

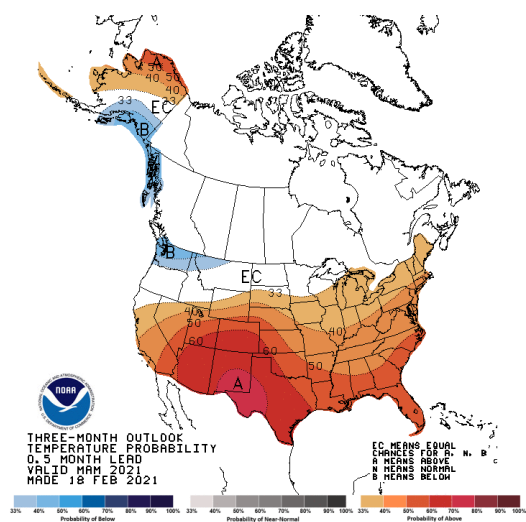
Home Horticulture - Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks – March 2021

Written and compiled by Ricky D. Kemery, Allen County Extension Educator Retired

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks / Home Horticulture is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to kemeryr7@frontier.com or text: 260-431-6893

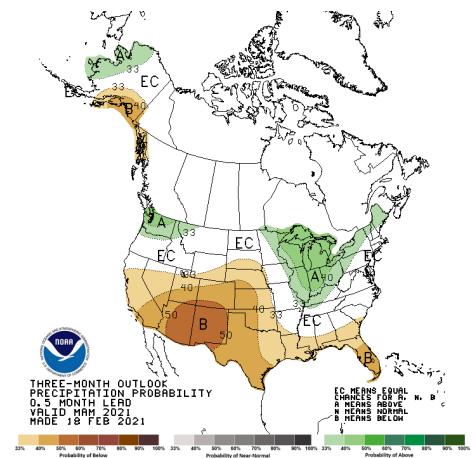
More Tornadoes in 2021?

This year's tornado season could be more severe than usual across the USA, in part because of La Niña.



AccuWeather meteorologists said that because of La Niña, severe weather and tornado activity could abruptly fire up and rival 2011, one of the most notorious severe weather seasons, when tornadoes killed more than 550 Americans.

"The temperature of the water in the central and eastern tropical Pacific during February 2021 is similar to the La Niña pattern in February 2011.



A study in 2015 from Columbia University found that a fairly strong La Niña brings more tornadoes and hailstorms over portions of Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, and other parts of the southern USA.

La Niña concentrates hot, humid air over the southern USA. The heat and humidity over the southern Plains states sets up a strong north-south temperature gradient, which in turn favors storm formation.

A study in 2017 published by the American Meteorological Society also found a link between U.S. tornado activity and La Niña.

Based on past decades, the chance for tornadoes typically increases from February into March in the South, and it is highest from April through June across the Plains.

Regardless, the climate prediction center predicts above average precipitation and slightly above average temperatures for our area this spring.

Recluse Spiders Run Amuck?

The Shapiro Undergraduate Library at the University of Michigan reopened after closing temporarily due to a poisonous spider scare. In January, pest management staff found three Mediterranean recluse spiders in a basement storage area that is not open to the public.

Mediterranean recluse spiders prefer basement spaces, tunnels, and other hideaways where there is a decrease in foot traffic. Users browsing the library stacks would be very unlikely to encounter a stray spider or be bitten.



Brown Recluse spider

Mediterranean recluse spiders have also recently been identified in the basements and remote areas of several other buildings on the university's Ann Arbor campus.

It is thought the spiders entered university buildings through underground tunnels, at a time of decreased occupancy.

Even though bites from these spiders are extremely rare, the university issued safety precautions for individuals working in basement areas, including wearing a long-sleeved shirt, hat, gloves, and boots or shoes which enclose the entire foot, when handling stored items, cardboard boxes, lumber or rocks.

In rare cases, the bite of a Mediterranean recluse spider can lead to a condition that is characterized by skin lesions. There have been several scares involving brown recluse (the American version of this spider) over the years. Since we are at the upper portion of the spider's range – at least in the past - finding recluse spiders in our area is rare. Many people bitten by recluse spiders were bitten when traveling to more southern regions of the U.S.

