



I N C O R P O R A T E D

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“Just be glad I could do what I did while I was here”

By Roger Snell

In 2003, while in Maine to see family, I visited Yarmouth Maine, first settled in 1636, to see Herbie, the tallest at a 110 feet and oldest American Elm in New England. Herbie is estimated to be 240 years old, older than the Declaration of Independence. He has survived 14 bouts of Dutch Elm disease, thanks to one mans devotion.

Frank Knight was named Tree Warden back in 1956 when the disease first hit Yarmouth, when streets were still lined with elms creating a canopy tunnel through towns and villages of North Eastern United States. Yarmouth has lost close to 800 elms since the disease invaded this beautiful, bucolic coastal New England town. Now only a dozen survive. A small town of 8300 residents; imagine if your town lost over 10% per capita of its trees. Frank Knight is now 101 years old and has resigned himself to the fact there is nothing else he can do for Herbie, who he has watched over for 50 years. Sadly, Herbie will be cut down Jan. 18th.

Dutch Elm fungus is spread by bark beetles and began in Ohio, sometime in the 1930's and quickly spread through America killing an estimated 100 million trees.

Frank Knight new he couldn't save all the trees and he began

focusing on this one special friend, whose canopy of 120 feet could be seen miles away. His wife didn't mind sharing him with Herbie and shared his love for the tree, but she did say "If that tree's name was Suzy, I'd be real jealous."



Herbie

Herbie received his name from neighborhood kids in the 50's, when crews began to trim infected limbs, the kids started yelling, "What are you doing to Herbie? You can't cut Herbie!"

One time, police were called to Herbie and found a group of young women trying to see how many people it would take to give Herbie, with a 20-foot plus circumference, a hug.

Herbie's remains won't be burnt in the fireplace. They will be kiln dried, and turned into furniture, local artisans will get access to some and the rest auctioned off to benefit the town tree trust.

Frank Knight contributes his long life to raw spinach and the beer he has for lunch everyday, but still admits that he has no idea what really kept him and Herbie around this long. "Nothing is forever. I don't want anyone to grieve when I go. Just be glad what I could do what I did while I was here," Frank Knight said about himself, and I believe, Herbie, too.

In honor of Herbie and to replace the other majestic elms lost to the disease, the town has created a Tree Trust that will begin planting new varieties of disease resistant elms. Donations can be made and tee shirts bought to benefit the program at

www.yarmouth.me.us, and then click on

The Herbie Project.

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Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Rhododendron Paralytic Poison

I haven't had a chance to see the new Sherlock Holmes movie yet, so we don't need to put in a spoiler alert, but one of my coworkers had a question for me on the poisonous effects of the Rhododendron as used in the movie.

Only a few of the genus are poisonous and none particularly so. It would take about 10 ounces of leaves to poison a 150lb man. Although an intrepid murderer could boil it down to a concentrated liquid with the toxin water soluble it is easily extracted from the leaves and flowers. The debilitating toxin's name is grayanotoxin. It binds to specific sodium ion channels in cell membranes, these are receptor sites involved in activation and inactivation, with the toxin preventing inactivation, leaving excitable cells depolarized. Empirically the toxin is $C_{22}H_{36}O_7$. The symptoms are varied and based on where the activated cells are located include, muscle weakness, vomiting, sweating, salivation, seizures, and dangerously slow or dangerously fast heartbeat, and depending on dose, can end in death.

One caution if you are hiking around the Black Sea is to not eat the honey. Pliny reporting on the use of this "mad honey" as a 1 century B.C. biological weapon. Kateuas, known for being the first herbalist of record and expert on medicinal plants, had read Xenophon's description

of his army's happening upon the abundantly rich beehives in the area of Trabzon. They gorged themselves and were incapacitated for many days, lucky that the trailing Colchian army didn't attack during this time of utter impotence.

Kateuas persuaded Mithridates into a slow retreat from that position from the warring armies near Trabzon. Pompey's army, according to Strabo's Geography, gorged themselves on the honey and once in drunken convulsions, were slaughtered by Mithridates waiting army. This is the first recorded use of a biological poison as a weapon of war.



