

The Birmingham Eccentric Features

NATURE NOW

By Lydia King Frehe
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Rare Tupelo Tree Has Bright Scarlet Foliage for Fall

On a recent field trip in the Orville area we came upon a not too common tree, the tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*). Other common names are black gum, sour gum and pepperage.

The tupelo tree belongs to the dogwood family. It is conspicuous in the autumn scene because of its bright scarlet and shiny foliage. Even the petioles of the leaves turn a deep red.

This medium sized tree reaches a height of 40 to 60 feet and a diameter of one to two feet. The crown is often flat-topped with the middle and lower limbs extend at right angles as do those of the beech. The trunk rises more or less in an unbroken line like a mast giving off short stiff branches.

Quarter sawed and stained it is a good imitation of mahogany. It can also bear the strain of the rollers over which the great cables in mine shafts are dragged.

Its toughness makes it useful for scaffolding and chopping blocks, and for the wooden parts of agricultural machinery. It is frequently used for floors of factories which receive the heaviest wear.

THE TUPELO tree can be transplanted and landscape architects often search the woods for it so that they may bring it to some city garden as an ornamental. Here it glows with the brightest light through each succeeding autumn.

THE ALTERNATE leaves are two to five inches long. They are simple and are widest above the middle. The margin is entire. The conspicuous luster of the upper side of the leaf is most noticeable in autumn. The under leaf is pale and does not change color with the seasons.

The inconspicuous flowers of the tupelo are small and greenish. Male and female usually appear on separate trees but certain trees also have perfect flowers.

The fruit, a sour dark blue berry about one-third of an inch in diameter, is born singly on a long slender stem or it may occur in twos and threes. The seed is easily recognized by its pronounced ridge.

THE BARK on young trees is smooth but on mature specimens it is narrowly fissured with oblong blocks resembling alligator leather.

The typical habitat of the tupelo is in low swampy forests although it will grow in drier situations if transplanted.

This unusual tree appears infrequently in the southern portion of our lower peninsula. Its range extends from southern Maine to Missouri and south to Texas and Florida. We found it common during our camping days in the foothills of the Ozark mountains.

IN THE FULL tide of summer the glossy, leathery leaves give the tupelo an almost tropical look. In its autumn foliage it is a conspicuous sight along any lake or swampy forest area. When spring arrives the leaf buds take on much the same vivid color as does the autumn foliage.

An old tree dies from the top and sometimes the trunk becomes hollow. The country folk in the south often cover cut sections with a board and use them as bee hives.

THE WOOD is tough and almost impossible to split. This fact together with its strong tendency to warp and shrink made the pioneer lumberjack call it worthless.

Now, with our modern wood working machinery, it has been put to many uses.

Today it serves well as a handle for heavy duty tools and guns.

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Disabled Vets Get Pay Hike

On Oct. 31 some 2,000,000 disabled veterans will see compensation checks for increased compensation amounting to \$98,000,000 yearly, John S. Gleason, administrator of veterans affairs, said today.

In Michigan, R. M. Fitzgerald, manager of VA's Regional Office, estimated that more than 82,000 veterans in Michigan will receive annual increases totaling about \$520,000.

UNDER TERMS of the new law signed by the President Sept. 7, provision is made in the October payment for a special increase amounting to three times the new increase. This applies to October checks and only veterans on compensation Oct. 1.

Mr. Fitzgerald stressed that it is no need for veterans to contact the VA. Electronics will do the job automatically. Actual figuring of the individual amounts due each veteran already is under way at the Automated Data Processing Center at Hines, near Chicago.

(See PAY HIKE, 7-D)

ACCORDING TO Government reports, there are 1,657 men and women locally whose livelihoods come from their own businesses, professions, trades or farms.

The number of local people who are employed by others and whose incomes are primarily from wages or salaries is 8,963.

The findings, released by the Department of Commerce, are based on information gathered in connection with the 1960 census.