However, some recluse spiders can travel by hitching rides in shipping merchandise. Others have traveled to our area in bags of mulch. It is just one more thing that can cause problems in this crazy world.



Wolf Spider

Many people find spiders in the home or garden and think they have a brown recluse epidemic. Some individuals develop a lesion, rash, or cellulitis after being bitten by a spider and think they have encountered a brown recluse.

The recluse – by its very nature – avoids areas of activity and high light. It is very distinctive in its appearance. It has a violin on its head (upside down if you look from the front) and that is it. No other markings. It is most commonly confused with the wolf spider often found in homes and outdoors. The wolf spider often has a lighter vertical band on its head and markings on its abdomen. All spiders “bite” if disturbed, and the reaction often can be to the digestive enzymes released by the spider during the bite and its actual venom. If one has been bitten by a recluse, the bite area can develop into lesions where flesh actually dissolves away, along with other severe reactions. Some people bitten by recluses are put into hypobaric chambers to help heal the bite area. I would show pictures of bites, but they are really gross. The key to avoid bites or contact with recluses is to be careful. If you travel to southern areas of the U.S. and stay in a vacation cabin or motel not used often, then check bedding before climbing in for a nap. Wear gloves, even in our area, before rummaging through boxes in an attic or garage not used for a long time, or when handling mulch in the garden.



The Continued Sage of Rhoomba Craziiness

Has your Roomba vacuum been acting strange lately? Yours might not be the only one.

Some i7 and s9 models of the robot vacuums have been experiencing issues due to a recent software update, iRobot said in a statement emailed to USA TODAY. The company said the issues affect a "limited number" of models.

"We've worked with impacted customers to roll their robot's software back, and we are also implementing an update to ensure any similar issues are avoided moving forward," said iRobot in its statement.

The company said the update is being rolled out over the next several weeks.

Details of the issues and response were first reported by users on social media who have complained of issues with their Roombas, including the vacuums behaving erratically "like it's "drunk."

"It will bang itself against the same wall 20 times before moving on," reads one Reddit post. "These robots look drunk" since the update, another user posted.

Selecting Trees for Home Landscapes

It's that time of year again, when folks head to the garden centers and nurseries to purchase trees for the home landscape. Research has shown that landscaping is the last thing people think about when purchasing a home. Many folks head to the garden centers and nurseries with no real plan in mind, looking for value instead of quality when it comes to adding trees to the landscape.

Tree Purchasing Tips:

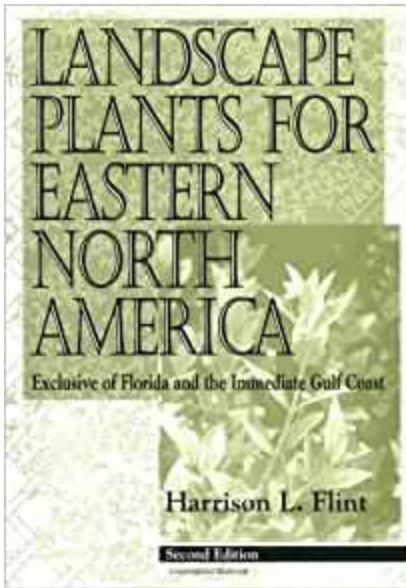
Folks have three choices when purchasing trees. Balled and Burlap trees are often the trees with the best root system, and a better root system means quicker establishment and survival in the long run. Try to find a nursey that grows its trees onsite, and burlaps them after a few years.



Containerized trees are generally brought into the nursey or clearing house bare root and then placed in containers for sale the same year. They generally are cheaper than burlap trees. The issue with container trees is that roots can circle and fill the container before purchasing. Unless the roots are teased apart, the roots might strangle the tree over time.

Certain trees, especially fruit trees can be purchased bare root from larger nurseries – online. These trees require more TLC to prepare and plant. Unless you are an experienced gardener, I would avoid these trees.

Having said all this, the trees must be planted properly to have a better chance at survival. The Feb. issue of Home Horticulture discusses this in great detail. As much as it pains me to say - one cannot totally depend on a nursey to properly plant trees for you. You need to watch them carefully to make sure the trees are planted correctly.



