

# Wild fruits all around, if you know where to look

My neighborhood hosts a largesse of edible stuff people don't seem to appreciate. There's a small tree in a nearby churchyard with beautiful spring flowers that everyone appreciates. But in the Autumn, it bends under the weight of hundreds of large, beautiful, crisp, sweet crabapples, which usually fall, untouched.

Except by me. I walk by it often, and when they begin to ripen, I can forage them for about a month. Nobody notices or seems to care.

There's a lot around the corner whose owners demolished the old house, but they left four fig shrubs nobody seems to pick but me; I make preserves for rainy winter days. And I know of three pomegranate shrubs whose owners grow them just for the reddish orange flowers. Thank you, the flowers are lovely - and the fruits delicious. Nectar of the gods, and all that.

Other ornamental trees and shrubs that produce delicious fruit scattered here and there around my little town include pecans, hickories, muscadines, rabbit-eye blueberries, and the less-familiar mulberries, reddish-leaf Indian cling peach, quince, ginkgo, loquat, and jujube. Big orange Japanese persimmons are obvious, but I find commonly grown Eleagnus shrubs by their super fragrant late fall flowers and come back later for the small

apple-like midwinter fruits. By the way, I've written a little treatise on growing attractive, landscape quality fruit plants for Mississippi, including many commonly grown shrubs with surprisingly good fruit. Glad to email you a free copy. I got started with this as a youngster raised in a big, varied landscape with mixed fruit plants, and honed it when Euell Gibbons came out with his famous Stalking the Wild Asparagus book. That's where I learned that the flowers of orange daylilies have the same nutrition as broccoli and can be eaten the same many ways. I've made tea with fresh pine needles, cooked bamboo shoots, and eaten the tender new shoots of smilax raw and steamed just like asparagus.

I won't get into all the cultivated and wild flowers that are edible, including weeds in the lawn. A partial list would include dandelions, chickweed, henbit, wild onions, clover, violets, dock, purslane, violets, clover, and Florida betony tubers. But back to regular yard plants. Not many people realize that Pyracantha fruits are mealy-tasting little apples, and the purple berries of beautyberry were used by Native Americans as a filler. The furry "wild lemons" on a thorny but fully hardy citrus plant named Poncirus are seedy and very acidic but make great lemonade or preservative or my preserves. Ever taste the fruit of prickly



Edible fruits on Eleagnus Shrub.

pear cactus, or cook its flat round leaves? As I drive around the state, I see countless colonies of native Chickasaw plums, ditch-bank elderberries, wild pears with their little fruits, and blackberries. And every Boy Scout knows how to make a refreshing lemonade-like "bug juice" drink by steeping the burgundy summer berries of sumac. Important point: Can you differentiate Queen Anne's lace (wild carrots) from the somewhat similar looking but deadly water hemlock? Need to know what you are doing because, in addition to harvesting only what is legal - not on private property or state parks - it's crucial to know edible from poisonous, or how to treat it to make it safe to eat. Acorns have to be treated, and only young shoots of pokeberry are edible. And I NEVER harvest wild mushrooms. Too risky except for those with training. Food for thought: What if someone on every block in my 'hood planted some of these by the street for neighbors to enjoy both flowers and fruit? It'd be a year-round edible forest feast! *Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.*

Thanksgiving. Three hours into the six-hour trip, I realized that I was in a theology lab. A day with a car full of kids will teach you a lot about God. Transporting a family from one city to another is closely akin to God transporting us from our home to his. A journey is a journey, whether the destination be the Thanksgiving table or

the heavenly one. The fact that my pilgrims were all under the age of seven only enriched my learning experience. As minutes rolled into hours and our car rolled through the hills, I began to realize that what I was saying to my kids had a familiar ring. I had heard it before — from God. All of a sudden, the car became a classroom. I realized that I was doing for a few hours what God has done for centuries: encouraging travelers who'd rather rest than ride.

I shared the idea with Denalyn. We began to discover similarities between the two journeys. Here are a few we noted. In order to reach the destination, we have to say no to some requests. Children have no concept of minutes or miles. Children can't envision the reward. It's worth it. As we sat around the table then, no one spoke of the long trip to get here. Yesterday's challenges were lost in that day's joy. That's what Paul meant.

