

DEAR ASK-A-TREE

For the edification and enlightenment of all trees and their staff, we bring you this feature, which we think you will find to be informative and conducive to arboreal health. For security reasons, the noted educator and world-renowned horticultural game show host providing the advice that this feature contains shall remain anonymous.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

Our neighborhood has seen an uptick in the borer population lately. What should we do about it?

Willowy in Wichita

Dear Willowy,

Borers can certainly be real pests at times. The wisdom of my old friend, *Franklinia benjamina*, comes to mind — “Borers and visitors stink in three days”. I say give them the boot.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

What's with all these dumb dogs and cats? The dogs are always doling out unwanted fertilizer applications, and the cats are always digging their claws into our bark.

An Oak in Oakland

Dear Oaky,

Boy, they are a pain sometimes, aren't they? Unfortunately, we are kind of in the middle. Humans seem to like their pets, so I can't see the problem ever going away. You could try to petition the city to put in more fire hydrants and maybe start a 'Declaw Your Cat' campaign, but it would probably be somewhat futile, again because you're dealing with humans and politicians. In the end, I'm afraid you'll just have to take it and be strong as an oak.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

I'm so tired. Every year it's the same thing. I always have to put on this spectacular flower

show so they will think I'm worth keeping. When I am covered with gorgeous yellow blooms, they stop and admire me, giving out lavish praise for my beauty. (My sister feels the same way about her purple blooms). Then, when I can give no more, they ignore me until another year rolls around. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy feeling pretty, but why can't I get compliments during the rest of the year?

Tabby (Ms. Tabebuia aurea) in Tampa

Dear Tabby,

I understand where you are coming from. I feel your pain; however, suck it up, sweetie. You have a gift, something that many other trees wish they had when they put out their inconspicuous little flowers. I have personally heard compliments about your beautiful fuzzy seed pods, too. There are also many people that think your limbs are picturesque when you drop your leaves. So, you see, you do get compliments long after you've finished blooming. I will do what I can to get the word out about those other fine qualities. Take the rest time

to just be you and not worry about putting on a show.

p.s.—I, too, am a big fan of your spectacular display.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

I looked up my family tree and found out I was the sap.

Sappy in Savannah

Dear Sappy,

You've been watching too much late night tv. I believe Rodney Dangerfield was the first to come up with that line. You are only as sappy as you want to be. Get off the couch and put out some more foliage.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

What's going on with this crazy weather this year? About the time that I think it is time to start letting the buds go, we get another frost. The other night, two weeks after the weather

reporter said spring was here, we got two inches of sleet, three inches of rain, and ice to boot. Is there anything that we can do about it?

Confused in Cincinnati

Dear Confused,

There is the classic quip by Charles Dudley Warner, “Everybody complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.” Well, you’ve complained about the weather, and I can do nothing about it. So, where do we go from here? I don’t know. Mark Twain said, “In the Spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours.” Basically, I’m just as confused as you.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

I’m worried. I am a Red Maple and I live in the backyard of a house. I’m growing well and am surrounded by kids and dogs. Sometimes, though, I look out at the forest across the way, and I wonder if I am missing out on something. Then I hear of other forests that

are being replaced by concrete. Should I shed my leaves in worry?

Maple on Elm Street

Dear Maple,

It is a curious phenomenon that there are many places where builders are bulldozing down trees to make way for developments and then naming the streets after the trees that they took out. There is a certain camaraderie that exists between the trees and plants of a forest, so perhaps you are missing out on that, but you are alive and well cared for. Since they planted you in a development, it is highly unlikely they will ever bulldoze you down. Bloom where you are planted, my friend.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

This is Maple on Elm Street again. I forgot to mention that I heard my people talking about planting another tree in the backyard. I assume you think this would be good. I don't know what kind they might plant.

Maple on Elm Street

Dear Maple,

Confucius say, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.”

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

I’m twenty years old and have developed a good branching structure. A new family has just moved into the house and the kids enjoy climbing my branches. They want to build a tree hut next week. I’ve never done this before, so is this a good idea?

Ficus in Florida

Dear Ficus,

I’ve heard about the Ficus branching structure and climbing kids many times. It has been nothing but praise. Have a little patience (you are working with kids, after all) and keep up the good work. Kids and trees have a special relationship that should remain alive. And sometimes they can say funny things, like I once heard one say, “Trees get leaves in the summer so their trunks don’t get

sunburned.” It sounds like something Billy or Dolly in *Family Circus* might have said.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

We recently had some wildfires in our area. Many trees of the forest died or suffered severe damage. No one is replanting anything yet. Do you think they will replant soon? Sometimes I feel very alone.

Pining in the Woods

Dear Pining,

Have patience, my friend. There are many in the human world who care about trees, so I'm sure they will get to you and replant after they've taken care of some other things. I once read where a man by the name of Martin Luther said that even if he knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, he would still plant his apple tree. I like that guy and hope that more will follow his words.

- Dear Ask-A-Tree,

Who makes a better baseball bat, ash or maple?

Batty in Baltimore

Dear Batty,

That is an interesting and dangerous question. If I say Maple, all the Ash trees will get mad at me. If I say Ash, all the Maple trees will get mad at me. So, I am going to divert to a question of my own. They use our wood for all their bats, but why don't they have the decency to name any major league team after any of us? Sure, the animal kingdom gets more than their fair share of names. Trees get none. At least there is a Toronto Maple Leaf hockey team. I look forward to an answer from someone.