

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

Q. Dear Twig: Did you find any Osage oranges?

A. I did. I'm standing here in front of them now. I'm hoping that they don't start to roll. I'll try to describe them for you.

First, they're round like a ball. Halfway in size between a baseball and a softball. And colored a crazy color: bright lime green. Got any Crayola crayons around? Check out **Electric Lime**. That's it.

Liney, wrinkly, bumpy skin makes an Osage orange look like a brain. Up close all those lines and bumps resemble a whole bunch of belly buttons. Outties. Plus also with a great big innie at the top of the fruit where the stem was.

Sniff one and the smell's kind of orangy, a bit like eucalyptus ("yoo-kuh-LIP-tiss").

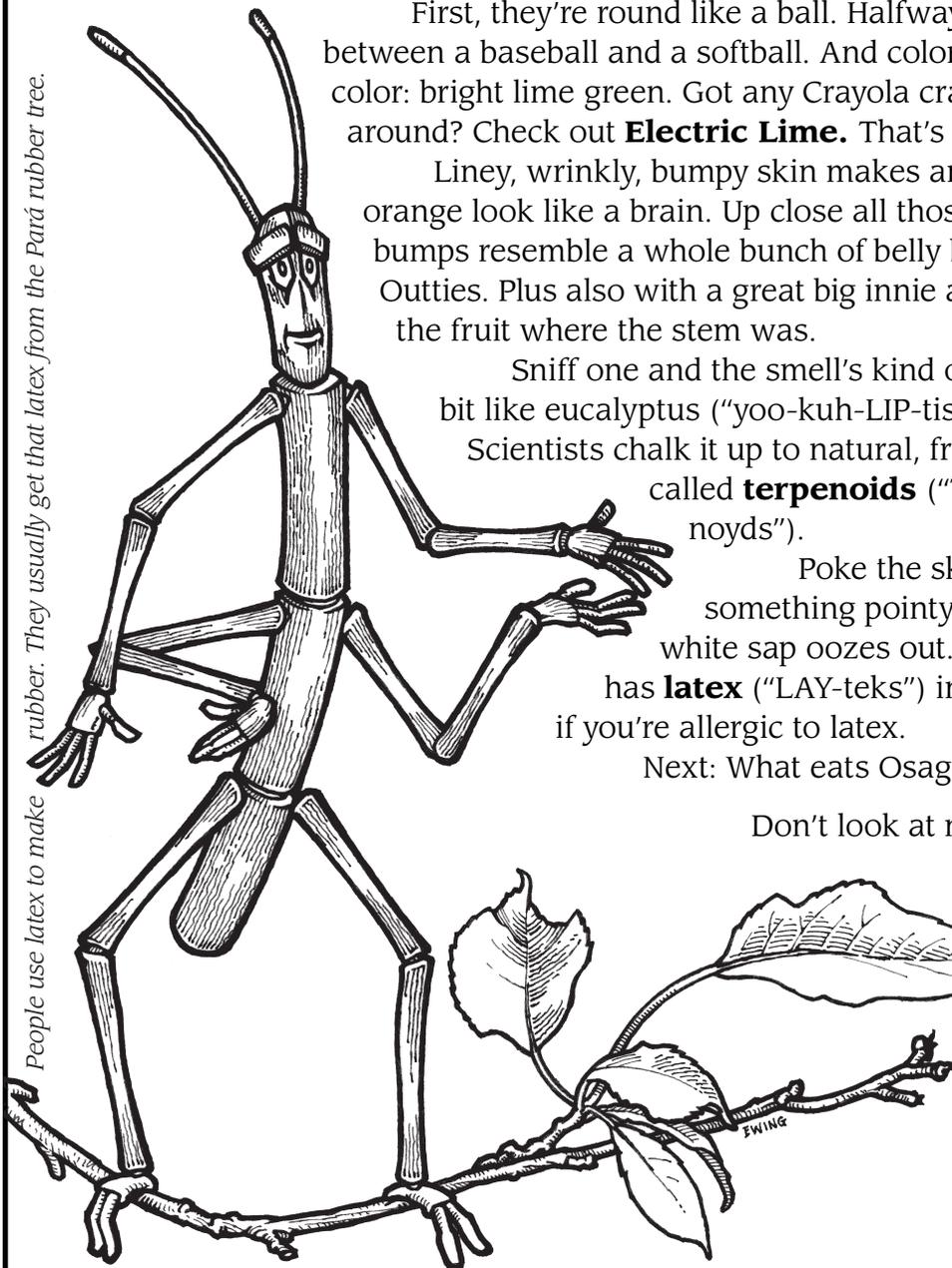
Scientists chalk it up to natural, fragrant oils called **terpenoids** ("TERP-uh-noyds").

Poke the skin with something pointy and sticky white sap oozes out. The sap has **latex** ("LAY-teks") in it. Avoid it if you're allergic to latex.

Next: What eats Osage oranges?

Don't look at me-ly,

Twig



People use latex to make rubber. They usually get that latex from the Pará rubber tree.

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: The Pará rubber tree grows in the tropics. We talked about Osage-orange trees, which don't — they grow in Ohio and other non-tropical parts of North America — last week also. Catch up here if you missed it: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/story.php?id=4882>. Osage oranges aren't oranges. The Osage-orange tree belongs to the mulberry family. So does the tropical breadfruit tree; it, too, grows giant lime-green fruit. Drop an Osage orange on a table and the sound you hear is "bu-unk" (it might bounce a little). Knock on one as you would a front door and the sound is "tok" or "pok." Get Osage-orange tree facts in Ohio State University Extension's *Ohio Trees* bulletin, http://ohioline.osu.edu/b700/b700_33.html.

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