Two very good sources of information about trees are **Landscape Plants for Eastern North America**, written by my old teacher at Purdue University, Harrison Flint. His book which is slightly outdated, contains tons of information about how large a tree can be over time, hardiness, soil requirements, pros and cons of the tree, major pest and insect issues, seasonal interest – the list goes on and on. The book also has charts and lists in the back that separate the trees based on characteristics such as: trees for heavy clay soils.

Michael Dirr's **The Manual of Landscape Plants** has very similar information with more decorative descriptions of the overall value – in his opinion – of a tree. He also has a color book that is a bit more limited in scope.

Even though the books are old, I just don't know of any better sources to use for selecting trees in the Midwest.

Tree Selection: The following trees are from one of the most popular publications I wrote when I was the Extension Educator in Allen County. Unfortunately, it was taken off the shelves and deleted from lists of helpful publications after I left.

First of All, Trees to Avoid

Colorado Blue Spruce - *Picea pungens* - Number one problem tree in our area. Unfortunately this tree has many insect, mite, and disease issues as it becomes more mature. Absolutely hates soggy clay soils.

Silver Maple - *Acer saccharinum* - Probably the worst tree for an urban yard that I can think of. Weak wood, vigorous roots, weedy "helicopters" - a monster of a tree.

Scots and Austrian Pine - *Pinus sylvestris* and *Pinus nigra* - Great trees in Northern Europe, but real losers in Indiana. Very susceptible to a nasty tip blight disease and insect problems. Short-lived.

Pin Oak - *Quercus palustris* - Many questions at the Extension office regarding this tree. Pin oak's response to urban subsoil conditions is to grow poorly, and to exhibit leaves which are pale green between the veins.

White or Paper Birch - *Betula papyrifera* - This tree's preference for cool conditions makes it a good target for borer insects and root rot disease. Usually short-lived in our area.

Lombardy Poplar - *Populus alba* - The tree is fast-growing and cheap, but very short-lived, due to a canker disease.



Magnolia - *Magnolia* species - It is a shame to be unable to recommend magnolias, but scale insects have decimated magnolias in Allen county in the last 15 years. Cucumber magnolia may be resistant to scale; otherwise buy with the thought that scale insects may be an issue someday.

Russian Olive - *Elaeagnus angustifolia* - Unsightly, scraggly, disease-prone tree that is not worth the trouble of planting.

Ash - *Fraxinus* app. Unfortunately, due to the continued threat of Emerald Ash Borer, this fine tree can no longer be recommended. Its future is still uncertain.

Norway Maple - *Acer platanoides* and **Flowering Pear** - *Pyrus species*. These trees are now listed as invasive trees and should not be planted.

Recommended Shade Trees

Sugar Maple - *Acer saccharum* - a good native tree with great fall color. 'Commemoration' 'Fall Fiesta' 'Legacy' 'Majesty' are newer cultivars with resistance to leaf tatters, drought, and scorch.



Sugar Maple

Red Maple - *Acer rubrum* - Look for just the species for a good native shade tree. Cultivars 'Morgan', 'Schlesingeri', have good fall color and are taller (40 feet or more) than more commonly found red maples. 'Autumn Blaze' is a hybrid of silver and red maple that in my opinion can suffer in sites with poor waterlogged soil,

Shantung maple hybrids - Shantung maples are complex hybrids of maples with some Asian parentage. These trees show promise for our area. 'State Street' is a tree recommended by the Morton Arboretum- reported to be very tolerant of urban conditions.



Linden

Ginkgo - *Ginkgo biloba* - Use a male cultivar like 'Autumn Gold' to avoid the smelly fruits. Great clear-yellow fall color. Disease and insect resistant.

Linden - *Tilia americana/Tilia tomentosa* - Both American Linden and Silver Lindens are, in my opinion, nice shade trees for our area. 'Boulevard' 'Frontyard' 'Rosehill' are a few cultivars. 'Green Mountain' is a popular Silver linden.

American Elm - *Ulmus americana* 'Valley Forge' has the best resistance to Dutch Elm disease.

