TREE TRIVIA

Sponsored by the Warren East Garden Club

﻿ A tree can have more than one common name, and several different species of trees may share the same common name. Thus, in order to have more freedom in our ‘trivia’, we will be using a tree’s common name instead if it’s scientific one.

1. In May of 1775, at Boonsboro, the first legislature in Kentucky gathered under one of these trees. The first public worship service in Kentucky was also held under its shade. A beautiful lawn tree, it is threatened by a Dutch disease.

2. A nationally known park near Bowling Green gets its name from the grove of these trees located within a bend of the Barren River. A popular picnic site through the years, Alfred Leland Crab, in his novel, “Peace at Bowling Green”, describes a picnic held on this privately owned land in the fall of 1865. A peace-making event, it honored all the soldiers from both sides of the Civil War.

Nuts from this tree were the chief food of the now-extinct passenger pigeon. Sometimes so many birds would land on a limb as to cause it to break. People sometimes carve their initials into the smooth bark of the tree.

3. Large clusters of white, tube-shapes flowers produce seed in 8-20 inch long bean pods, giving it a name of Indian bean or Cigar Tree. This tree with heart-shaped leaves is a host plant to this \_\_\_\_\_\_sphinx moth whose larva, known as “Tobby” worms are prized as fishing bait. Having a circumference of 16.2 feet and a height of 71.5 feet, one of these trees, was chosen as one of the 2019 Big Trees of Bowling Green. Sadly, it, a large sister tree, as well as five other trees in a Nashville Road yard were destroyed by the December 2021 tornado.

4. Our evergreen tree shares the common name as the great trees of the mountainous forests of Lebanon used in building the palaces of King David and King Solomon, as well as the temple in Jerusalem. The wood of our tree, a different species, is used for fence posts and porch decks due to its resistance to rotting. Closets are also lined with it, as it repels moths.

5. An island in the Mediterranean Ocean shares the name of our tree. Our tree deserves respect as one of the few living representatives of an ancient scientific Family of trees that includes the redwoods and sequoias of the West. In our species, the bald ones can have knees.

6. The common name of this beautiful spring-blooming tree reminds us of a family pet. Though a small tree, the wood is harder than oak, ash, hickory and ironwood. It is sometimes used for golf club heads.

7. Also known as a maidenhair tree (as the leaf’s shape reminds one of the leaf of the maidenhair fern), this tree is the only surviving species of an Order of plants that lived millions of years ago. It was discovered growing in temple gardens of China. Only male trees are usually planted as ornamentals, as the fruit on the females smells like rancid butter. The fan-shaped, fern-like leaves turn a brilliant yellow in the fall and drop within one to five days of each other. Several people have said that the leaves on their tree all fell on the same day.

8. A movie in 1957 named after this tree starred Elizabeth Taylor. Parts of it was filmed at Reelfoot Lake in northwest Tennessee, in Kentucky at Liberty Hall Historic Site in Frankfort as well as settings in and around Danville. Its world premiere was at the Brown Theatre in Louisville. The tree, named for how the petals falling from its yellow flowers (which hang in 8-16 inch long panicles in summer) resemble “golden rain”. Green seedpods ripen from orange to pink in the fall. In some areas this tree is considered invasive.

9. This tree has several locally used common names describing its large green fruit which is supposed to repel several pests. Horses are also said to eat them. This native of the Mid-West, due to its thorny branches, was planted to make living fences. The planting of these fences is noted in the Journals of the Shaker Village at South Union near present-day Auburn, Kentucky. One of these trees with a circumference of 76.4 inches and a height of 73 feet was chosen in 2019 as one of Bowling Green’s Ten Big Trees.

10. A symbol of “The South” and southern ladies, this broadleaf evergreen tree has waxy dark green leaves and large creamy white flowers. The leaves are often used in Christmas decorations. On Bowling Green‘s, street named for it, many trees were lost in the December 2021 Tornado

11. A legume, as are some beans, peas, alfalfa, and clover, this tree adds nitrogen to the soil. With heart-shaped leaves and bean-pod seeds, this tree adorns springtime with its beautiful pink blossoms. During Mammoth Cave National Park’s Wildflower Day in April, many tourists from across the USA and other countries, ask Warren East Garden Club members at their Wildflower Exhibit, “What are those beautiful pink-flowering trees?”

