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October 2008

Northwest Native Plant Journal

A Monthly Web Magazine

Outdoor Housekeeping:

Dress up your garden for Fall, p8

Composting for Beginners, p11

A Squirrel's view of gardening, p6

...and more

Published by The Wild Garden: Hansen's Northwest Native Plant Database

Northwest Native Plant Journal

A Monthly Web Magazine

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Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*)
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

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"Photographer Extraordinaire"

JoAnn Onstott

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About this Web Magazine

This Journal was created under the direction of Wally Hansen – a dedicated Grower, Aficionado and Passionate Lover of Northwest Native Plants.

This Journal is not 'commercial.' Our goals are:

- A — To generate interest, even passion, concerning the magnificent Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest.
- B — To help you create your own Native Plant Gardens, large or small, for home or work.
- C — To help you propagate and “grow on” those species that interest you the most.
- D — To inform both Home Gardeners and interested Professionals of many disciplines concerning trends and news items from my little corner of the world.
- E — To help the reader enjoy native plants more by understanding the historical and cultural role of native plants (i.e.—use by Native Americans, Pioneers, Early Botanists, etc.).



Rose Hips, photo by JoAnn Onstott



On the Cover

Autumn Glory

Douglas Maple (*Acer douglasii*) leaves with the sun shining through are quite a background for the powerful shape of this tree's massive trunk.

What an unusual view! Imagine yourself standing inside the huge umbrella of flaming maple leaves, looking through those branches at the sunlit shapes only nature can make.

It is photos like this one that truly evince the artist's eye of our soft-spoken staff photographer, JoAnn Onstott.

Magnificent!

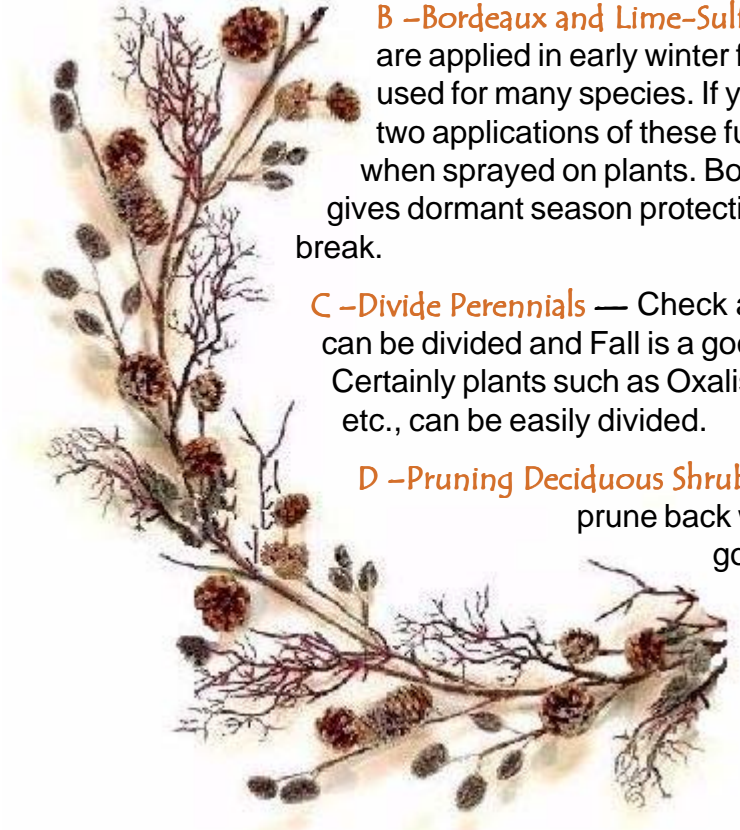


Photo by JoAnn Onstott

To Do List

Caring for your NW Native Plant Garden

A – Fall Leaves — You probably have a nice crop of fall leaves about now. They are a precious garden resource – pile them up and COMPOST. The native woodlanders especially like soil made from native deciduous trees – humus! There is equipment and composting information available everywhere. I make piles of leaves about 18” deep and use plenty of nitrogen fertilizer. Then I periodically till the compost area with a tiller. If you do not have many fall leaves, consider buying a load of hardwood sawdust and let it decompose for a couple of years.



