
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • December 2005

The Holiday Party is December 12

Our annual Christmas Party will be Monday, December 12, at 7:15 p.m., at **the Atrium of the A. J. Palumbo Hall** at Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland). As you approach the campus on Fifth Avenue (heading toward downtown), do not turn right into the Carlow Campus entrance. Instead, pass the entrance, stay in the right lane, and make the immediate right into the parking area. Park here and cross the street. Place a note on your dashboard saying "Botanical Society Meeting," or use your parking permit.

This is the **Wild Foods Holiday Party**. Members and guests bring an assortment of foods made from something found in the wild. Appetizers, cookies, candies, fruits, and berries: a challenge for the most daring and the most creative. Don't dare stay away if you have nothing to bring, for there will be plenty!



This is also **Member's Night** where we share our botanical sightings over the year. A member can bring up to twelve slides. A slide projector will be available for slides, and a digital video projector will be available for a CD of digital pictures.

The **annual election of officers** will occur at the December meeting. A slate of officers will be presented, and any additional nominations can be presented at the December meeting.

Learning From the Plant Kingdom

Anu Garg's A.Word.A.Day column for the week of November 14, 2005 shows how plants have aided the development of our language.

"Not that I want to be a god or a hero. Just to change into a tree, grow for ages, not hurt anyone." Using trees as the metaphor, these poignant words of Nobel prizewinner Czeslaw Milosz sum up what it truly means to be human. Perhaps we in the animal kingdom can learn much from those in the plant kingdom.

We feature words related to plants, and as the first example shows, we don't have to keep these terms only for our leafy friends. One can use many of these words in other contexts, alluding to human behavior.

A.Word.A.Day--tropism

tropism (TRO-piz-uhm) noun

The turning or bending (typically by growth instead of movement) of an organism in response to an external stimulus.

[From Greek *tropos* (turning). Ultimately from Indo-European root *trep-* (to turn) that also gave us troubadour, tropic, entropy, and contrive.]

If you've ever noticed a plant bending towards the light, you've seen an example of tropism. The term is usually applied to plants. The response to a stimulus could be positive or negative: towards or away from the stimulus. Some examples of stimuli are light (phototropism), gravity (geotropism), heat (thermotropism), touch (thigmotropism), and water (hydrotropism).

Darwin and his son Francis demonstrated that the tip of the plant detected light and if you covered just the tip, the plant would grow straight, not toward the light.

The word tropism is related to trope, the term for rhetorical devices such as metaphor and irony. The idea is that the words in those rhetorical devices are turned in a special way.

"The traits [Judith Miller] has drive many reporters at The Times crazy: her tropism toward powerful men, her frantic intensity, and her peculiar mixture of hard work and hauteur." Maureen Dowd; *Woman of Mass Destruction*; *The New York Times*; Oct 22, 2005.

A.Word.A.Day--dendrochronology

dendrochronology (den-dro-kruh-NOL-uh-jee)
noun

Tree-ring dating.

[From Greek *dendro-* (tree) + *chronology* (the science of determining dates of past events).] Dendrochronology is the science of studying tree rings to date past events: climate, the date of construction of a house, etc. This is the idea: some trees add an annual ring. Each ring is unique as it depends on the climatic conditions during the year. By comparative study of these annual growth rings dendrochronologists can go back thousands of years and can often pinpoint the year quite precisely.

Time imprints on our faces the traces of life we've lived: laughs, pouts, frowns... all leave their mark. What would facial dendrochronology say about you?

"With their reputations at risk, violin dealers closed ranks. They commissioned further dendrochronology that dated the Messiah's wood back to 1682." Toby Faber; *Lord of the Strings*; *The Guardian* (London, UK); Aug 27, 2004.

A.Word.A.Day--ecesis

ecesis (i-SEE-sis) noun

The entry or establishment of a plant in a new habitat.

[From Greek *oikesis* (inhabitation), from *oikein* (to inhabit). Ultimately from Indo-European root *weik-* (clan) that is also the forebear of vicinity, village, villa, and villain (originally, a villain was a farm servant, one who lived in a villa or a country house).]

Decided to pack up and move to a new city? Why call it a mere moving (or shifting) when you can grandly announce your ecesis.

"Perhaps there are also ecological barriers to ecesis in new habitats even when seeds arrive." Richard H. Groves; *Australian Vegetation*; Cambridge University Press; 1994.

