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Grower News

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Editor John Esser

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Look Who's Tapping Trees for Sugar

Recently I received an article titled "Squirrel Smarts" from a former college professor who sits on a committee with me. The article was written by a Bernd Heinrich and published in the October 2016 issue of Natural History magazine. Bernd is a retired professor of biology from the University of Vermont and author of several books. He also shares a curiosity of nature with me.



Sugar Maple Trees

While visiting his cabin Dr. Heinrich writes that he observed red squirrels, a

species which inhabits the North woods of the United States. He was distracted by one squirrel scampering from one tree to the next and stopping to lick or chew the bark. It was an early spring day with cold night temperatures and sunny days, perfect for a sap run. Bernd walked to the trees being visited by the squirrel and noted moisture on the bark and chisel shaped bite marks. Was the squirrel enjoying the sugary liquid oozing from the tree?

The woods that housed his cabin contained what are called Rock Maples in Vermont and we call Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) in Wisconsin. The woods also contained Red Maples, Cherries, Ash, Quaking Aspen and Birch. He observed no bite marks on those trees only on the Sugar Maples. Since it was early spring there was still snow on the ground so he could determine which trees had been visited by squirrels by their tracks in the snow and which had not. Of the ninety-three Sugar Maple trees in this grove (obviously a scientist and researcher), he

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A member of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation (WGIF).

determined by their tracks that seventy-four had been visited by squirrels since the last snow fall. In contrast, of the 113 other trees by his cabin only a few had any tracks to them indicating the squirrels had not climbed them. In addition, on closer examination of the trees in his grove he found three bite marks on a Red Maple but that is all. Bernd says that though it is only circumstantial evidence that the squirrels are only tapping Sugar Maple trees, all the taps are on that tree species while of the other five tree species in his grove there were only three bite marks on one other tree.

So, are the squirrels at his site smarter than those in other areas? He has examined Sugar Maple trees at thirty-two other sites in Vermont and Maine and found bite marks on the Sugar Maple trees in nineteen of those sites. On further examination, the bite marks are all fresh or ones that have healed over, probably from the previous year, indicating that the squirrels are only tapping (biting) the Sugar Maple trees during the time the sap is running and not at other times of the year.

Dr. Heinrich also discusses the squirrel's need to rid the sap of a huge volume of water which people do by boiling the Maple tree sap while making syrup. Squirrels use a more energy efficient method. Their taps are on vertical trunks or slanting branches which allow the sap to streak down the trunk and branches allowing the sun and natural air movement to evaporate the unneeded water and concentrate the sugar.

Dr. Heinrich also thinks this tapping explains why twelve species of a winter active moth is found in areas where Sugar Maple trees grow. These moths are warm bodied and need large amounts of energy to stay warm. Bernd has spread Maple syrup on tree bark and found that it attracts these moths. Are they also feeding on the Maple sap from the red squirrels efforts?

Early European settlers learned Maple sugaring from Native Americans but where did the Native American's learn to make sugar from an almost tasteless tree sap? An Iroquois legend says that the idea came from a boy who watched red squirrels. A coincident?

After watching squirrels raiding my bird feeders to eat the seeds I've long realize squirrels are smart but this information about them making Maple sugar raises my evaluation of their intelligence.

As I've said before nature continues to amaze me.

Editor



Allium Millenium

Allium 'Millenium'

The Perennial Plant Association has awarded the title Perennial Plant of the Year® 2018 to Allium 'Millenium'. This herbaceous perennial, relative to the common onion, is a workhorse of the late summer garden. Bred by Mark McDonough, horticulture researcher from Massachusetts, 'Millenium' was introduced through Plant Delights Nursery in 2000 where it has proven itself year after year earning rave reviews. 'Millenium' is spelled with one "n", as registered, but is occasionally incorrectly listed with two "n"s. This

cultivar is the result of a multigenerational breeding program involving *Allium nutans* and *A. lusitanicum* (formerly *Allium senescens ssp montanum*), selected for late flowering with masses of rose-purple blooms, uniform habit with neat shiny green foliage that remains attractive season long, and for its drought resistant constitution.

Allium 'Millenium' has numerous virtues to add to the landscape setting. Growing best in full sun, each plant typically produces an upright foliage clump of grass-like, glossy deep green leaves reaching 10-15" tall in spring. In midsummer, two to three flower scapes rise above the foliage with each scape producing two or three showy two-inch spherical umbels of rose-purple florets that last as long as four weeks. The flower umbels are completely round (spherical), not domed or hemispherical as they are in some *Allium* species. They dry to a light tan often holding a blush of their former rose-purple color. While other alliums can look scraggly in the heat of the summer, 'Millenium' does not let the heat bother it! Easily grown in zones 4-9 (possibly zone 3) makes it a great perennial in many areas of the country. In very hot summer climates it does appreciate afternoon shade.

