# CFAES

# SECREST NEWSLETTER

All things Secrest

January 2021

### From the Curator...

In a move toward standardization and accessibility, the Arboretum is transitioning to a more intuitive, user-friendly plant labeling system. The objective is to label every tree, shrub, and group of herbaceous perennials within the next 2 years. Each accession label contains four pieces of information: the currently accepted scientific name of a plant, including a cultivar name and designated trade name when applicable, the scientific and common name of the plant family in which it resides, one or more common names, and a unique, multi-part accession number.

Accession labels are 2" high by 4" wide doublelayered, UV-stable plastic blanks that can be engraved to expose the white bottom layer under the black top layer. We purchase the blanks pre-cut for roughly \$1.00 each and use our laser engraver to "vector" holes in the upper left-hand corner so they can be hung on plants with plastic-coated wire. We then export the desired plant information to a label template file directly from our plant records database. The template is then sent as a "print job" to the engraver, where up to 30 accession labels can be engraved in one batch.



In the example below, the label assigned to one plant of the relatively new introduction *Cotinus coggygria* 'COTSIDH5' (sold as Velveteeny<sup>™</sup>) indicates how the plant is known botanically and commercially. Directly below is the scientific name and common name of the Anacardiaceae, here known as the Sumac Family. The third component is the most familiar English common name of COMMON SMOKEBUSH. The latter is engraved in all capital letters to help the common name stand out as the most important piece of information to many visitors. Finally, this plant has been assigned the accession number S2018-0092\*2. The individual components of a complete accession number are:

1. The leading "S" indicates that this plant was originally received by Secrest Arboretum, one of the three gardens in a campus-wide plant collection and shared database. A leading "A" would indicate a plant held at ATI and an "O" denotes a plant found on any other part of campus, collectively the OARDC—or now the OAES, again.

2. The next four digits indicate the year the plant was first obtained or added to the collection. In cases where this year is uncertain, as is true with some older plants, the year is designated



as "1000." It is possible that this could be updated if definitive records emerge at a later date.

3. The four-digit number to the right of the hyphen indicates that this plant—and any others of the same type and origin—were chronologically the 92<sup>nd</sup> unique accession of 2018.

4. The digit following the asterisk is known as the item number (or "qualifier") within the accession. Here, this plant is item number 2. Item 1 exists elsewhere in the collection.

The concept of an accession and accession items is akin to a set of twins, or triplets—or more. Some are identical (cloned plant cultivars) and some are fraternal (seedlings). They are forever linked as siblings of a unique family unit, born at the same time and place. Searching for an accession number in the Secrest plant records database reveals the history, status and location of any other members of that accession. This function will become more useful to visitors when pertinent

collection data becomes accessible online. As you've likely heard before, we're getting there...

SECREST ARBORETUM ACCESSION LABEL COMPONENTS

SCIENTIFIC NAME (Genus + species) CULTIVAR TRADE NAME NAME Cotinus coggygria (with ™ or ® FAMILY 'COTSIDH5' Velveteenv™ designation) NAME FAMILY Anacardiaceae (Sumac Family) COMMON COMMON NAME COMMON SMOKEBUSH NAME COMPLETE ACCESSION NUMBER S2018-0092\*02 S = Secrest ITEM NUMBER ORDER OF YEAR ADDED A = ATIO = OARDC TO COLLECTION ACQUISITION IN 2018

--Jason Veil

# **Arboretum Events**

To get the most up-to-date information about what is on and what is off, go to the Secrest Arboretum website.

2/12/2021 2-3:30 PM Witchhazel Discovery Zoom https://osu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAldeusqDotEtCy2isNmaxReBN2jM8j-DWI

3/10/2021 1-2:00PM Guided tree walk\* Onsite, Registration Required \*Subject to change based on guidelines from The Ohio State University

#### Thinking Out of the Pot

Our goal is that the ideas featured will inspire you, our readers, to share fun and novel ways that you create interest in your spaces, perhaps with reused or repurposed items, plants in unexpected locations or unusual combinations of them. Featured this time are submissions from Susan Corl and Sue Cook. We hope to see your ideas featured here in the next edition.