B –Bordeaux and Lime-Sulfur — These old fashioned (several hundred years) “close to natural” herbicides are applied in early winter for many species. Make plans now and get materials early. This treatment can be used for many species. If you have Native Crabapple, Chokecherry or Bitter Cherry, I suggest you make one or two applications of these fungicides. Bordeaux is a mixture of copper sulfate and hydrated lime. It is rain-fast when sprayed on plants. Both are broad-spectrum fungicides and give protection against bacteria. Lime sulfur gives dormant season protection against insects and mites. You might apply early in the winter and later before bud break.

C –Divide Perennials — Check all your perennials while there are still some leaves. Many native plant perennials can be divided and Fall is a good time. If you can find separate crowns with roots, you can divide off a new plant. Certainly plants such as Oxalis, False Lily-of-the-Valley, False Solomon Seal, Wild Strawberries, Red Columbine, etc., can be easily divided.

D –Pruning Deciduous Shrubs — If some native deciduous shrubs grew too fast and are a bit leggy, you can prune back when the leaves are off. Shrubs can also be pruned to force bushiness. If you are going to take winter cuttings from the trim, wait until December. (Be very cautious in pruning young native trees—only to correct some improper shape, never cut the leader!)

E –Bulbs and Rhizomes — Get your native bulbs and rhizomes in now. Sometimes it is tricky to hold bulbs in refrigeration. This may break winter dormancy too early and the bulbs and rhizomes will “think” the winter is over and start sprouting!



Sparky's Corner

A special message from our frisky contributor



Did you ever notice how much help squirrels are in the garden?

For instance, one of our neighbors (a two-legger) was planting little starts of huckleberries the other day. We all sat up in the big Garry Oak watching as she poked holes in the dirt and then stuck the little huckleberry bushes-to-be down in the holes and carefully tucked the dirt around them, patting them so the roots could get perfect contact with the soil.

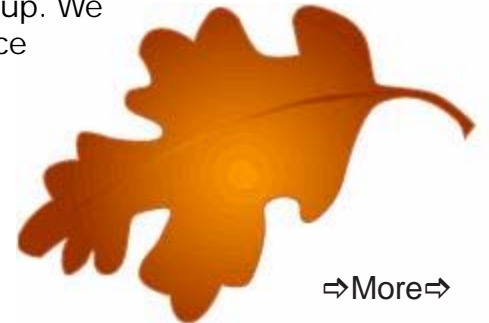
She stood back when she was done and made that two-legger sound--sort of "whhoow." She washed her paws and rinsed her bucket and set it upside down. Then she picked up all her tools and went back inside her nest. Fascinating!

Then we went to work doing our part of the gardening. We turned the little huckleberries upside down so their heads would be warm and their roots could get some air. We nibbled a few to make sure they were the tasty kind. Then we brought some of our freshly gathered hazelnuts and dug holes in the garden to store them for later in the winter.

When we were done we jumped in the puddle where the two-legger lady did her washing up. We raced around on that big flat place

outside her nest where she has the people perches so she could enjoy our fancy footprints. We were all tuckered out at that point so we went up and snuggled in Grandma's nest for a while.

The neighbor lady came out that evening to show the two-legger man she shares her nest with all the great work we had done. They chattered while they were inspecting our handiwork. Well, the lady two-legger did most of the chattering. The man just put his paws on his hips and twisted his head back and forth.



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Sparky's Corner, continued

I hope the other two-leggers in the neighborhood do some more stuff in their gardens soon. We just love helping them out and sharing our winter food storage places with them.

Speaking of winter food, the filberts are just right for harvest now. There are lots and lots of them all over the ground beneath the hazelnut trees. Two-leggers like to lay them out until they are dry, then they take off the husks and store them in big baskets for a couple of months.

We squirrels take the husks off also but we store them in little holes we dig all over the place. We put them in flower pots, under the grass the two-leggers put around their nests, and beside bushes and trees. We only store one in each little hole. That way if something happens to a few of our storage places we will still have enough to tide us over until next spring. We eat the berries that are left on trees and shrubs and vines until they are all gone and when the mushrooms bloom we eat them too. But when winter comes we rely on the nuts we've harvested in the fall.

