

# Plants that know how to get around

One of my favorite native wildflowers has gone rogue overseas, but its newfound connections are perversely satisfying to me.

My goldenrod, closely related to sunflowers, zinnias, and asters, is starting to bud up with clusters of tiny, sunny-yellow blossoms that'll make fantastic cut flowers soon. I know a lot of folks falsely blame it for allergies, but the real culprit is ragweed's dust-like wind-blown pollen; goldenrod pollen is large, heavy, and sticky, unable to

blow up anyone's nose. Wildlife experts tout goldenrod as the most-favored native pollinator; because of its rich pollen and sweet nectar you will find goldenrod covered with honeybees, bumblebees, hoverflies, ants, beetles, moths, butterflies, aphids, and the spiders and hummingbirds that feed on the pollinators.

And no decent English garden will be without several different kinds of goldenrod, usually small, non-spreading types like Peter Pan and Cloth of Gold.

My favorite is Fireworks, a non-spreading clump-former with long, thin arching stems of flowers.

But it's the common tall, rangy field goldenrod, which in my garden needs a little thinning every spring to keep in bounds, that's concerning European and Asian ecologists because it has become a widespread non-native that's crowding out some of their wayside natives.

You could say it's getting them back to sending us kudzu, honeysuckle, and dandelions.

Not that I'm a purist when it comes to native plants. As past president of our state's native plant society, I most certainly am concerned when seriously invasive non-natives overtake plants that our native wildlife depends on or colonizes wetlands, fields, and forests.

But just as there are garden advantages to new "impure" cultivars of our natives, I appreciated closely-related species from afar. There may be subtle differences in size, flower, and vigor that make some close-kin foreign species preferable over our own natives in the garden.

For example, I enjoy compact Asian species of beautyberry (*Callicarpa*) as much as our taller, gangly native. Instead of ours' golf ball-size clusters of purple berries, the Chinese beautyberry has smaller, delicate rows of fruit clusters, just as showy, but more manageable. And our butterflies and birds love it just as well as the native.

There are other examples of closely-related plants that are found only in the Southeast US and to eastern Asia, with similar genes and garden suitability. Some of my favorites native exclu-

sively to both continents include magnolia, sweetshrub (*Calycanthus*), dogwood, hydrangea, maple, pitcher plant, iris, lilies, asters, hollies, wisteria, palms, and maidenhair fern. And dozens of others. Azaleas, too, though theirs are evergreen, our are deciduous.

The facts behind why they are so similar, though completely separated by oceans, mountains, and deserts for thousands of years, are fascinating in themselves.

What we call terra firma is a huge, floating crust that every now and again breaks apart, drifts around, and bangs back together. At one time a big hunk of it was one supercontinent called Pangea (from root words meaning "whole" and "land"). The latest breakup is pretty obvious when you look at how Africa could easily spoon into the curves of North and South America.

And over eons, because of mountain upheavals, glaciers scraping things clean, and changes in weather patterns that turned rainforests into deserts and vice versa, plant communities that were once connected by Beringia (now the mostly-submerged Bering Straits), got separated, and independently adjusted to their new conditions, or disappeared.

However, the climates of Mississippi and central China remain pretty similar, and support close-kin relics of once widespread flora.

So, plants that go around come back around. We once again have dawn redwoods and nandina, and they now have goldenrod. Again.

*Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.*



FELDER RUSHING

# Obituaries

## JAMES MOORE SHANKS

James Moore Shanks, 91, passed away at his home in Lexington, MS on Saturday Sept. 5, 2020. He was a member of Oak Grove Baptist Church and had retired from the Mississippi State Highway Department after 30 years, he worked in the Highway maintenance Department. He also served in the US Navy.

James is survived by his daughter Melba Dean Davis and son-in-law Larry White of Lexington. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Deanier (Dena) Drummond (Jason), Bubba Davis, Don White (Marcella) and Cheryl Veazey (James); great grandchildren, Brittney Dees (Joseph), Cody Roberts, Josie White, Lacey White and Rebecca Boswell (Matt); great great grandchildren Luke Dees, Wyatt Dees, Kenzie Dees and Hayes Boswell.

James Moore was preceded in death by his wife Myree Tyson Shanks, his daughter Patricia White, his parents, David Ford and Edna Byrd Shanks, four brothers and three sisters.

Pallbearers were Ricky Winstead, Paul Warren Winstead, Leslie Burden, Rand Tyson, Bubba Stewart and Pat Peeples.

There was a graveside service from the Coxburg Cemetery on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. Southern Funeral Home of Lexington was in charged of services.

