

Dry summer leaves lackluster fall colors

By LEM MESEE
Outdoors writer
(First of two articles)

Michigan State University's cooperative extension service. By the way, Dr. Koeling predicts a less-than-brilliant array of fall colors this year.

EXCELLENT FALL colors usually come with warm, dry fall weather that has been preceded by a normal five or six inches of rainfall during the summer.

But this year, most of Michigan's woodlands have received less than half that amount, Koeling said.

This drying effect tends to turn leaves prematurely brown. They tend to drop before the really brilliant colors can be seen.

There is a separation layer across a leaf stem where the leaf meets the branch. When the temperature drops and there is a water deficit, this layer blocks the passage of nutrients and moisture to the leaf. It's a "stress reaction" in the tree.

FROST ITSELF doesn't enhance fall colors. Rather, frost has the same effect as dry weather.

The decrease in temperature and fewer daylight hours in fall are what reveals the latent colors in leaves. A leaf has several pigments which, during summer, are masked by chlorophyll, a green photosynthetic

material necessary for tree growth. The pigment carotene produces orange hues, xanthophyll, yellow, anthocyanins, red to purple.

So as the tree stops making chlorophyll, the pigments are revealed, giving us the bright shades of yellow and orange and red and purple.

The folks at the Automobile Club of Michigan have a good idea when and how to see some of the best fall color throughout the state. Here are some of their suggestions for the northern reaches.

UPPER PENINSULA, Sept. 17 to Oct. 3.

At Munising on Lake Superior, an hour or two east of Marquette, try the Pictured Rocks boat cruises. It's a three-hour narrated trip along the historic and colorful rocks on the Superior shoreline. Colorful rocks, colorful trees—what a combination!

To see the Tahquamenon River, try the Tonerville Trolley, an authentic narrow-gauge railroad. It starts at Soo Junction off M-28 and takes you six miles through the wilderness to Hunter's Mill. There you disembark and board the Tahquamenon for a 21-mile trip down the river through the wilderness to Hunter's Mill. There you disembark and board the Tahquamenon to just above the rapids. The whole trip takes 6½ hours and is offered daily at 10:30 a.m. until Oct. 6.

For a shorter (4½-hour) trip, try the riverboat and timber train ride, based at Sater's Landing 10 miles north of Hurlbert.

M-28, Passengers board the Diantha Hubert for a 17-mile river trip, then take a two-mile timber train trip, followed by a short walk to the upper falls. The trip leaves at 10:30 a.m. daily until Oct. 10.

NORTHERN LOWER peninsula, Sept. 24 to Oct. 10.

The Charlevoix Chamber of Commerce offers a 1½-hour cruise on Lake Charlevoix at 1 p.m. on Saturdays, Oct. 2 and 9, and Sunday, Oct. 10. Buy tickets in advance from the chamber.

Also at Charlevoix is the Intron Ferry, a 50-cent trip of less than five minutes which takes cars across Lake Charlevoix from Intron to Boyne City in a short cut.

that trims a half-hour from the driving time.

At Boyne City, hop aboard the Boyne Valley Railroad for a color excursion that takes just under two hours each way.

There are four 16-mile round trips every Saturday and Sunday through October.

The tracks run through picturesque Boyne Mountain Ski Resort to Boyne Falls.

The AuSable River above Gceda is broken up by a series of dams. At two of them are the AuSable River Queen boats.

The boats are high and the colors spectacular as you take a leisurely ride on the paddle wheeler.

(Next week: Color tours close to home.)

Contract talks stall

Union opposes observer

Bloomfield Township resident John King's presence as a county observer at upcoming contract negotiations has become a point of contention between county and union representatives, who are trying to establish ground rules for the talks.

King, a 64-year-old retiree, has been chosen by Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy to represent the public in contract negotiations affecting 1,200 county employees.

But American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSME) Council 23 union officials have so far been "adamantly opposed" to the county executive's proposal, according to Mike Niemann, a Murphy spokesman.

Niemann added that serious negotiations can't get underway "with this thing still hanging in the fire."

The contract expires Jan. 1.

King's participation in the contract talks may be decided Monday when the county board of commissioners' general government committee votes on a resolution supporting Murphy's position.

Niemann said the resolution has already been approved by the personnel practices committee and will be forwarded to the full board after Monday's committee meeting.

"MAYBE AFTER the general government committee meeting Monday things will start to move," Niemann said, explaining that union representatives were slated to attend the session to express their opposition to King's participation.

They won't even discuss the concept of public participation, Niemann said, adding that the issue has been brought up regularly at weekly meetings.

Murphy is not about to give up, according to Niemann.

He feels the time has come for this public participation in contract negotiations. We're going to go ahead and have it done.

King, a frequent government critic, volunteered to serve as a citizen "watchdog" for the negotiations.

"He has the best credentials. He's the only one who comes to county board and union representatives, who are trying to establish ground rules for the talks."

King is not a friend of the Murphy administration or the Democratic board. He's pretty non-partisan," Niemann said.

He added that objections so far have not been to King, but to the principle of public participation in the contract talks, although Murphy proposed the union also pick a representative.

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