Well, my buds just told me another neighbor is out in his garden so we better go see what we can do to help him. See you next time!



Filberts almost ready for harvest

Leaves turn
tolden in fall.
Photos by
JoAnn Onsott



Your friend,

Sparky

Hazelnut orchard in spring. Hazelnuts or filberts are one of the largest cash crops in Oregon's Willamette Valley.
Photo by Jennifer Rehm



The Fall Garden

It's a matter of outdoor housekeeping

When the flowers are gone and the food is all harvested, the garden we loved all spring and summer is often neglected in favor of indoor pursuits. Here are a few little touches that will make your landscape flourish in fall and dazzle in December.

Fill empty spaces

Branches of a Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) can be cut and stuck in bare spots where perennials have died down or spring flowers are waiting to grow. This provides a pleasing visual effect as well as discouraging wildlife and pets from digging there.



Larger trimmings and deadfall you find that have moss or fungi on them are also lovely lying in the perennial beds. Twine a bit of vine among them to tie the scene together. Use Western Wild Grape (*Vitis californica*) or Virgin's Bower (*Clematis ligusticifolia*) or even trimmings from your Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*), Blackcap (*Rubus leucodermis*) or other bramble berries. (Wear gloves if you use anything with thorns).

Add fragrance

In areas close to walkways or porches, try using old potpourri as a ground cover. It will compost throughout the winter but it will look very nice as well as providing a pleasing aroma when you or your guests pass by.

Another favorite way to add fragrance to areas where guests are welcomed is to take small cuttings of Juniper (*Juniperus communis* or *scopulorum*), Incense Cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), or one of the northwest native pines and stick them into a large pot or decorative bucket filled with dirt or sand. Add water and they'll stay fresh for at least a month after which time you can add them to your compost and replace with fresh cuttings.

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The Fall Garden, continued

Container plantings

If you have window boxes or other containers with plants that have passed their prime, clean them out (trim perennials and remove annuals) and add arrangements of leaves, seed pods and other interesting botanical pieces. Cattails are good and birds will enjoy them as well as using the soft downy seeds to insulate their nests. Include cones from pines and cedars, nuts for squirrels to discover and dried corn. Window boxes are usually safe for birds to eat from if there is not a way for cats to reach them. The birds will enjoy a sheltered feast beneath the eaves and you can watch from inside!

Shape deciduous trees and shrubs

While the leaves are gone from deciduous species, look at the bones of your trees and shrubs. This is a perfect time to correct past mistakes and to truly enjoy the framework that is obscured by summer's frills. Stumpy branches that have produced watersprouts should be removed entirely along with their ungainly offspring.

Witches' Broom is easily seen at this time of year when the plants are otherwise 'nude.' This is a dense bunch of short shoots caused by the fungus *Taphrina betulina*. It is called Witches' Broom because when all the extra shoots grow in the same direction it resembles a broom. The legend is that a witch has flown over the tree which causes this odd structure. Classed as a gall, when the little shoots grow every which way they look like a birds nest. They can occur on all sorts of trees but the most susceptible are birches. They are not harmful but they are rather unsightly.



Witches' Broom on an old plum tree in my backyard.
The otherwise graceful shape of this tree is marred by the dense cluster of sprouts though the tree suffers no harm beyond its unsightly appearance.

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The Fall Garden, continued



Dried seed heads of Wild Onion (*Allium*)
and Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*)



Cleanup Options

Some plants have appealing seed heads that are perfectly respectable as winter decor for the garden as well as for crafting. Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), Wild Onions (*Allium* species), Silk Tassel (*Garrya*) and Ocean Spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) are a few examples of natives that fit in this category. Because they are interesting even on frosty days, many gardeners leave them until early spring.

By the way, now is a good time to gather some dried Cow Parsnip and Allium seed heads for a special craft project we'll show you next month. Easy and fun!

Fall Mulches

Unusual choices for dressing bare earth around trees and shrubs or for perennial beds can give your landscape a unique appearance and are quite economical, sometimes even free!

Hulls of Hazelnuts are often available at the factories where these nuts are processed for retail sales. They are a nice brown color, they won't blow away as some lighter weight materials may, and they are a natural deterrent to snails and slugs.