Hackberry - *Celtis occidentalis* Some would argue that this tree should also be on the worst tree list. However, hackberry will grow on an extremely poor site in a large open area. 'Prairie Pride' is the most available cultivar, and better than the species. Some columnar selections are also available.

London Plane Tree - *Platanus acerifolia* - This sycamore relative makes a good street tree.

River Birch - Good substitute for white birch with ornamental bark and resistance to the white birch borer. 'Heritage' is a very good tree. This tree requires moisture.



Chinquapin Oak - I really like this oak which is fast growing oak with smaller acorns and unusual leaves (see left)

Native Trees - Such as Bur Oak, Red Oak, White Oak, Sassafras, Hickory, either are difficult to transplant, take forever to reach any size in one's lifetime, or have litter issues that cause some homeowners grief. Even so, good to plant for the long term.

Tulip Tree can be too large for homes with smaller lots. Sweet Gum, and Sycamore are ok on sites that have moist conditions, though unpopular with some homeowners because of debris problems (Sweet Gum) or large growth habit (Sycamore). If you have a lot of land, then larger trees or trees with litter are not as much of an issue. As I mentioned in a previous issue, I think planting native trees is a great idea, but some non-native trees can also work in today's urban landscapes.

Monarch Decline – Once Again

According to a new report by the World Wildlife Fund and Mexico's government, the monarch population present for hibernation in Mexico plunged by 26% in December compared to the same month in 2019.

In 2019, the monarchs occupied 2.83 hectares, nearly 7 acres, in their hibernation forests in Mexico. After their latest migration in 2020, however, they occupied just 2.1 hectares, roughly 5.1 acres.



In the U.S., the monarch butterfly is approaching endangered status. In December, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said that listing the butterfly species as endangered or threatened is "warranted" under the Endangered Species Act, but that there were other species that were higher priority to be listed.

The decline is likely related to the decreasing forest area in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, where the majority of hibernation colonies are recorded. Friday's report found that in the year leading up to the most recent migration, the forest lost four times more trees than it did the year prior.

"Clandestine" logging was the primary cause of this, the report said. Pest control activities, wind and drought also impacted the loss of trees.

Climate change is also impacting monarchs during their time in the U.S. Changing environmental conditions were not favorable for milkweed, according to the report, which is essential for monarchs to breed. Monarchs lay their eggs in milkweed, and larvae feed exclusively on the plant.

"This limited the reproduction of the Monarch population, with an impact on the migrant generation, reducing the population of this insect throughout North America and leading to a smaller population occupying the Mexican forests during its hibernation," the report says.

Cats and Dogs

A group of researchers from Kyoto University in Japan tested the loyalty of domestic cats by adapting a technique previously used on dogs. The experiment involved a container, 36 domestic cats (13 were house cats and 23 lived in cat cafés) and their owners.

Cat Cafes provide a space for both coffee enthusiasts and cat lovers! Cat cafes originated in Taiwan, with one opening in Taipei in 1998. One Japanese tourist took the idea to Japan and opened its doors in 2004. Some cat cafes have “permanent” cat residents who are up for adoption.



A Cat Café in Taiwan. This looks like a cat fight – waiting to happen.

The researchers set up two groups: the "helpers" and the "non-helpers." The cats watched as their owners tried in vain to open a container and take out an object. In the helper group, a second person, an actor, helped the owner open the container — in other words, they acted as a friend to the owner. In the non-helper group, the actor refused to help and turned away — making them a foe. To act as a point of comparison, a third person just sat there throughout both conditions, neither helping nor refusing to help.

After the skit, the actor and the neutral person from each trial offered the cat a piece of food, and the experimenters recorded which person the cat took the food from. After four trials, the conclusion was clear: The cats did not care who they took the food from. Previously, the research team showed that dogs undergoing the same experiment avoided people who refused to help their owners.



It's more likely that cats don't understand our social relationships as much as dogs do, because dogs were domesticated much earlier, she wrote. What's more, the ancestors of dogs lived in social packs, whereas cats were solitary hunters, which could mean dogs already had existing social skills that were hyperdeveloped when they were domesticated.

