

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

Q. Dear Twig: What if there were flying pumpkins?

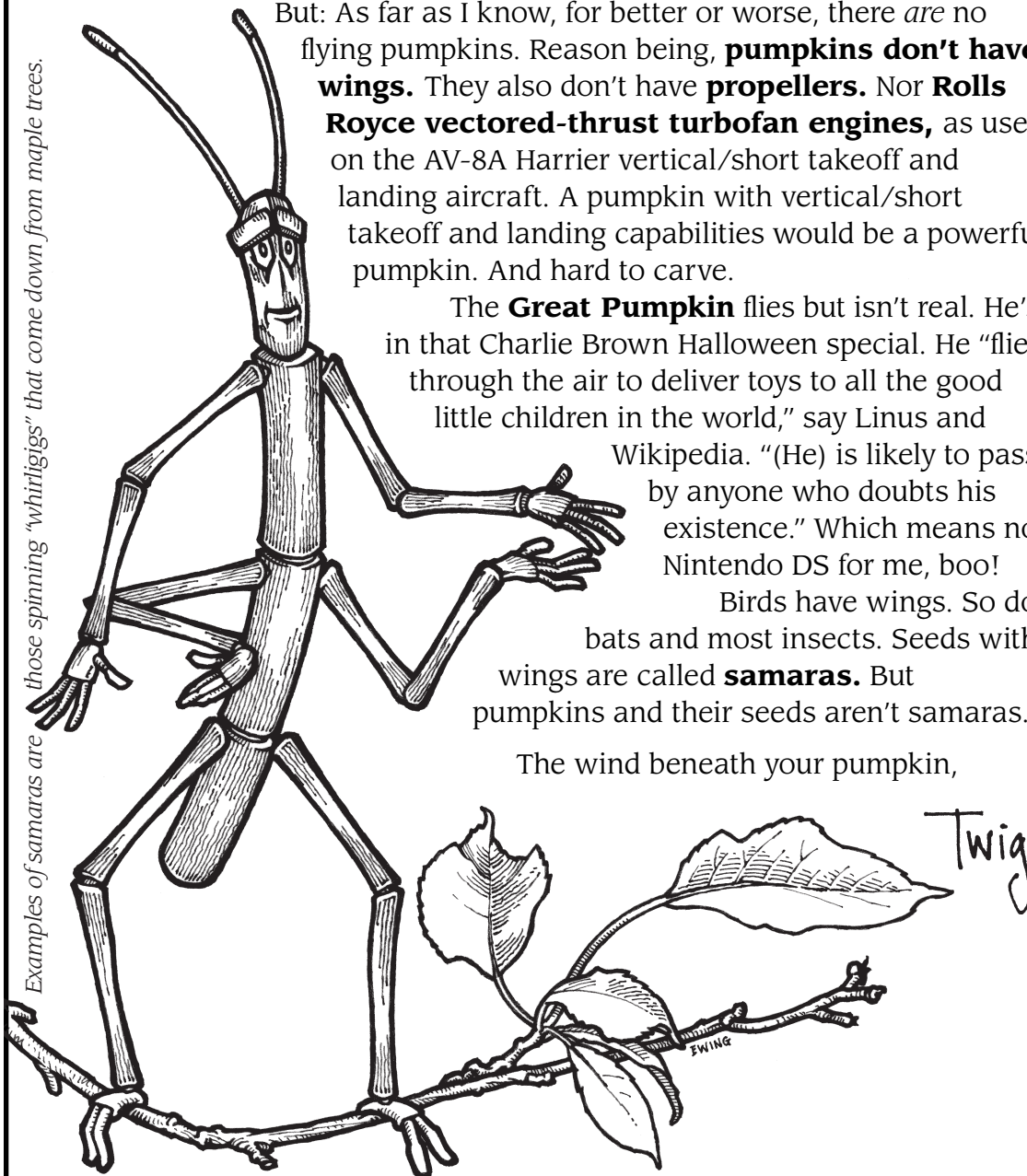
A. Wobbity, wobbity. Um, yes, well, if there were, you'd have to keep looking up all the time so you wouldn't get klonked in the head by one.

But: As far as I know, for better or worse, there *are* no flying pumpkins. Reason being, **pumpkins don't have wings**. They also don't have **propellers**. Nor **Rolls Royce vectored-thrust turbofan engines**, as used on the AV-8A Harrier vertical/short takeoff and landing aircraft. A pumpkin with vertical/short takeoff and landing capabilities would be a powerful pumpkin. And hard to carve.

The **Great Pumpkin** flies but isn't real. He's in that Charlie Brown Halloween special. He "flies through the air to deliver toys to all the good little children in the world," say Linus and Wikipedia. "(He) is likely to pass by anyone who doubts his existence." Which means no Nintendo DS for me, boo!

Birds have wings. So do bats and most insects. Seeds with wings are called **samaras**. But pumpkins and their seeds aren't samaras.

The wind beneath your pumpkin,



Examples of samaras are those spinning "whirligigs" that come down from maple trees.

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



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Notes: To find out more, try the Ohio State University Extension fact sheets "Growing Squash and Pumpkins in the Home Garden," <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1620.html>, and "Growing Giant Pumpkins in the Home Garden" (but not flying ones), <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1646.html>; *Jane's All the World's Aircraft 2007-2008: It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* (1966); and "Blowing in the Wind: Seeds & Fruit Dispersed by the Wind," <http://waynesword.palomar.edu/plfeb99.htm>. *Webster's New World College Dictionary* gives two ways to say "samaras": "SAM-er-uh" and "suh-MAR-uh."

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