Small cones from some pine trees are attractive when used generously are nice texturally. Many pines have large cones but there are species with 1 to 2 inch cones that work well in this application.

Coffee grounds are nice to mix with soil to give a different color. These are magnets for worms, nature's little earth workers. Many baristas offer used grounds, free for the taking.

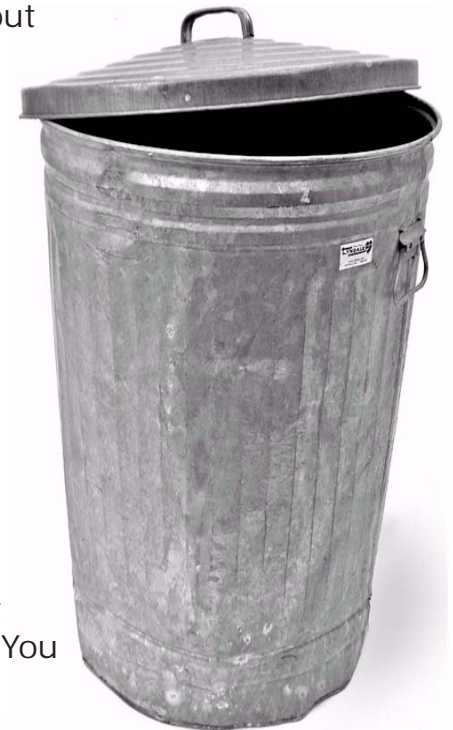


Magical Dirt

A beginner's guide to composting

This is so simple it might be illegal.

1. Pick out your largest container. It could be a huge nursery pot (they do come in sizes up to 50 gallon), an old garbage can, a wheelbarrow or the tub of a clothes dryer.
2. Pick your spot. Whatever your container is, situate it in a spot that is easy to get to but that won't be in the way no matter where you are headed. Corners of yards are good, alongside a garden shed often works well, even a yard or so from the back door is fine if you are going to compost kitchen waste. A sunny spot is better than a shady one.
3. Put in some branches, any kind will do. These will aerate the composting materials and act as the lazy composter's stirring tools. Stand the branches in the container so that nothing is stacked--you want them going every which way in a very untidy manner.
4. Shovel in a little dirt to cover the bottom of the container. This is the compost starter that will ignite those little buggies that turn yucky stuff into golden dirt.
5. Add compostables. (Leaves, dead bouquets, vegetables too tired for the table, whatever.)
6. Wait until it rains.
7. The day after it rains, put a lid on your container. It doesn't matter what kind of lid. It does not have to fit tightly. Pick something that is larger than the top of your container. You might use a piece of plywood, an upturned table, an old umbrella (patio or personal), a storm window. If you've nothing the proper size, a piece of tarp will be fine or even a big garbage bag. Just make sure the container is covered loosely--you want a little air to come in but no rain or snow and the wind should not be allowed to blow the cooking ingredients about.



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Magical Dirt, continued

8. All during fall and winter, add more stuff. And be versatile. The more different things you add, the better the final product will be. Just remember, for every fresh green thing you add, also add some nice brown thing. For instance, each time you clean out the veggie drawer in your frig into the composter, add about the same amount of something already cooked like dirt out of a flower pot (you know how those houseplants tend to die off) or a shovel of plain old dirt or the sweepings from the kitchen floor or whatever. A secret ingredient that will jazz up your compost is hair clippings. Ask a local hairdresser or barber to save their floor sweepings. They'll think you're nuts but believe me, it works.

9. Whenever your container cools down, add something hot. They sell compost starter at garden stores but if you have access to a little manure or straw from a horse stall it works just as well if not better. Do not use dog or cat droppings. Rabbit poop, bat guano, worm droppings, anything like that is good.

10. When your container is full, put that lid on it and leave it alone until spring. If you need another place to put your compostables, start another bin.

Come spring you should have a batch ready to use. When you open up your container there will be fresh, rich, composted material you made yourself. It may be lumpy and if that bothers you, either break up the lumps or leave them in the bin as a starter for the next batch.