A.Word.A.Day--palmy

palmy (PAH-mee) adjective

1. Abounding in palm trees.
2. Flourishing; prosperous.

[From Latin *palma* (palm tree).]

The term palmy is usually used to refer to a time in the past. The name of the palm tree derives from the resemblance of the shape of its frond to the palm of a hand. Why the association of palm with prosperity? The branches of the palm tree were carried as symbols of victory in ancient times. There is a related term, palmary, meaning outstanding or praiseworthy.

"Below, the oceanfront mansion in East Hampton, N.Y., bought in his palmy days." (photo caption) Eric Wilson; Decline And Fall of Helmut Lang; *The New York Times*; May 26, 2005.

A.Word.A.Day--indehiscent

This week's theme: words from the plant kingdom.

indehiscent (in-di-HIS-uhnt) adjective

Not bursting open at maturity.

[When a peapod is ripe after a long wait and bursts open, it's yawning, etymologically speaking. The term indehiscent comes from Latin *dehiscere* (to split open), from *hiscere* (to gape, yawn), from Latin *hiare* (to yawn). Another term that derives from the same root is hiatus.]

"Rhubarb is a vegetable, no matter what the government says: a member of the buckwheat family of herbaceous plants including buckwheat, dock, and smartweed, which are characterized by having swollen joints, simple leaves, small petalless flowers, and small, dry, indehiscent fruit. Indehiscent means 'not dehiscent', not opening at maturity to release the seed. So 'indehiscent' means 'hard, dry, holding onto the seed', which actually describes Norwegians quite well. Most Norwegians consider dehiscence to be indecent. They hold the seed in. But rhubarb pie comes along in the spring, when we're half crazed from five months of winter -- it's the first fresh vegetable we get, and it makes us dehisce." Carol Stocker; *Rediscovering Rhubarb*; *Boston Globe*; May 16, 1996.

By Anu Garg, from *Wordsmith.org*
Access A.Word.A.Day at
www.wordsmith.org/words/today.html

Best Wishes

Member Esther Allen is recovering at home from a bout of pneumonia. We wish her a full recovery and rest over the holidays. You can send her a card at 107 Idaway Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15217.

Books and Sweatshirts Are Wonderful Gifts

Please use the enclosed order form to purchase *Wildflowers of Pennsylvania* – this amazing book makes a wonderful gift!



The Botanical Society is selling **sweatshirts** with the **oak leaf logo**. The sweatshirts are the color of oatmeal and a rich, warm cotton. They are available in unisex sizes of small, medium, and large, and can be purchased for \$20.00. To get

your sweatshirt, forward your check, made payable to Botanical Society of Western PA, to Dr. Mary Joy Haywood at Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. (412) 578-6175; haywoodmj@carlow.edu

We Are Collecting Annual Membership Dues

The Botanical Society is now collecting annual dues; rates are \$10 individual and \$15 family. Students pay half-rate. Dues are paid annually at the beginning of the calendar year. Use the enclosed dues submission form and send the form or bring it to an upcoming meeting.

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania – December 2005

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WILDFLOWERS - Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

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WILDFLOWERS is published monthly by the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania. We welcome short articles of botanical interest, drawings, and notices of botanical events and group activities. Send to the editor at the above address. Deadline for submissions is the 23rd of the previous month. WILDFLOWERS is printed on recycled paper.

The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Membership Information

The Botanical Society was founded in 1886. The object of the Society shall be to bring together those who are interested in Botany and to encourage the study of this science and a knowledge of plants. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individual and \$15.00 for family. Students can join at half-rate. To join, mail your name, your address, and check payable to "Botanical Soc. of W PA" to Loree Speedy, 279 Orr Road, West Newton, PA 15089. Your membership includes a subscription to the monthly bulletin WILDFLOWERS.

The Society meets the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:15 p.m. sharp, at Kresge Theater, Carlow University, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome to the informative program and business meeting.

Wildflowers of Pennsylvania – Ordering Information – 400 pages of text and 612 color photographs

Wildflowers of Pennsylvania can be purchased for \$20.00 (plus \$1.40 sales tax for PA residents). Forward your check, made payable to Botanical Society of Western PA, to Dr. Haywood at the address below. If you order by mail, add \$2 postage and handling for one book, \$3.00 for two, \$4.00 for three, \$4.50 for four. Send your request to Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM, Ph.D., 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3165 (412) 578-6175; haywoodmj@carlow.edu