It's also not clear if these findings extend to all house cats. "About two thirds of our subjects were from cat cafés, which makes us cautious about generalizing the results of this study to all domestic cats," the researchers wrote in the study. Though the house cats and the café cats didn't show differences in behavior, they could have a different bond to their owners. Café cats, for example, may spend more time socializing with strangers and may have fewer individual interactions with their owners than house cats would.

The Cornpones – or Why I Don't Grow Corn.

The Corpones are a young family consisting of Michelle and Matt, who just took up gardening last year during the pandemic.

Matt decided that they should grow sweet corn in the garden because- well - both Matt and Michelle like corn. Michelle found organic super sweet corn from her favorite seed company. The seed was very expensive because supplies were short because of the influx of new gardeners as a result the pandemic. Matt and Michelle both ordered the super sweet because well – they really like very sweet corn.

Matt and Michelle planted the corn in mid-April because they wanted the corn to get an early start- early start-early harvest - correct? When the beginning of May came and went and there were no seedlings, Matt and Michelle began to worry. When an early May snow event occurred, Matt and Michelle found out from Facebook friends that their corn seeds probably rotted in the ground because sweet corn likes warm well-drained soil to germinate. Super sweet varieties are even more sensitive to cool, wet soil.

Michelle had a much more difficult time finding more organic seed , and finally settled on a sugar-enhanced variety at an exorbitant price online. Matt planted the seed, and lo and behold, they noticed seedlings appear a week or so later. Yay! Corn was on the way!

Michelle looked out her kitchen window a few days later to see two things. One, rabbits had appeared in the garden, and they were feasting on the young seedlings. Rabbits, like the Cornpones, really like corn, even though they can't digest it.. Second - large crows appeared, and Michelle observed that apparently just out of mischief, the crows were just pulling the corn seedlings out of the ground. The seed was eaten up by other birds who - like crows, really like corn.



This time Michelle could only find a non-organic corn from a few lonely left-over packets at the local Garden Center. She went later in the evening and wore a mask to keep safe.

Matt covered the emerging seedlings with chicken wire to keep the critters and the birds away. It took a lot of chicken wire to cover the corn.

The corn began to grow, but it looked yellow and sickly. Matt found out from another Facebook friend that the corn needed fertilizer, He had to arrange for a friend to deliver manure and drop it in the driveway so he could use a wheelbarrow to put it in the garden in the backyard. The Cornpones neighbors were not happy about the smell that permeated the neighborhood and were not impressed when Michelle lectured them on the benefits of organic gardening.



Towards the end of the summer the Cornpones were delighted when a few small ears appeared on the corn. As it turns out, the corn had been planted in long rows instead of in blocks that enhanced pollination. Even though there were not as many ears because of the poor pollination, the Cornpones were happy. Corn was on the way!

Unfortunately, the arrival of racoons destroyed that dream, Racoons also absolutely love corn, and will scale walls and fences just to eat it. They only way to save the few remaining ears was for the Cornpones to maintain a 24- hour surveillance on the corn patch. They used a variety of scare techniques – including megaphones, police sirens, strobe lights, howling dog and screeching cat sounds, to keep the coons at bay. The frequent visits from the police prompted by neighbor complaints helped keep them awake. They were exhausted.

The day finally came when the few remaining ears of corn left on the plants was ready. At last fresh sweet corn!. Michelle roasted the ears on a barbecue grill until the corn was blackened nicely. The Cornpones buttered the ears profusely and bit in the ears to taste – chewy starch. As it turns out the sweet corn was tainted by the field corn grown nearby by Frank, the friendly farmer. Sweet corn can be pollinated by other corn types grown nearby, resulting in – well corn- no one except cattle and other farm animals would like.

The IRS was not amused when the Cornpones tried to deduct the cost of growing their corn- about 500 dollars an ear, on their taxes. Needless to say, the Cornpones will nit attempt to grow corn this season. Maybe zucchini- that's the ticket.



Palo Santo

Palo santo (*Bursera graveolens*) is a tree that's native to Peru, Ecuador, and other South American countries. It grows in dry tropical forests and produces very fragrant resin. In Spanish, palo santo means "holy wood." *Bursera graveolens* is found in the seasonally dry tropical forests of Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and on the Galápagos Islands. The tree belongs to the same family (Burseraceae) as frankincense and myrrh. It is widely used in ritual purification and as folk medicine for stomachache, as a sudorific, and as liniment for rheumatism. Aged heartwood

is rich in terpenes such as limonene and α -terpineol.