Put your new (free) golden dirt around your trees and shrubs, put some in containers, add a nice covering to your perennial beds. You will grow the best, most healthy plants you've ever seen. And all because of one magical ingredient: compost.



Young Douglas Maple (*Acer glabrum*)
growing in compost at the nursery.
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



Walking Tours

Experience Autumn up close and personal

You may have seen or heard about a healthy living campaign called Steptember. It was aimed at encouraging folks to add more exercise to our lives. There were contests and prizes and all sorts of incentives to lure us into participation.

I've never been much of a 'joiner' so this didn't do a lot for me, but there is an activity I thoroughly enjoy when the leaves are falling: I love walking along and kicking up the leaves! Sounds a bit juvenile but I find it invigorating. The way the leaves fly up and float around in the air shows off their colors and shapes and allows that autumn aroma to lightly scent my journey.

This is not nearly as much fun when it's raining. The leaves need to be pretty much dry and freshly fallen to get the right effect.

Here in Oregon's capitol city, we have beautiful trees of all types and well kept sidewalks all around the public buildings. There are sculptures and fountains and lights to brighten a cloudy day or a late afternoon walk.

Create your own leaf kicking experience. Pick a nice park or city sidewalk and do a little leaf-kicking of your own. It's fun!

P.S. If you don't have a sunny day, wear your Wellies and go puddle-stomping!



Big Leaf Maple (*Acer grandidentatum*)
Also known as Bigtooth Maple or Rocky Mountain Sugar Maple
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

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Walking Tours, continued



Can't you imagine the brilliance of these
Douglas Hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*)
leaves flying in sunshine!
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



These Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) leaves are just
begging to be kicked up!
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



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Walking Tours, continued



Beautiful bronze! This photo is labeled Garry Oak but I think it might really be Kellogg Oak.
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



Even the smallest feet can make the leaves of Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) go airborne. They are soft to the touch.
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

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Walking Tours, continued



Heart-shaped leaves of Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) are golden orange.
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



Chokecherry leaves (*Prunus virginiana*) in shades of salmon.
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



Tree of Many Colors

Vine Maple: A garden kaleidoscope

Photographs by JoAnn Onstott

If you like surprises, this is the tree for you. Will your Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*) be red this year? Or orange? Or scarlet and gold? Time will answer the question but never will it be the same. Quite often we see several different colors on the same tree!

Take an afternoon trip in the hills or mountains of western Oregon, Washington or northern California in October and you will find a Vine Maple in almost any autumn color you can imagine.

Here are a collection of photographs JoAnn has taken over the past several years illustrating the wide range of colors that this, the smallest of native maple trees, can produce. Don't worry though---even with so many different colorations we share with you here, there will still be more when you next spot a Vine Maple.



"No Spring nor Summer Beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in one Autumnal face."

- John Donne

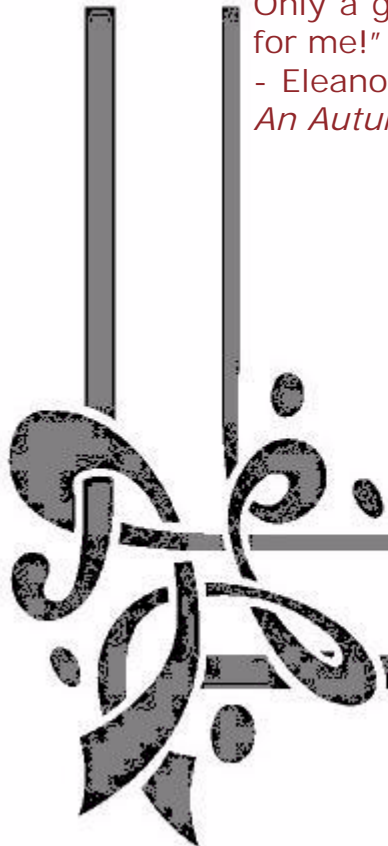
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Tree of Many Colors, continued

"On such a day each road is planned
To lead to some enchanted land;
Each turning meets expectancy.
The signs I read on every hand.
I know by autumn's wizardry
On such a day the world can be
Only a great glad dream for me—

Only a great glad dream
for me!"

