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PARK PICKS
by
FRIENDS OF THE ALLENTOWN PARKS



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Praying Mantis

While walking through Allentown's parks there's no telling what you might see. Look closely and you'll find this unusual and very beneficial insect that feeds primarily on insects like flies, crickets, moths and mosquitoes. They are a natural form of pest control.

More recently a Chinese Spotted Lanternfly.

Praying Mantis-photo by Richard Fritz

Introduced into the Philadelphia area in 1896, perhaps the Chinese Mantis will be the natural form to control the Lanternfly before it does significant damage to Pennsylvania apple, grape and other crops.

tulip poplar, and sassafras—generally, these colors come from compounds called carotenoids (also responsible for the color of carrots) which are present in the leaf during the growing season. The green chlorophyll dominates and covers up those carotenoids in summer. As the days grow shorter and the temperatures cool, chlorophyll degrades and goes from green to colorless, allowing the oranges and the yellows to show up. These colors are present in the leaf during its growing season.



Lehigh Parkway

red maples, black gums, dogwoods, sourwood, and oaks? Red pigments are not present in the leaf during summer. Trees that turn red actually produce this pigment, called anthocyanin, in the autumn. These pigments play a key role in readying the tree for the next spring. Researchers discovered that anthocyanins act as a sunscreen, protecting leaves (especially evergreen ones) from bright seasonal light when it is cold outside. Other researchers have discovered that the suncreening effect protects leaves from too much light, which can interfere with late-season transport of nutrients from the leaf back to the twigs, something trees do as a conservation mechanism.

Still, other scientists believe the red color serves to ward off insect pests. A healthy, strong plant has lots of the pigment; certain insects laying eggs in the fall may seek other, weaker host plants for their offspring.

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Inside A Leaf

The vivid, often simple colors on the outside are the products of the complex chemistry of growth inside a leaf. Take the yellows and oranges, for example—the dominant colors of aspen, ash, birch, beech, hickories, maples, some oaks,

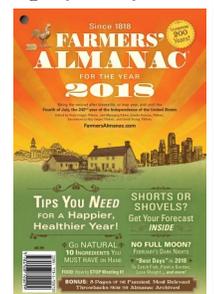


Cedar Creek Parkway



What About The Reds?

What about those gorgeous scarlet, crimson, and ruby hues of the red maples, black gums, dogwoods, sourwood, and oaks? Red pigments are not present in the leaf during summer. Trees that turn red actually produce this pigment, called anthocyanin, in the autumn. These pigments play a key role in readying the tree for the next spring. Researchers discovered that anthocyanins act as a sunscreen, protecting leaves (especially evergreen ones) from bright seasonal light when it is cold outside. Other researchers have discovered that the suncreening effect protects leaves from too much light, which can interfere with late-season transport of nutrients from the leaf back to the twigs, something trees do as a conservation mechanism.



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Glenn Morris (2015), What Causes Leaves to Change Color?, *Farmer's Almanac Newsletter*, September 27, 2017.