It has no serious pest problems have been reported. Leaf spot may occur in overcrowded growing conditions. Deer and rabbits leave 'Millenium' alone. Alliums are sometimes avoided due to their reseeding behavior. Fortunately 'Millenium' exhibits 50% reduced seed production, raising less concern for self-sown seedlings.

'Millenium' has a fibrous root structure forming an ornamental herbaceous clump easily propagated by division. Once in the garden, 'Millenium' can easily be lifted and divided in either spring or fall. Cut back foliage in late fall.

Pollinators will flock If you think that should be pursued further you could ask Brian if he want to pole the board for approval or we could bring it up at the next board meeting scheduled for January 16. o *Allium* 'Millenium'! Butterflies and bees will thank you for adding 'Millenium' to your garden. Pair with shorter goldenrods (*Solidago sp.*) such as 'Little Lemon' that reaches one and a half feet tall. Goldenrods are late summer pollinator magnets that will offer beautiful contrasting golden yellow blooms. Another late summer re-blooming companion perennial to consider is *Oenothera fremontii* 'Shimmer' with its low-growing silvery foliage adorned daily with large yellow flowers that open late afternoon and fade to an apricot color by morning. Being tap-rooted this evening primrose is well behaved, not creeping through the garden, for which, rhizomatous spreading evening primroses are famously 'Millenium', the butterfly magnet, was selected by the PPA membership as the 2018 Plant of the Year®.

Martha A. Smith, Horticulture Educator,
University of Illinois Extension.

Mark McDonough, Plant
breeder/horticulture researcher,
Massachusetts.

Jim Tehan Obituary

“Tehan, James Angus Age 84, Found Eternal Peace surrounded by his loving family Sat. Nov. 18, 2017. Loving soulmate of 55 years to Juanita. Beloved father of Jon (Joyce) Valdez, Terry Tehan, Debra Tehan, Karen Tehan and Katherine (Louis) Elizondo. Proud grandpa of 9 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. Further survived by nieces, nephews, other relatives and many loving friends. James is preceded in death by his parents, brother, sister, daughter Linda and his son Daniel. James was the second generation owner

along with his brother Kenneth Tehan of Tehan's Brothers Greenhouses. A Celebration of Jim's life will be held in the spring of 2018 at Tehan Greenhouses Inc.”

Funeral Home Obituary

Editor's note: Jim Tehan was the former co-owner of Tehan Greenhouses and the uncle of current owner and CFGW member Tim Tehan. Tim told that his father Ken and uncle Jim were farmers and built greenhouses to produce plants for their farm. When they started producing flowering plants the business was called Tehan Brothers and strictly wholesale but 12 years ago they started to retail their crops.

Editor

Pantone Announces Color Of The Year For 2018

(PANTONE)-- A dramatically provocative and thoughtful purple shade, PANTONE 18-3838 Ultra Violet communicates originality, ingenuity, and visionary thinking that points us toward the future.

Complex and contemplative, Ultra Violet suggests the mysteries of the cosmos, the intrigue of what lies ahead, and the discoveries beyond where we are now. The vast and limitless night sky is symbolic of what is possible and continues to inspire the desire to pursue a world beyond our own.

Enigmatic purples have also long been symbolic of counterculture, unconventionality, and artistic brilliance. Musical icons Prince, David Bowie, and Jimi Hendrix brought shades of Ultra Violet to the forefront of western pop culture as personal expressions of individuality. Nuanced and full of emotion, the depth of PANTONE 18-3838 Ultra Violet symbolizes experimentation and non-conformity, spurring individuals to imagine their

unique mark on the world, and push boundaries through creative outlets.

Historically, there has been a mystical or spiritual quality attached to Ultra Violet. The color is often associated with mindfulness practices, which offer a higher ground to those seeking refuge from today's over-stimulated world. The use of purple-toned lighting in meditation spaces and other gathering places energizes the communities that gather there and inspire connection.

About the Pantone Color of the Year

“The Pantone Color of the Year has come to mean so much more than ‘what’s trending’ in the world of design; it’s truly a reflection of what’s needed in our world today.” – Laurie Pressman, Vice President of the Pantone Color Institute.

As individuals around the world become more fascinated with color and realize its ability to convey deep messages and meanings, designers and brands should feel empowered to use color to inspire and influence. The Color of the Year is one moment in time that provides strategic direction for the world of trend and design, reflecting the Pantone Color Institute's year-round work doing the same for designers and brands.

Pantone Color Institute

The Pantone Color Institute is a consulting service within Pantone that forecasts global color trends and advises companies on color in brand identity and product development, for the application and integration of color as a strategic asset. Recognized around the world as a leading source of color information through seasonal trend forecasts, custom color development, and palette recommendations for product and corporate identity, Pantone Color Institute partners with global brands to

leverage the power, psychology and emotion of color in their design strategy.

Pantone Press Release

Sounds great but are you skeptical? Well, I've read these predictions for many years and have found that their projections for color of the year to be accurate and those colors sold in clothing, housewares and flowers. What does this mean for you and your business? You need to know what your customers want so grow more flowers in this purple shade!