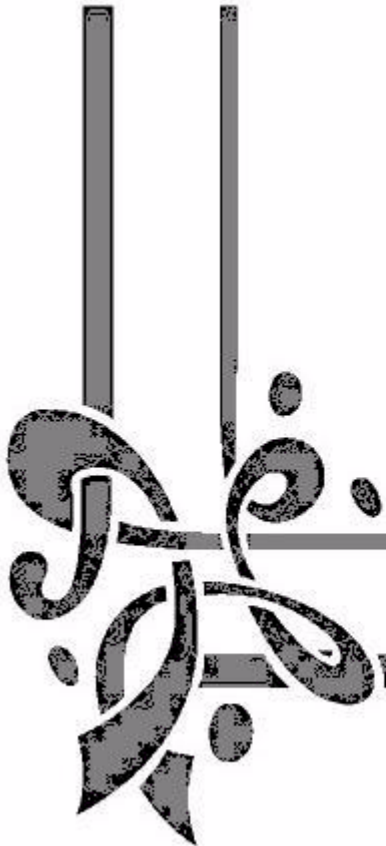
- Eleanor Myers Jewett,
An Autumn Day



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Tree of Many Colors, continued

"Autumn is a second spring
when every leaf is a flower."
- Albert Camus



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Tree of Many Colors, continued

"In the other gardens
And all up the vale,
From the autumn bonfires
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over
And all the summer
flowers,
The red fire blazes,
the grey smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!
Something bright in all,
Flowers in the summer
Fires in the fall! "
- Robert Louis Stevenson,
Autumn Fires

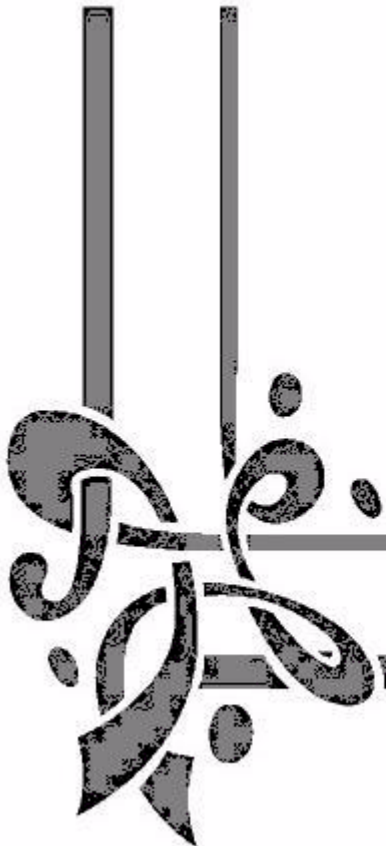


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Tree of Many Colors, continued

"The milkweed pods are breaking,
And the bits of silken down
Float off upon the autumn breeze
Across the meadows brown."

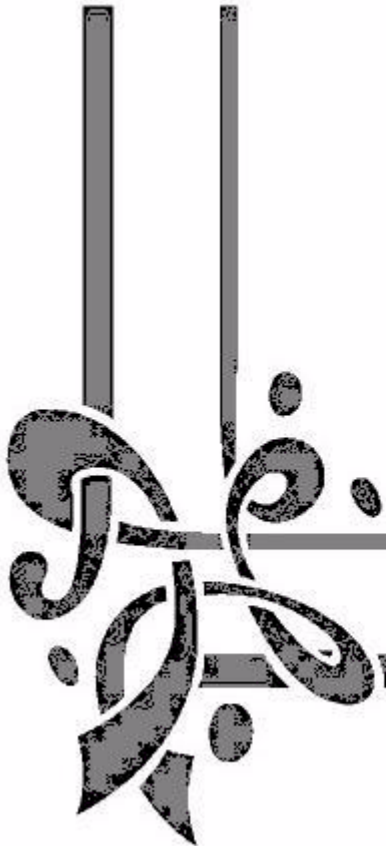
- Cecil Cavendish, *The Milkweed*



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Tree of Many Colors, continued