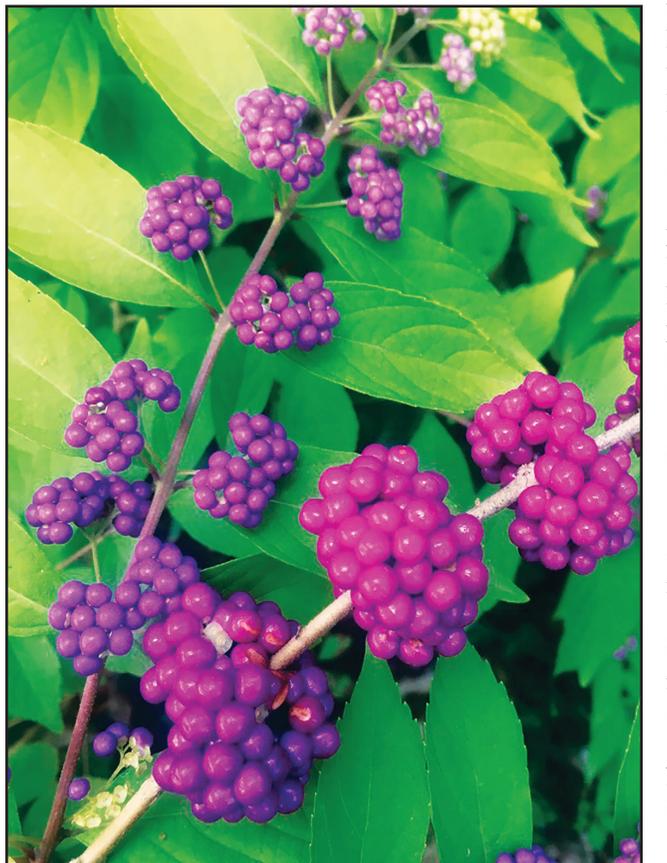
## OPAL LULELL HALL GINN

Opal Lulell Hall Ginn was born October 11, 1921 in Itawamba, MS to Lowis Owen Hall, who died when she was three years old, and Ruby Melburtie Pounders Hall. Opal died peacefully on Saturday, September 5, 2020 at The Orchard's Rose Garden in Ridgeland, MS.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her three half-siblings and her husband of fifty-nine years, Morris Eugene Ginn. Surviving her are her two daughters, Elizabeth Ginn Case McKinley and Elybia Ginn Johnson (Jim Parker), her five grandchildren, Richard and Rodney Case, Rebecca Case Ivison, Danny Lehman, and Russell Wilson, twelve great-grandchildren, and four great-great grandchildren.

Prior to her retirement and her move to Jackson twenty-three years ago, Opal lived in Pickens, MS for fifty years, where she and Morris were Movie Theatre business owners in Pickens, Lexington, and Durant. She was also a Life Master duplicate bridge player, and famous for her rum cakes and banana bread. Most of all, she was a joyful and treasured caregiver to all of her children, grandchildren, and many friends (most of whom have pre-deceased her). She will be sorely and forever missed by her loving family.

Private graveside services will be held at the Quiet Ridge Cemetery in Pickens.



Chinese and American beautyberries are equally beautiful.

# THE WICKER REPORT

By: United States Senator Roger Wicker



## Wicker encourages schools to reopen with caution

Following health protocols will help prevent surge in cases

With summer coming to a close, school buses are making the rounds again as children head back to school. But for thousands of Mississippi parents, teachers, and administrators, the new semester is adding new challenges to an already-stressful year. School districts have had to make tough decisions about when and how to reopen in light of the pandemic. Many are resuming lessons in person while following health guidelines. Others are taking a gradual approach starting with online learning or part-time classroom instruction.

There is no doubt that reopening our schools comes with risk, but keeping them closed would also bring heavy costs. School closures have already forced many working parents to stay home to care for their children, resulting in disruption to their jobs and the wider economy. Learning gaps and a lack of social interaction have taken a toll on children. And students who depend on school meals have had a harder time getting daily nutrition. School boards are carefully weighing these factors as they consider the best course of action for their communities.

### Teachers Can Receive Free Tests

Students and teachers need to take careful precautions so that the return to school does not lead to a new surge in cases. This means wearing masks at all times, practicing social distancing, and washing hands frequently with soap. A number of schools have already taken decisive action to place students and teachers in quarantine if they have been exposed to the virus. These decisions are helping to protect the wider community and should be commended. As new cases emerge, transparency with parents will be essential. The Corinth School District has set a great example by posting regular updates online about COVID-19 cases linked to school.

Keeping teachers healthy is a top priority, and Mississippi is taking steps to make sure our educators have access to testing. Teachers can receive free coronavirus tests at UMMC's drive-thru center in Jackson and at community sites across the state, and county health departments are offering free tests as well. Nationally we are approaching 1 million tests per day, and I support new federal funding to help states continue to improve testing and contact tracing.

As classes resume across the country, Senate Republicans are pushing for funding to help schools purchase personal protective equipment and technology upgrades. This would add to the nearly \$170 million Mississippi received earlier in the year for these items. Republicans are also proposing childcare grants to help keep daycare facilities open, enabling more parents to return to work.

### Expanding Broadband Will Aid Recovery

The internet has been a critical lifeline for classrooms, businesses, and churches during this difficult year. But not every community has benefited equally from the internet. Many rural and minority communities continue to lag behind in broadband access, making their recovery more difficult.

Recently I introduced legislation to speed up the deployment of broadband in areas with no broadband service. I have also introduced legislation with Senator Tim Scott to support the expansion of broadband in areas surrounding historically black colleges. These schools are anchors of economic opportunity and broadband access in areas that continue to be underserved.

I am pushing Congress to pass both of these bills in the coming weeks to help our nation recover from the pandemic. Every classroom, business, and health care facility deserves full access to internet services as we work to overcome this national challenge.

MEMBER



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