arriving from Germany and the popularity of the Christmas tree exploded across the United States.*

### *Christmas Trivia - Did You Know?*

- the electric Christmas lights replaced the candles when an associate of Edison came up with the idea for them,
- at one point the use of tinsel was banned by the government because it contained lead (now replaced by plastic),
- the top Christmas tree growing states are California, Oregon, Michigan, Washington and Wisconsin,
- there are 77 million trees planted each year in the U.S. with over 2000 trees planted per acre,
- in 1963 the National Christmas Tree was not lit until December 22 because of a national 30 mourning period following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy,
- Christmas trees must be imported to Greenland as no trees live that far North,
- Franklin Pierce, the 14<sup>th</sup> President, brought the Christmas tree tradition to the Whitehouse and, it was Calvin Coolidge, in 1923, who started the National Christmas Tree lighting ceremony that is now held each year on the White House lawn.



Sally Anderson submitted the following photo "Lily" for the 2020 annual photo contest. She tells us, "I ordered this lily from a catalog and it was supposed to come as a bare root early in the spring. Because of COVID 19 the company fell behind and the plant arrived later than expected. I planted it but it didn't bloom until the beginning of September. I picked it and brought it in the house. I am thrilled with the blooms and the fragrance." She did not, however, know what the name of the lily is. In any case it is gorgeous!

*"The wishbone will never replace the backbone."  
-Anonymous*





### The Quest

By Judy Mitchell

Becky Gutzman's presentation on Preserving the Harvest (October 2020) was super interesting. It prompted me to reflect on the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic when we were probably all trying to figure out the optimal stocking plan for our freezers, refrigerators and pantries given that the entire family would be spending more time at home.

At my house, we were in the habit of buying fresh items at the grocery store or Farmers Market whenever we needed them. Suddenly, we needed to plan for far fewer shopping trips. Sound familiar? With trial and error, we identified produce that we use regularly that also has a decent shelf life. Onions keep well in our basement. Fuji apples, carrots, cauliflower and bell peppers keep well in our refrigerator. Iceberg lettuce and spinach keep better than some of the other leafy greens.

That experience got me interested in better understanding how to properly store fresh garden produce. If a cauliflower I bought at the grocery store in March kept for almost two weeks, how long would a cauliflower bought at the Farmers Market stay fresh? Well, UWEX has a publication for that: Publication A3823, Storing fruits and vegetables from the home garden (available at <https://learningstore.uwex.edu> ).

Publication A3823 gives harvesting and storage instructions for a long list of fruits and vegetables. We can certainly make use of this information when harvesting home grown produce and I figure we can use it when we shop at the Farmers Market too. Buying produce harvested at the right time is one step towards a longer shelf life. The right storage temperature and the right packaging are critical too.

Table 1 (page 6) provides an excellent overview of recommended storage temperatures, whether or not to use perforated plastic storage bags and what shelf life you can expect for home grown produce. If you keep your refrigerator set around 32 degrees, you have the right temperature for a lot of the produce on the list. At that temperature, cauliflower will last 2 to 4 weeks and carrots and cabbage will last for months. Tables 2 and 3 give tips for spotting chilling injury and ethylene exposure which have negative impacts on quality.

By following the tips in Publication A3823, we can optimize the shelf life of our fresh produce and maybe be better prepared to help gardeners next year with questions about harvesting and storing their home grown produce.



The picture to the left was submitted for the 2020 photo contest by Ellen Terwilliger. She comments concerning the photo submission: "I enjoy growing ornamental cabbage in front of our home. I was walking by and saw how the light was shining through the leaves. It is one of my favorite annuals. The forms, lines and textures are very engaging. It lasts well past frost and the way it looks with frost and snow on it is also delightful."



## EYE CANDY



Beauty comes in many forms and shapes one of which is in this preserved, twisted old tree trunk out in the prairie. (Photo from Pinterest).



Anne Annis submitted this photo for the 2020 Annual ECAMGAV Photo Contest. Concerning her entry she says, "The Photo of the 'Ballerina Purple Datura' was taken on September 15, 2020. To me, this is such an elegant, exotic bloom, unfurling layers of silvery white petals backed in deep purple. It's amazing how each intricate combination of petal-whorls is finished off with a delicate, tiny twist on the end. This was definitely was one of my favorite flowers, and the show-stopper of the season, in my garden!"

*Rhodora! If the sages ask thee why  
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,  
Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were made for seeing,  
Then beauty is its own excuse for being: - Ralph Waldo Emerson*



Downtown Eau Claire as seen from the dash of Jo-Ann Clark's car...

*Silver bells,  
silver bells  
It's  
Christmas  
time  
in the city  
ring-a-ling,  
hear them  
ring,  
soon it will  
be  
Christmas  
day.*



*"Nothing intelligent would ever get done if sometimes people didn't do silly things."  
-Anonymous*



This is the Arbol del Tule tree, located in Santa Maria, Mexico. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest tree in the world. For more info go to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%81rbol\\_del\\_Tule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%81rbol_del_Tule)

Unless otherwise noted, articles for this newsletter are submitted and/or written by ECAMGA members or the newsletter editor, Carol W. Cox. Unless otherwise noted, graphics are from clipart. Newsletter layout by Carol W. Cox



*Dec. 7 - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day*

For more Eau Claire County UW Cooperative Extension information go to our website: [www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/eauclaire](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/eauclaire)  
Phone: 715-839-4712  
Fax: 715-839-6277  
M-F 8AM-5PM



*Dec. 21 - First Day of Winter*

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