No need to remove a tree root! Incorporate it as an interesting garden feature.



Turn a stump into a planter.

Cement blocks turn into impromptu planters.



Don't throw Granny's Shoe away!



#### Update from Paul...

What do we do over the winter?

Winter for many people means a time to slow down. Indeed, for the green industry, winter is a relatively slow time unless it snows. Yet for us who work in a university arboretum with limited staff, winter is anything but slow. While the work we do over the winter may not be as visible as work done during the spring and summer, there is still much to do.

Winterberry season begins winter at the first week of November as we begin to cut and weigh winterberry for customers. The amount of winterberry cut each year can vary based on the yield of the winterberry plants. For a month, we cut winterberry several times a week. By early December people are done decorating and we are done cutting winterberry. This is the first time we can slow down a little since July (for some reason July is always on the slower side compared to the spring rush).

It is in this slower time that we place supply orders, plan for the



upcoming season, work on record keeping, make labels, and catch up on odd jobs that have been put on hold until a time as this. After the holidays, however, the pace picks up. Classes and workshops start to occur on a regular basis and require preparation. The greenhouse season approaches, requiring Matt to procure supplies and begin to prepare the greenhouse. Seeds get sown, flats get filled, cuttings get stuck, and the cycle continues.

By February pruning commences in the gardens, with a focus on plants that will remain in the collection for coming generations. Student applications arrive and we interview prospective students for summer. In addition, once the ground freezes a systematic—we try to do it systematically, but sometimes there are casualties—removal of plants from the collection takes place to make room for new accessions. This involves cutting plants down, dragging and chipping the brush, and removing stumps with an excavator.

Once mid-March arrives the weather begins to warm, silver maples begin to flower signaling the end of winter and the beginning of a new cycle. The Cedar waxwings and Robins arrived weeks before and have stripped winterberry and crabapple of their fruits, signs of spring. Volunteers return to the garden and spring looms around the corner with a hurricane of activity—this is the calm before the storm we know as spring. Every year as spring arrives, we look in terror at the season ahead, knowing the amount of work to be done; we wonder how winter could have gone so fast and how spring could have arrived so soon. We wonder how we will possibly get everything done and like magic, it does.

In this season, there are snowy days with walks through the arboretum, journeys out into the garden on a sunny day to smell witch hazel, and moments to enjoy the labor of previous years. It isn't big or showy, but rather ordinary and that is where the beauty lies. It lies in the rhythm of every year, slow winters, followed by hectic springs, sustainable summers, and fast-paced falls. This makes up the rhythm of the beautiful ordinary life.

## Featured Plant of the Season

One way to define "stunning" is to find winterberry plants in a snow-covered landscape. The dense clusters of bright red berries defy the monochromatic look of a winter background.

Winterberry (*llex verticillate*) is a deciduous holly shrub native to the eastern United States. It is a medium-sized shrub, usually 6-10 feet tall. The plant grows wild in acidic soils in forested wetlands or along ponds, lakes and marshes.



No need to look very far, however, since winterberry has become popular as a landscape plant and cultivars are readily available. At Secrest Arboretum, winterberry is found along the main path in the gardens and also next to the Discovery Pavilion.

Although the plant is a holly, the leaves of the common winterberry do not have the classic sharp teeth found on typical hollies. While many holly shrubs are evergreen, winterberry is a deciduous plant.

The flowers of the winterberry are unassuming, but the dense clusters of bright red berries that form later are spectacular. The berries can remain on the plant throughout the winter, although they are an important food source for birds. Initially the berries are hard, so birds tend to wait a bit and feed on the berries after they have had a chance to soften.

Winterberry is an important food source for some

wildlife, but it can be toxic to pets and people.