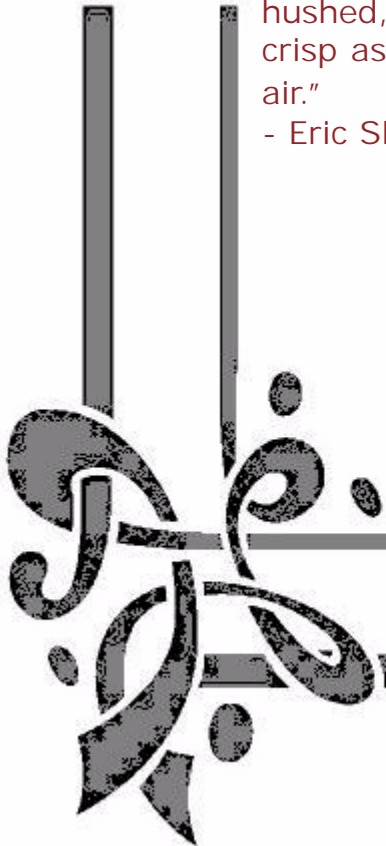
"The leaves fall, the wind blows,
and the farm country slowly
changes from the summer
cottons into its winter wools."
- Henry Beston, *Northern Farm*



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Tree of Many Colors, continued

"A few days ago I walked along the edge of the lake and was treated to the crunch and rustle of leaves with each step I made. The acoustics of this season are different and all sounds, no matter how hushed, are as crisp as autumn air."
- Eric Sloane

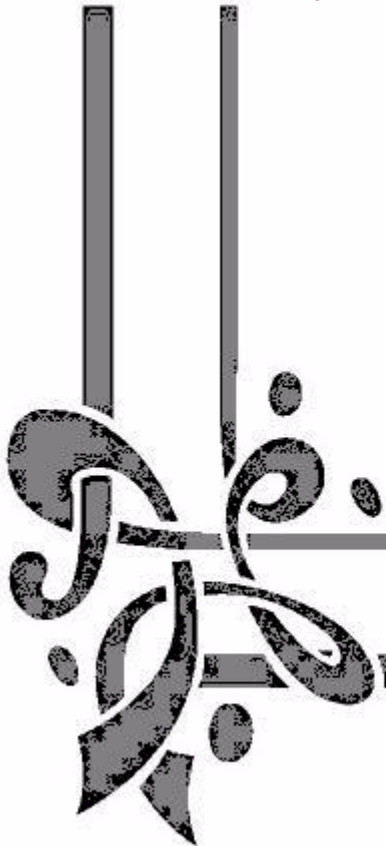


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Tree of Many Colors, continued

"For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad."

- Edwin Way Teale



This & That

Notes from Jennifer

Isn't life wonderful? Seems like every single day brings a surprise to make me laugh or cry or that simply takes my breath away. Folks who think there is nothing new under the sun are right in a way. There are still the same old molecules and atoms and bits of matter. But it's the combinations that give each moment its unique newness.

My weekday drive down the valley could be boring miles of asphalt were I to take the freeway. It would be headlights and bumpers and exhaust fumes, tail lights flashing as brakes were applied, blinkers sometimes used or as often not, abrupt lane changes to watch out for.

It would be efficient, probably, but I long ago elected to take the back roads and let efficiency take the hindmost.

And so, each day delights me with a gift of a new viewpoint, a spark of imagination or an awestruck moment to remember.

On one commute last summer I spied a couple of very proud pheasants strutting across the road. Quickly I turned around and doubled back, thinking to snap their picture. They made a beeline for the weeds along the pavement--but not a very quick beeline. One stepped down into the ditch but the other was more confident and paused in the gravel roadside. They were as curious about me as I was about them. They took turns bobbing heads up to watch me, first one and then the other. I waited, camera at the ready, and finally they both bobbed up simultaneously. I got them! The tiny noise of my digital broke the spell and both scampered away. I drove home smiling.



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This & That, continued

Another day I met four grown sheep and one little lamb grazing contentedly while several crows cavorted around them, swooping up and down, perching on the fence or the big oak nearby. One of the crows landed atop one of the sheep, right on her head! I've no idea what the ewe thought about that, she did not seem to be surprised at all and neither did the crow. Perhaps they are old friends.