For thousands of years, the wood, resin, and oil have been used for medicinal purposes. It's mainly used to treat pain and stress. It's also said to clear negative energy. There isn't a lot of scientific proof behind these benefits. Nevertheless, palo santo has been used by indigenous peoples for centuries.

The wood of the palo santo tree is available as sticks, chips, or powder. It usually comes from the branches of the tree, so it's 100 percent wood. Palo santo wood contains a very aromatic resin, which can be extracted and used separately. The essential oil of palo santo can be derived from the wood and fruit.



Traditionally, palo santo is widely used to repel mosquitos. It's also said to deter ants, termites, and flies. There may be some merit to this claim. Palo santo essential oil is mainly composed of limonene. Limonene is a substance with insecticide properties, so it's used in natural insect repellants.

Another supposed benefit of palo santo is pain relief. People use palo santo to treat different types of pain, including arthritis, headache, and sore throat. Many people find the aroma of palo santo relaxing, so it's commonly used to ease stress. It's thought to have a purifying, cleansing effect on the body and mind. A 2014 study by Trusted Source also found that ingested limonene decreased signs of stress in rats.

Don't use Palo santo if your skin becomes irritated, you have lung or breathing problems after burning palo santo. If you're pregnant or breastfeeding. It's recommended to avoid using palo santo oil or incense.

Although palo santo has become very popular, the tree isn't endangered. There's also no hard research proof that palo santo has any of the benefits listed previously. Rats are not available for comment.

Recommended Evergreen Trees

If one goes to a nursery or garden center to purchase evergreen trees, you can be confused by all the choices. Here are a few that I recommend.

Norway Spruce - *Picea abies* - A large tree (20-30' spread and up to 50-70' in height at maturity) that is probably the best screening and windbreak tree for our area because of its site adaptability.

Black Hills Spruce - *Picea sp.* - Slower-growing spruce handles tougher conditions unlike many other spruce.

Eastern Red Cedar - *Juniperus virginiana* - This is a tough native evergreen tree that is common in wild waste areas. Birds love this tree. Very drought tolerant. A potential issue is that this tree is an alternate host for Cedar apple and hawthorn rust.

Limber Pine - *Pinus flexilis* - A much tougher pine tree (some cultivars have nice blue needles) from the Dakotas for dry sites in our area. More difficult to find in garden centers and nurseries.

Bald Cypress - *Taxodium distichum* - Good selection for a wet to medium sites. Great fall color. Loses its needles in the winter. **Dawn Redwood** - *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* - is a similar look for wet sites.

Douglas Fir - *Pseudotsuga menziesii* - A western species that is not a true fir, Very drought tolerant and site-adaptable. Wonderful bracted cones are used in decorations.

White Fir - *Abies concolor* - A very decorative evergreen tree with great color and soft foliage. Better for well-drained sites/sandy soils.



Black Hills Spruce

Kitchen Table Players

Most of you know that music is my “other” passion” in life, and that I belong to a small folk group called the Kitchen Table players – consisting of me (songwriting, vocals and guitar), Gwendra Turney (violin and vocals) and our latest addition to the group, Veronica Brocher (cello and keyboards).

We just released our latest video on our YouTube channel. “Pack of Wolves” was written well before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, its lyrics resonate with today’s world of confusion, strong opinions, mistrust, and disillusionment with the world. It's not a pretty, happy, feel-good song or video. It's about people with issues - narcissism, greed, nihilism, user mentality, isolation, mistrust, and judgment that can stifle the spirit. It's about urban and social decay and the struggle to survive.

We have spent 2020 in social isolation, shooting large amounts of video and editing. Like our previous videos, "Pack of Wolves" was filmed locally, primarily in an urban desert near New Haven and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Most of our performance footage was filmed on an overcast October day where the temperature was 35 degrees with 30-40 mph winds!

