

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



For the week of
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By Kurt Knebusch
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Hey Editor!

Ken Cochran, curator,
Secret Arboretum,
OARDC, Ohio State
University, reviewed this
column

Dear Twig: What are hedge apples? My father points them out to me when we're driving in the country.

Oo, I like hedge apples. The hedge apple tree is one of my favorites. It's also called Osage orange, or, scientifically, *Maclura pomifera*.

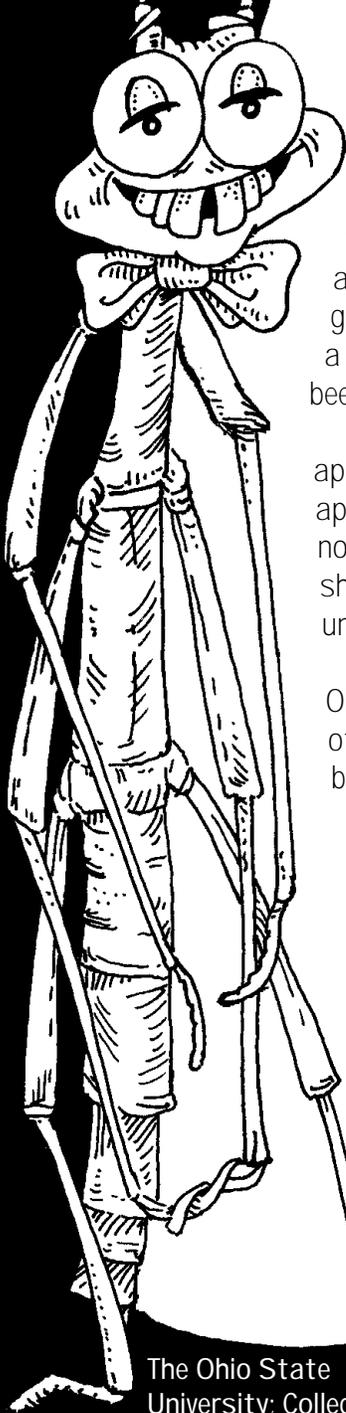
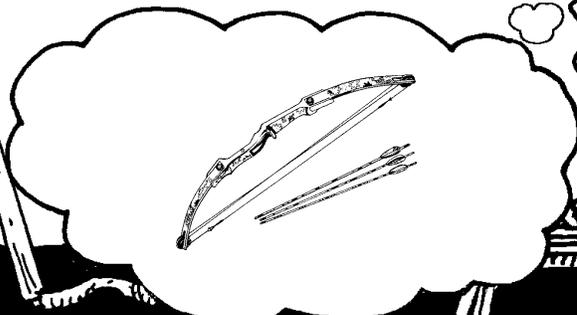
The hedge apple/Osage orange is a medium-size tree that grows big honkin' fruit. These fruit aren't apples and they also aren't oranges. Instead, they're green like a frog, as big as a softball and wrinkled like a brain. If Newton had been konked by one he would've been knocked silly. I don't know Bob the Bug's excuse.

Some folks risk konking. They gather hedge apples then put them in their homes. They claim hedge apples keep out pests. Whether this actually works or not hasn't been proven by science. But one study has shown that certain oils in the fruit, some of them unidentified, make roaches run away.

Osage oranges are native to parts of Texas and Oklahoma. But you can find them growing in most other states. They were widely planted as living fences before the invention of barbed wire.

Another common name is bodark, or bois d'arc — French for "wood of the bow." Osage orange wood makes great bows. Long-lasting fence posts, too. All in all it's quite a tree!

Twig



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