Nationally, it is shown that the number of self-employed, related to the total employed, has declined sharply since 1950.

The butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker have been finding the going rougher in this age of supermarkets and department stores. The largest part of the drop has been in the number of small farm operators.

IN THE non-agricultural pursuits, on the other hand, the number of self-employed people has remained fairly constant during the past few years.

B'ham Home of Three More Historic Autos

Secretary of State James M. Hare issued three historic vehicle license plates to Great Sales, Inc. of Birmingham, recently. The new, by licensed vintage vehicles are a 1921 Hispano Suiza roadster, a 1926 Vauxhall roadster and a 1921 Roamer Sport.

Hare said that some of Michigan's nearly 4,000 vintage vehicles are on display at the 44th National Automobile Show in Detroit.

Conservatism is the maintenance of conventions already in force.

—Thorstein Veblen

Now Is Time to Plant Next Year's Daffodils

This is the time to plant your spring bulbs. We have waited long enough to be sure that the rodents have found their winter shelter and won't take our bulbs along with them for appetizers.

If your name is on the list of life's procrastinators, remember you can plant bulbs any time in the winter when you can work the ground but your results won't be as good as if you planted them when the ground can pack around the bulbs to avoid icy underground lakes.

LOTS OF people buy bonemeal for a fertilizer around the bulbs. It will release its benefits about the time that the bulb comes into flower and will be forming the next year's flower within the bulb.

I think just as good results can be achieved by fertilizing around your bulbs when they are in flower, just sprinkle the fertilizer on the ground—do not disturb the

roots. Flowers for next year are formed immediately after the petals fall.

If you want a professional look when you are planting a full bed of bulbs, 36 in. off the soil to the needed depth, carefully place the bulbs in the pattern wished and then gingerly toss the soil back over the bulbs to the desired depth. When this method is used the total results are uniform.

WHEN YOU buy your bulbs, your dealer will be generous with cleaners, telling you about the proper depth for each selection.

If you decide to plant tulips, you can have a show off color for ten weeks if you carefully select your bulbs.

If you have a hillside for wild setting, do not overlook the beauty you can have by planting daffodils casually. If you have children at your house, plan on them placing sticks in the grass near the bulb and plant crosses so that they can look for the first sign of spring.

THE BLUE as expressed by Siberian squill and grape hyacinths always seem important to me to have near other bulbs to make their color more vivid. The one color which will do the most to attract

interest will be orange tulips near yellow daffodils.

Do not overlook the joy of planting large pots of bulbs (only one color to a pot). Water them well, then either bury them below the frost line or place in a cold, dark area of the basement for the dividend of pleasure made for February. Happy Bulbing.

THE OTHER day I stopped at Margaree Esser's, 747 West Maple. She lives in an early Birmingham White home with the long privet hedge in front. Her driveway is a long haul up a hill and she has been delighted with the use of ground bark on its surface.

Also at this home is a new metal framework which supports a collection of clematis on the south side of her plain garage wall.

As a ground cover she has planted Dunlap strawberries (the best for home use). What a beautiful, lush ground cover it makes for the clematis which demands that its feet be kept moist by a cover. A steel divider, eight inches deep goes into the ground to guard the free form design of the bed and a barrier so that the roots of the strawberries do not take off across the lawn.

Well done, Mrs. E.

Great reservoirs of oil hidden deep under Michigan in the limestone reefs of an ancient sea are being brought closer to discovery, reports a Michigan State University geophysicist.

For three years, Dr. William J. Hinz has led MSU student teams measuring gravity and magnetic force across most of Michigan, particularly in the lower peninsula.

He and others have long suspected that valuable supplies of oil and other minerals are trapped under a mile-or-more thick covering of sediment and glacial deposits from the ice ages.

"THE RESULTS of our investigation," suggests the associate professor of geology, "should make it easier to locate this wealth by reducing the risks involved in deep-drilling and deep-mining operations."