Our goal is to have viewers feel the emotion of this song and ponder the many meanings and symbolism in the lyrics and story – and perhaps find they have felt the same emotions in their lives. Like always, we celebrate the beauty of nature and its ability to survive – even when times are tough. Please feel free to subscribe, post a comment, and share!



[YOUTUBE.COM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Pack of Wolves](#)

[The Kitchen Table Players “ Pack of Wolves” Featuring Ricky Kemery and Gwendra Turney](#)

Feta Cheese and TikTock

If you're having a hard time finding feta cheese on grocery store shelves, you can thank the omnipresent TikTok for the shortage. A one-pot pasta dish has been making the rounds on social media and is allegedly causing feta shortages in some parts of the country.

A Finnish food blogger Jenni Häyrinen first created the viral pasta dish in 2019, and it ended up being widely shared on social media. The popularity of the "UuniFetaPasta," as it was called in Finnish, ended up causing a feta shortage in the Scandinavian country. And now that the sensational pasta finally landed on TikTok, it is causing a similar shortage in American grocery stores. According to a recent report by The Charlotte Observer, "finding a block of feta cheese is like a “golden ticket” in Charlotte right now," thanks to the viral recipe.

In the odd chance you missed the whole TikTok Pasta craze, let us fill you in. The ingredients for this delectable dish are simple, but its true genius lies in the simplicity of its preparation. It calls for cherry tomatoes, olive oil, garlic, fresh basil, pasta (think penne), and of course, a block of feta cheese, all of which come together in one baking dish in the oven. The preparation is easy, the cleanup even easier. Who knew the Finns were pasta lovers?

Recommended Smaller Trees

Crabapples - *Malus* sp. - The key here is to purchase disease resistant varieties. A few of my favorites: 'Donald Wyman', 'Snowdrift' and 'Red Jewel' There are many cultivars to choose from.

Hawthorn - *Crataegus* sp. - An excellent small tree for dry areas with little room for root growth. Should not be planted near walkways because of the thorns. 'Winterking' is an excellent Hawthorn with beautiful fall berries.

American Hornbeam - *Carpinus caroliniana* - This medium-sized tree is very site-adaptable with nice yellow leaves in some years.

Redbud - *Cercis canadensis* - Nice understory native tree; well adapted to the conditions of our area. Some of the fancier colored-leaved selections have more issues.

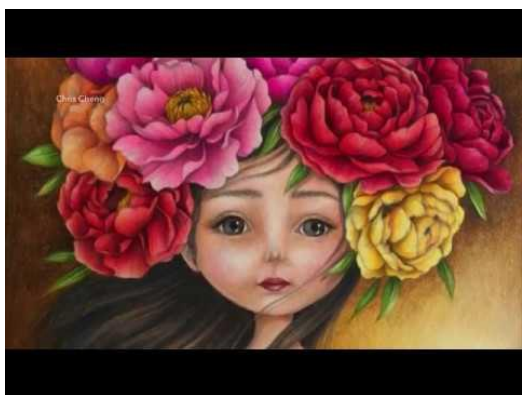
Serviceberry - *Amelanchier* - This small native tree has nice white spring flowers, tasty berries, good form, and great fall color.

Red Maple - *Acer rubrum* - Many cultivars are nice small-to medium sized trees when planted on a somewhat moist to wet area. 'October Glory' and 'Red Sunset' are two widely available smaller red maples. New cultivars like 'Fall Fiesta' are constantly being introduced.

Little Leaf Linden - *Tilia cordata* - Tough urban tolerant tree with a similar form to flowering pear, but a much better choice, since Japanese beetles are on the decline, and flowering pears have become invasive.



Serviceberry Tree



The Ground Hog Kingdom — A Fairy Tale by Ricky

There was once a small, lovely kingdom named Peaceful Valley. The valley was located in the Sunrise Mountains, named because of the beautiful sunrises that made all the people happy. Everyone had beautiful gardens of flower and vegetables - as the soil was fertile - brought down to the valley by rivers and streams from the mountains higher above.

One person who was especially happy and cheerful was the king and queen's only daughter, Princess Peony. The princess had a special affinity with animals, Cows and little piglets adored her, birds ate seed from her hand, and dogs and cats always begged to be petted by her. The princess was especially loved by groundhogs, or pig whistles as they were called in the valley. The adult ground hogs would harvest and drop flowers of all kinds at the princess's doorstep — each and every day.