12. Known for its aromatic leaves, twigs and roots, this tree with its mitten-shaped leaves often grows in fence rows and roadsides but can become a giant tree. The Creole spice file’ includes its dried leaves ground into a fine powder which gives gumbo its unique consistency. Reaching 78 feet tall, with a trunk circumference of 21 feet, and a branch-spread of 68 feet, the Kentucky State and the National Big Tree Champion of this species grows near the edge of Frederica Street in Owensboro. In 1957, this tree was threatened by the widening of the highway. There is an interesting story of how this destruction was prevented until a call to the governor resulted in the building of a retaining wall around it.

13. Tall, slim, slick \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sapling is an old saying referring to how this tree sheds its gray bark, revealing a white trunk and limbs.

It is the largest hardwood in girth in North America. In 1802, on the north bank of the Ohio River, Andre Micheau measured one with a 47 foot circumference. The large ones are usually hollow. On a hunting trip with Daniel Boone in 1770, his brother-in-law John Stewart, failed to return to their meeting place and could not be found. Five years later, his skeleton, showing a wound and broken arm, was found inside one of these hollow trees. He was identified by his initials on the brass band on his powder horn. A tree sharing this common name, in the Biblical stories of Amos (Amos 7:14) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:3) was probably a species of a \_\_\_\_\_-fig tree.

14. How did this tree ever get this name?

Most people would say that it, in fact, should also have quite the opposite name. This medium sized tree from China, having large clusters of small whitish blooms, with leaves somewhat like a walnut tree, is highly aggressive and invasive. They send out new sprouts when cut down or injured, and produce a chemical to prevent other plants from growing in the area. Probably, the only effective method of removal is by the use of chemicals.

15. From China, another invasive alien, has several names relating to royalty. This tree is easily identified by its large clusters of lavender blooms in the spring, later turning into groups of round seed pods. The heart-shaped leaves are 6-13 inches long. This tree was named for Anna Paulownia (1795/-1865) of Russia, princess of the Netherlands and ancestor of Queen Juliana.

16. The largest (growing to 100 feet or taller) and one of the most beautiful of this evergreen Genus, thus tree can be easily identified, and “aged” by the circle of new branches formed around its trunk each year. During the 17th and 18th centuries these tall trees were used for ship masts. The standing trees were marked with the “broad arrow” by agents of the Crown of England and reserved for the British Navy. Special barge-like vessels were built to ship them to England. In total, about 4500 were shipped.

17. This tree species has a potential life span of 500-800 years, and may reach a height of over 100 feet, with an even greater spread of its branches. Photos posted on-line by FFA members show one of these massive trees at the Kentucky FFA Camp near Hardinsburg. Another of these trees was known as the Boundary Tree in the 1805 survey of Thomas Lincoln’s land where his son, Abraham, was born. Although no longer standing, people for years visited this landmark at the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Park near Hodgenville.

18. This tree is scientifically neither of its common names. The shape of its yellow and orange blooms (easily overlooked as the trees are so tall) as well as the outline of its leaves give it one of its common names. The flowers are a major source of nectar for our spring honey. One of our tallest (it can reach 200 feet) hardwoods, those tree existing in the virgin forests of colonial days had massive trunks. Pioneers would hollow out a single log to make a long lightweight canoe. It is one of the host plants to Kentucky’s State Butterfly, the Viceroy, (similar in looks to the Monarch).

This is Kentucky’s State Tree. The Kentucky coffee tree is Kentucky’s State Heritage Tree.

19. The star-shaped leaves turn to jewel tones of blue, red, purple, orange and yellow in the fall. Their 1-1 1/2” prickly seed balls can be made into ornaments for fall or Christmas decorations. In the past few years, a columnar version, requiring less space, has been planted in several places around Bowling Green. In pioneer days a gum was obtained from the trunk by peeling the bark and scraping off the resin like solid. It was used medicinally as well as for chewing gum.

20. Another tree especially prized for how it turns red, yellow or orange in the fall, is a popular shade tree. In late winter/ early spring, the sap can be tapped, collected, and cooked down to make a delicious syrup or sugar. A tree yields between 5-60 gallons of sap per year. About 32 gallons of sap makes one gallon of syrup or 4 1/2 pounds of sugar. Children like to chase the “helicopter” seeds in the fall.

ANSWERS:

1. American Elm

2. Beech

3. Catalpa

4. Cedar

5. Cypress

6. Dogwood

7. Ginkgo

8. Golden Rain Tree

9. Hedge Apple, Osage orange, Horse Apple

10. Magnolia

11. Redbud

12. Sassafras

13. Sycamore

14. Tree of Heaven

15. Princess, Purple Paulownia, Empress

16. White Pine

17. White Oak

18. Tulip Poplar

19. Sweet gum

20.Sugar Maple