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searchable database!***

Did you know.....

- ◆ Americans eat more bananas than any other fruit; a total of 11 billion a year!
- ◆ 84% of an apple and 96% of a cucumber is water.
- ◆ Bananas are actually herbs. Bananas die after fruiting.
- ◆ A pineapple is a berry.
- ◆ Nutmeg is extremely poisonous if injected intravenously.
- ◆ Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson grew *Cannabis sativa* on their plantations. I wonder if they had a compassionate care ad in Poor Richard's Almanac.
- ◆ Ginger has been clinically demonstrated to work twice as well as Dramamine for fighting motion sickness, with no side effects.
- ◆ Eggplant is a member of the thistle family.
- ◆ Onions contain a mild antibiotic that fights infections, soothes burns, tames bee stings and relieves the itch of athletes foot.
- ◆ One bushel of corn will sweeten more than 400 cans of soda.

Deer Resistant Plant O' the Month

Pattie Roberts



Deer Resistant Plant O the Month:

Pinus pinea

AKA Italian Stone Pine AKA Umbrella Pine

Sunset Zones: 8, 9, 12-24, H-1

Sun exposure: Full to light shade

Water requirements: moderate once established

Mature size: 40-80' tall; 40-60' wide; grows at a moderate pace

The Stone Pine is known for its characteristically umbrella shape and its edible pine nuts. Young trees look like stout, bushy globes, by middle age it develops a thick, reddish-brown trunk with an "umbrella" of branches. In old age, the tree is broad and distinctively flat topped.

Can be used to impart a Mediterranean look, as a bonsai specimen, or for nut production.



UC DAVIS
ARBORETUM

All Stars



ROOT PRODUCTION METHOD

January Chores in the Garden

- ◆ Living Christmas trees should be planted as soon as possible. Do not leave the root ball exposed to freezing temperatures after removing the tree from the house
- ◆ Selective pruning may be done on shade trees. Make clean cuts at a branch collar.
- ◆ Avoid pruning spring blooming shrubs as this will remove the spring flowers.
- ◆ Plant bare root fruit trees, grape vines and brambles.
- ◆ If the weather is nice and the soil is in good condition, turn a bed for February planting of peas and kale.
- ◆ Time for the second spraying of your fruit trees.
- ◆ Turn indoor plants every few weeks to keep growth even.
- ◆ Keep your bird feeders full.
- ◆ Roses and Fruit tree clinics abound at nurseries this month. Go check one out.

Get your garden on,
Roger

For December:

My leaf extract is used to lower blood sugar in Asian countries. My leaves are high in corosolic acid. Banaba, Bang lang and many other names I am called by. Drive down any suburban street and you'll see me in shrub form or tree. Showy flowers cover the ends of my branches in summer and if trimmed after the flowers fade you can coax me to bloom again. I am named after a Swedish buddy of Linnaeus, Magnus, but that is just my first name. My specific epithet denotes I am from India and most of my variety names are American Indian. Go figure.

Who am I?

??? Mystery Plant ???

Roger Snell

Guess Me And Win Me!

For January:

Tradition says that I will grow for thirty-three years, until reaching the height of Christ when crucified, then die. Sprigs were placed under pillows at night to ward off evil spirits and bad dreams, while my wood was used to make lutes and other musical instruments. My botanical name comes from old Latin for 'dew of the sea', referring to the blue dew-like flowers found growing near the sea. A symbol of remembrance and friendship, and is often carried by wedding couples as a sign of love and fidelity. You'll find me as an exciting new varietal and a UC Davis Arboretum All-Star if you know whose music the Koechel catalog was developed for.

Who am I?



For December:

Soleil Paz, TJ, Pauline Sakai, Carlyn Hanson, Ray Morneau, Don Yamasaki, Nancy Beemer, Renee Towan, Dave Roberts,—all guessed the Mystery Plant correctly!



It was:

We a have winner!

Lagerstroemia indica

If you think you know this month's plant,
Call us! If you have some suggestions, let us know them too. (916) 652-9261 x 1