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(See OIL HUNT, 8-D)

varieties will multiply rapidly when planted in open areas, and will increase through the years. Once planted, they can be relied upon to bloom anew each spring.

Oil Hunt Pushed in Michigan

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and the value of the home-grown food consumed.

Elsewhere in the United States, the median self-employment income was \$4,200 and, in the State of Michigan, \$4,376.

1,657 Run Own Businesses in B'ham

(Special to the Eccentric)

NEW YORK—For a sizeable proportion of the working population of Birmingham, the matter of getting a job and holding it is not a problem.

For them, the important considerations are such matters as gross receipts, expenses, net earnings, competition and growth.

Who are these people? They are the ones who are in business for themselves. They are the growers, the doctors, the lawyers, the gas station owners, the farmers and the others who are self-employed.

In Birmingham, they represent 9.9 percent of the total working population.

As to incomes, self-employed people in Birmingham netted \$9,380 on the average, after deducting their operating expenses. These deductions include, in the case of farmers, the cost of their housing

Autumn Melancholy?

By CLEO SYMONS
Special Writer

Reading three of my favorite columnists, writing about autumn, has sent me to the typewriter to record more observations about the season.

All played much the same tune, but with variations. One was in a melancholy, minor key, while the others were more cheerful—even humorous.

What they had in common was a harking back to cherished memories and privileges that come to mind with the passing of summer.

Two of the writers living in New York retorted diverging views. One hailed the return of nippy days and frosty nights with glad cries because it heralded the season of quiet and have and included the joyous search for a new status symbol—a more spacious apartment.

wailed the passing of summer and the end of the cook-out. In language wistful and nostalgic, he intoned the charred steak, his chef's tap and two-tined scepter along with the shrouded grill, which he wheeled into the carport with mournful tread.

(He's evidently forgotten 't hose horses that either bite or sting or burrow or bedevil.)

BUT WHY be sad? Now is nature's grand finale! Color has ignited the leaves and is roaring across the hills and valleys like a glorious flame.

Firebrand maples have exploded among the evergreens, gaily illuminating their somber spikes. Every tree, every bush and vine is cheering and waving a colorful banner.

With this splendid parade of joy, must we feel melancholy simply because nature flaunts so gay a shroud? As we batten down for the long winter ahead it should be a time of preparation, spiritual as well as physical. It is a season of harvest, of ingathering. A time of festivals and fulfillment.

FOR HER there were no drooping spirits such as befell the residents of small Michigan towns—who tend to droop right along with every falling leaf. New Yorkers, she says, really come to life with autumn's first crisp breeze.

The other cited the predictions, prophecies and soul-searching indulged in by practically everyone with the advent of Indian Summer.

From the residents of the paw-paw and persimmon belt, the yearners over the whooping crane and the woolly-bear caterpillars, right on down through the sports enthusiasts and politicians.

FOR THE thousands of poets who will write extravagantly about falling leaves, there will be corresponding thousands who will mutter about having to rake them up, says he. There will be letters to the editor complaining about the stores starting their Christmas sales before Halloween. Report cards will give parents an indication as to which side of the family the children will take after this year. And so on.

Finally, there was the melancholy one. In behalf of the Escoffier of the patio, he be-

YET THERE IS something solemn, even a little sad, about these last rites that have a deeper meaning. Perhaps the smell of burning leaves awakens some dim racial memory. The spicy tang of apple cider, does it recall some long ago victory over nature or one's self.

Since somewhere along the line most of us have ancestors whose roots were in the soil, perhaps it shouldn't be strange that October's "bright blue weather" sort of touches off these nostalgic feelings.

Of course, you may be just one of those who goes down and kicks the old furnace, hoping (vainly, no doubt) that it will hold out another winter. Or perhaps you are the mother who hauls out the children's coats and snowsuits and is amazed at how much they have shrunk during the summer.

AS FOR me, please excuse the mood indigo—I'm afraid I can't help it. I must be one of those small town Michigan gals referred to by the New York columnist.



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