

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

**Q. Dear Twig: What kind of wood do they make wood pencils out of?**

A. My feathered friend Weezerbird told me something at lunch last week. (He had grubs. I had leaves.) He said, "That place you work at [the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, part of Ohio State University] has the biggest **incense cedar tree** in Ohio."

I said, "What's an incense cedar tree?"

He said, "The tree they make pencils out of."

And he was right. I checked. (He actually usually is.) (Don't tell him I said that.) American pencil companies make their pencils out of wood from **California incense cedar trees**. Reasons:

The wood is soft. Soft for a wood, that is. So pencil-makers can shape it into pencil shapes easily. It sharpens easily, too.

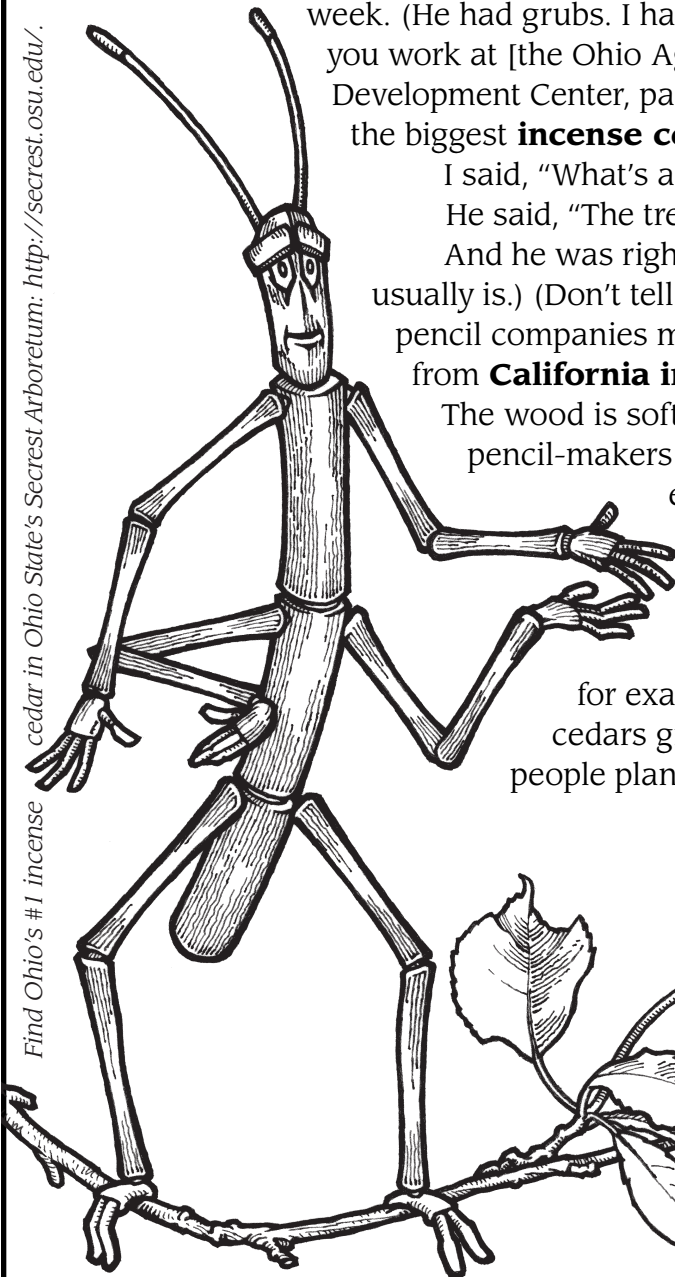
It doesn't make splinters. And also it smells good.

Incense cedars are **coniferous evergreens**. As, for example, pines are. Incense cedars grow in the wild out West. But people plant them in other places, too.

Writefully,

Twig

Find Ohio's #1 incense cedar in Ohio State's Secrest Arboretum: <http://secrest.osu.edu/>.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For the week of  
Sept. 14, 2008

By Kurt Knebusch

(330) 263-3776

[knebusch.1@osu.edu](mailto:knebusch.1@osu.edu)

**Notes:** See what a California incense cedar looks like at <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=CADE27>. One hundred or so years ago, U.S. pencil-makers made pencils out of eastern red cedar trees. But those got used up and scarce. So the switch was made to California incense cedar trees, which were and are easy to come by out West, including now in managed plantings. In other parts of the world, people make pencils out of eastern red cedar relatives. Secrest Arboretum is part of Ohio State's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster. Ohio's biggest trees: <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/tabid/5361/Default.aspx>. Pencil-making details: <http://www.pencils.com/>.

**Section of Communications and Technology**

2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1044  
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services Bldg.  
1680 Madison Ave.  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
(330) 263-3780

OSU Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status. Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President, Agricultural Administration and Director, OSU Extension. TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868