Check www.pantone.com for more information and a sample of the color.

Editor

2017 Field Trial Results

When ordering Sun Impatiens and New Guinea Impatiens for your spring, 2018 sales season you need to check out the results of the CFGW's 2017 sponsored Field Trials held at the University of Wisconsin West Madison Agriculture Field Station. Those trials contained 179 varieties of these hybrid Impatiens and you will find the information invaluable for selecting the best varieties for your customer's gardens.

To find those results go to www.westmadison.ars.wisc.edu. Then click on "2017 SunPatiens and New Guinea Impatiens Evaluation Results" and go to "CFGW2017flowerdata." These data will have a numeric rating taken on June 27, July 27 and August 24 plus a brief description of the plant evaluated on those dates.

For your information this 2017 CFGW West Madison Impatiens trial was probably the largest trial of these Impatiens in the U.S. We did the same two years ago when we trialed Coleus.

The 2018 Field Day has been set for August 2, 2018 and will feature

vegetatively propagated Petunias. Janet Hedtcke, West Madison's Director, has allocated more space for our trials for 2018 so I suspect you will find more varieties grown at this year's Petunia trials.

Editor

I Say

Of course I talk to myself, sometimes I need expert advice.

Fall Greenhouse Conference 2017 Edition

78 Greenhouse owners, growers and trade show vendors attended the Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin's October 19, 2017 Fall Greenhouse Conference. That is one more attendee than attended in 2016 but it included more greenhouse growers and owners since Gateway Technical College did not send students this year.

Attendees heard Proven Winners Jessica DeGraff and Ball Horticultural's Dr. Marvin Miller as well as having three opportunities to visit the trade show booths plus they received a tour of Natural Beauty Growers greenhouses. Both speakers ranked well in attendee's evaluations with Jessica receiving an average rating of 4.8 and Dr. Miller received a 4.5 both out of 5.

The ranking for the trade show was 4.1, the lowest of any rankings, but there were no one made comments on how to improve them. The vendors comments were almost all positive leading me to believe that vendors felt there was good traffic to their booths.

The comments made concerning this conference ranged from "lift beverages higher," "Spend a little money on decent name badges," "Dr Miller spent too much time talking and guiding the conversation," to "Great Conference."

The 2018 conference will be held October 18, 2018 at Natural Beauty Growers. I am currently working on recruiting speakers. We will continue to hold the conference at Natural Beauty Grower's warehouse in Denmark, Wisconsin. They allow us a free meeting space and I believe attendees like to tour their greenhouses. We need only to rent tables, chairs and purchase food. This helps keep our meeting costs down.

Thank you to those who attended this year. These meetings follow the CFGW charter to provide a continuing education to Wisconsin's greenhouse owners and growers. Our first charter was written in 1953 using the same language.

Suggestions for speakers and improving these meetings are always appreciated. Please send them to jresser@charter.net.

Editor

November 6th Membership Meeting

The November 6, 2018 CFGW membership meeting was held at Caan Floral, Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Caan's Floral is always a great place to visit but just before the Christmas season it is spectacular. Owner Kris Shepard and his staff know how to decorate for the Christmas season with many fully trimmed Christmas trees and shelves full of Christmas ornaments, lights and a myriad of items for the season. 22 CFGW members attended the meeting.

Kris has owned the business for four years. The greenhouses were originally called Waldheim Nursery but Don Caan purchased them in the mid 1980s and with his son Tom turned it into a "go to" retail business. They currently have 30,000 square feet of retail space and 90,000 of production greenhouses. They were growing 19,000 Poinsettias an increase of 2-3% over the prior year.

Our speaker that evening was SePRO's CJ Coy. SePRO is a supplier of fungicides, insecticides and growth regulators to the greenhouse industry.

CJ explained that their TopFlor growth regulator can be used at half the rate of Bonzai and Sumagic keeping the materials costs down. Another key product is their insecticide Hachi-Hachi which works very well for the control of Western Flower Thrips, scale, leafhoppers and there is no resistance.

CJ also discussed using Akari on all species of Mites as well as TalusDFD for white fly control plus several other materials from SePRO for insect and disease control. CJ and SePro have become CFGW members for 2018.

Editor

I Say

The biggest lie I tell myself is ... "I don't need to write that down, I'll remember it."

Program Schedule, 2018 (some dates and locations are tentative)

- February 20** @ Dramm
- March ??** @ Edgewood. Topic transitioning business ownership
- April ??** @ Custom Grown??? (Megan will contact Paul). Topic not selected.
- June ??** @ North Parish Gardens, Brooklyn, WI. A round table discussion of the spring season.
- August 2** Field Day @ West Madison Ag. Research Station. Vegetative Petunias on trial.
- September ??** BFG Janesville. Topic new varieties (Megan)?
- October 17** – Fall Greenhouse Conference at Floral Plant Growers, Denmark?
- November** @ Karthaus & Sons. Speaker and topic not selected.