# Bless your Heart and make this soup

There is so many scary reports in the news these days I become so anxious as I learn about the murders, the break-ins, kidnappings and especially the accounts we are recently hearing and learning about the Coronavirus.

Honestly, it is enough information to constrain us to a home sprayed regularly with Lysol and cleaned with Clorox all the while wearing medical masks and hazmat suits.

All this alarming information we are given is nothing new. Do you remember the influenza pandemics that have been replaced by one or the other for the last five hundred years? Influence of one kind or another is the once and future pandemic.

Since 1876 there have been years recorded with the worst pandemics with over fifty million worldwide contracting some type of flu. The H1N1 flu (known as the swine flu) started in Mexico and spread global killing thousands. Then there was the Avian flu or better known as the bird flu going global and also killing thousands.

These type flus can be caught the same as Coronavirus, six feet from the infected person, coughing or sneezing or breathing on them. However, there is one HUGE difference — there is no flu shot to take to prevent this one!

Some of my family had

## \*Public School

(Continued from page 1.) loss the families are feeling." The faculty, staff and student body of SV Marshall is participating in the Disaster Relief drive from February 25th through March 6th. Donations are accepted at the school at 12572 Highway 12W from 7:00 am to 5:30 p.m. Monday - Friday. Families who need assistance are invited to come pick up any needed donations on March 6.

God never said that the journey would be easy, but he did say that the arrival would be worthwhile. Remember this: God may not do what you want, but he will do what is right... and best. He's the Father of forward motion. Trust him. He will get you home. And the trials of the trip will be lost in the joys of the feast. From *In the Eye of the Storm*. Copyright 2001, Max Lucado Used by permission.

one of the types of "H" flus a few weeks ago and I cooked for them. I carried food to the driveway, called for the one not infected to come outside and get the mana and carry into the disease-ridden quarters all the while I sat in my mask and hazmat suit. They were fed and taken care of and I was not infected and PTL survived! I have bought a big box of medical masks, a huge bottle of hand sanitizer, and a thick book

of "Signs and Symptoms" so that I can better monitor myself. If you see me out somewhere just know I am protecting you and me from an imagined pandemic.

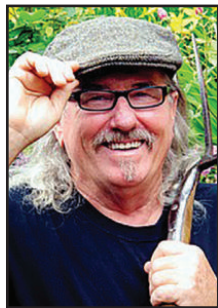
If you get one of these flus, bless your heart and make this delicious:

## Chicken Noodle Soup

Cook 4 – 6 chicken thighs (or breasts, I like thighs) in about 9 cups of water and add 2 T. butter, ½ cup chopped onion, ½ cup chopped celery and bring to a boil and then simmer for about an hour. Remove chicken and pull apart, remove bone and add back to the pot. Add ½ t. dried basil, ½ t. dried oregano, 1 cup sliced carrots, 1 ½ cup egg noodles and salt and pepper. Simmer until egg noodles are tender. About 30 – 35 minutes. If water runs low, add chicken broth.

\*Peggy Sims is a life-long resident of Attala County and columnist.

Dr. Peterson said she wants the Tchula community to know that SV Marshall Elementary is their child's second home and the SVME family won't sit back and not do anything. "The SVME family has reached out to families and community members to determine the needs of those affected by the flood. We are collecting items to donate to these families to provide some relief from the disaster." Superintendent of Schools, Dr. James L. Henderson said, "Our hearts go out the families of Tchula. Suffering catastrophic loss two years in a row at the hand of Mother Nature is never easy, no matter how resilient we are. We are contributing to the relief fund to help support our students and their families and we hope our efforts can ease their pain. Our students are our number one priority and we want to ensure that they have what they need; we are here for them in all that we do."



FELDER RUSHING



# Two Fathers, Two Feasts

The following is an excerpt from *In the Eye of the Storm*. Being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully

giving thanks to the Father (Col. 1:11-12). A Thanksgiving car trip with kids will teach you a lot about God. I drove the family to Grandma's last year for