The two tractors on the previous page amused me by the way they were parked. I think the big one was saying, "Yes, little fellow, I've plowed a lot of fields in my life." Farther down the road I saw a group of tractors and excavators and other machinery I did not recognize. They seemed to be having a meeting of some sort. Or else the folks who had been driving them all went to lunch.

Such silliness keeps me sane when the workaday toil leaves not enough time to spend in my garden. When I get home I often don't have time for more than a cursory nod to the plants that grow so unselfishly around me. I rarely water and never fertilize or punish them with bug sprays. Instead I allow them to do as they please and trust that the birds will deal with any rude insects and sufficient rain will come to quench their thirst. But I do love spending mornings pulling weeds and picking flowers. I adore afternoons in the swing creating my own breeze. And an evening in the garden admiring stars is pure creature comfort.

I hope you are finding at least a few moments here and there to commune with nature, to admire a leaf or watch a butterfly's erratic course among the flowers.

*A bird does not sing because it has an answer.
It sings because it has a song.
Chinese proverb*



Look what I found this summer!



Useful Plant Databases on the Web

Here is a good collection of web data bases that will be useful to professional growers and all native plant gardeners. This list is from a larger list compiled by Lawyer Nursery in 2002 and published in one of their flyers. I wish to thank them for this public service.

Wally



Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) in November
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

American Bonsai Society

http://www.absbonsai.org/abs_home.html

Birdchick

<http://www.birdchick.com/>

Hundreds of photos of birds, bees, butterflies and other friendlies. Sharon Stiteler shares the joys of birding as well as insights on rabbits.

Bonsai web

<http://www.bonsaiweb.com>

Portal of links to educate about the art of bonsai.

CalPhotos

<http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/photos/>

Over 33,000 plant images from the University of California, Berkley

Cornell University online grafting course

<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/hort494/graftage/hort494.index.html>

Fire effects on plant species

<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/>

USDA, Forest Service site.

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Useful Plant Databases on the Web, continued



Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) in July
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

Flora of North America Web Site

<http://hua.huh.harvard.edu/FNA/>

Taxonomic relationships, distributions, and morphological characteristics of all plants native and naturalized found in North America.

Forest Types of the United States

<http://forestry.about.com/library/tree/bltypdex.htm>

Maps of the most common forest types.

Forestry index

<http://forestryindex.net/>

Links to news & info on the forestry industry.

Growit.com Rooting Database

<http://www.growit.com/Know/Rooting.htm>

"Extensive information on rooting cuttings of woody plants, organized by botanical name. Developed for commercial growers."

ModernBackyard

<http://www.modernbackyard.com>

Landscape architecture provides exceptional, affordable landscape design online.

The Native Plant Network

<http://nativeplants.for.uidaho.edu/network/>

Information on how to propagate native plants of North America.

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Useful Plant Databases on the Web, continued



Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia
aquifolium*) in March
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

Portland Bureau of Environmental Services

<http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=29323>

Oregon's Clean River Agency website full of wonderful information about caring for our earth. Download their Native Plant Poster, plant list and brochure on removing invasive plants at

River Corridor and Wetland Restoration

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) site

Soils

<http://homepages.which.net/~fred.moor/soil/links/10102.htm>

A website about soil fertility, chemistry, and pH with many interesting links.

Soil Science Society of America

<http://www.soils.org/>

Website for soil science professionals. Offers information and links.

Woody Plant Seed Manual

<http://www.wpsm.net/>

Manual by the US Forest Service covering seed biology, genetic Improvement of forest trees, seed testing, certification of tree seeds and other woody plant materials, and nursery practices.



NOTICE: NURSERY IS CLOSED

**In November 2010,
Wallace W Hansen Northwest Native Plants
Native Plant Nursery and Gardens
closed permanently.**

Many thanks to all our gardening friends for your interest in the native plants of the Pacific northwest. It has been our pleasure to serve you.

www.nwplants.com

Our website, www.nwplants.com, is no longer commercial. Our goal is to continue Wally's legacy of generating interest, even passion, in the magnificent native plants of the Pacific Northwest through information and illustration.

Good luck! Good gardening!



**Creeping Oregon Grape
(Mahonia repens)**

Photo by JoAnn Onstott - October 2007