The baby ground hogs were a favorite of the princess. As she sat outside on her favorite chair drinking mint tea, the babies would crawl up on her lap to be petted and nuzzle her neck - making tiny mewling sounds as she enjoyed the mountains and sky.



Everything was wonderful until the day the king and queen called Peony to the throne room. “Peony, you are now of age and required to marry” the king proclaimed. We have arranged for Prince Indigo to be your future husband “the queen remarked tearfully. The prince is from the incredibly prosperous Kingdom of Riches-located by the sea. Joining our two kingdoms will be wonderful for all!

The prince arrived 2 days later with much fanfare and noise. “Your parents have appointed me to be Minister of Finance until we marry,” he announced. His eyes were not kind. She saw that he often batted away the animals which gathered around him.



Over time Prince Indigo’s influence began to affect the happiness of the Peaceful valley. He kept the king and queen cozily within the castle, so they were unaware of the changes he was making. He convinced the king to impose a tax on the farmers and gardeners for all things grown and sold. The citizens were puzzled, as they had always shared with everyone what they had grown. The Prince established fines on those who decorated their gates and windows with flowers, claiming it did nothing to make the kingdoms more prosperous.

The worst punishments came to the animals. Indigo was jealous of Peony’s love and kinship with the animals. He created places called “shelters” where animals were killed every day to “control “overpopulation. Cattle and chickens were never allowed to wander free.

Peony’s beloved pig whistles were declared “pests” and the Prince made laws that allowed them to be shot or poisoned wherever they were found.

The people were not happy, but the prince imprisoned and punished citizens who did not agree with him.

The final straw came later when Peony found a sick and poisoned little pig whistle who had managed to crawl into her bed to nuzzle her neck. It whimpered as she tried to comfort it.

The Princess arranged a meeting with her parents and Prince Indigo the next day. She walked into the meeting carrying her baby groundhog. What are you doing with that little pig whistle? The Prince shouted. “Guards!” Take that creature away and throw it into the river!

You will not!, Peony exclaimed. “What can you, a lowly princess do to me?” The Prince shouted.

Peony looked towards her parents. “I will never marry this person. He has taken away the happiness of our valley”. She looked back towards the Prince. “What will I do?, Peony said with deep sadness. “I will cry”, for everything and for everyone.”

“Hah!“ Prince Indigo said. “Go ahead and cry and see what happens!” “I will,” Peony whispered.



Peony went to her room and locked the door. She held the sick baby groundhog close to her breast, and she began to cry, deep tears of sadness and loss. Her wails were heard all over the valley. The people were alarmed to hear their princess so sad. They had heard of what had happened that day .

And then a strange thing occurred. It began to rain, Not just a gentle peaceful rain, but a storm of great magnitude. As Peony's tears increased, the more severe the storm became.

The rivers became swollen and overflowed their banks. The streets were flooded. Peony's tears did not stop.

The king and queen tried to reason with their daughter. They shouted to her through the door "Please stop crying!" "I will not!" she wailed! "Look outside and see what has happened to our valley".

The king and queen finally looked out on their kingdom from their balcony. They saw the Prince rounding up dissidents on the street. They saw their town with no flowers or happiness left.

The next morning the princess woke from a deep sleep. "When did I fall asleep?" she wondered. She noticed a tickle at her neck. The baby pig whistle was nuzzling and mewing. It was alive and healthy! Still holding the bay groundhog, she went to her window. The citizens were cleaning up the town. Once again they were hanging flowers from the fences and gates and planting their window boxes.

Peony heard her parents knocking softly at her door. "We sent the prince away" they said. We are sorry with all that happened. Your happiness and our citizens' happiness are what is most important. We know you will be a wonderful queen when we are gone."

Peony opened her door and gave her parents a huge hug. The baby pig whistle chattered happily at Peony's neck. All was well once again in the happy kingdom of Peaceful Valley.



Hoggles' Demented Cat Logic



To My Caregiver: *I want to open a cat café, I don't know what they are, but I want one...*

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