#### Linda Irwin - A Friend of Secrest Arboretum

Active Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) enjoy learning about gardening practices and have a willingness to share their knowledge and best practices with others. Linda Irwin is such a gardener. During our recent Zoom interview, her beautiful log home and greenhouse served as pleasant backdrops for Irwin to share the story of her lifelong gardening journey.



Linda's earliest garden memory involves a spoon and dirt. As a youngster, she sat in her mother's garden using that spoon to eat dirt while watching her mother work the family plot. As they grew, Linda and her siblings joined their mother in the garden and learned how to work the soil and produce a bounty of food for the family to preserve and use during the year. Through her mother's gardening lessons, Linda grew to enjoy watching plants develop and to appreciate reaping the benefits.

When Linda and her husband started their own family, she continued her mother's gardening traditions. She points out that it has saved her family money through the years, especially during times of hardships for dairy farmers.

Linda has always loved being outside with her animals and working in the garden. She has bred horses, and she has

operated a retail greenhouse on her family's farm. The greenhouse came about when oil wells were drilled on the farm property, providing the Irwin's with free gas. Linda's uncle, who had a greenhouse in West Virginia, convinced her to set up a retail greenhouse using the free gas for heat. With her children's help, Linda's greenhouse business evolved, and she sold vegetable and flower plants to the public.

Her uncle also maintained a large collection of succulents and cacti that he sold at flea markets. When he gave up his business, his collections went to Linda. She kept the succulents, and she and her sister donated the cacti to the Franklin Conservatory in Columbus, Ohio. Linda's favorite succulent is Life Savor which has a bloom that is shiny and smooth like candy. She also has a rare gasteria.

Linda's greenhouse is currently full of plants she is overwintering. Geraniums and mangaves are among those waiting for spring to return.

Developing unique solutions to gardening problems motivates Linda. Because she has groupings of hostas that she doesn't want to disturb through division, she has discovered that planting daffodil bulbs in the empty centers of the plants fills the space until the hosta leaves take over. The hosta leaves in turn cover the decaying daffodil stems. She plants her pepper plants next to corn so that as the sun moves to the west, the corn shades the pepper plants from the stress of direct sunlight. She mingles pumpkins with the corn. The pumpkins continue to thrive when she cuts the corn stalks down to use for fodder as the pastures slow in the fall. In the summer her gardens are full of daylilies, a plant she enjoys.

Although Linda's daily life has always been busy, she has made time for 4 garden clubs and Master Gardener volunteering. In addition, Linda currently serves as regional director for Region 14 of the Ohio Association of Garden Clubs (OAGC).

It was Pollinator Education Program Director Denise Ellsworth, who Linda had arranged to speak at her garden club, that gave Linda's name to Paul Snyder for the first Master Gardener Volunteer Class in 2016. Because Linda was injured when she fell from her hay mow, she was forced to wait a year to join the class in 2017. She was eager to be in the class because she knew the knowledge she would obtain would be a blessing to her garden and greenhouse. The opportunity to continue to learn and to share knowledge has led her to volunteer as a small group leader every year since she has become an MGV.

Linda enjoys volunteering at Secrest Arboretum and greenhouse. She values the hands-on lessons that Paul provides in these volunteer sessions.

Her contribution is appreciated by Paul Snyder who states, "Linda has always been more than willing to help when the need arises. She arrives early to volunteer in the gardens (she usually takes a stroll through the gardens first) and frequently lends a hand when a one-time volunteer activity comes up. Linda has been a small group leader in the MGV course for at least 4 years, helping to train and inspire new master gardeners. She has a positive attitude and is a pleasure to work with."

She has enthusiastically encouraged many gardeners to become Secrest Arboretum MGV interns. According to Linda Irwin, the way MGVs can best fulfill their role is by passing knowledge on to others who "thirst for the answers" of how to make their gardens grow.



Contributing to this newsletter: Herb Broda, Janet Broda, Paul Snyder, Jason Veil, Pat Warner