

# Winter bares tree, shrub buds

By Timothy Nowicki  
special writer

**W**INTER woodland walks may seem gray and colorless to many people, but a close look at tree branches can reveal some bright surprises.

Buds we see on branches of trees actually developed last summer. Trees and shrubs produce flower and leaf buds when they have sufficient energy for new growth. This period is usually during late spring and early summer.

Some secondary growth of buds will occur later, but rapid enlargement will not occur until the warm days of spring. Many tree buds are small and inconspicuous, like those of elm, ironwood and muscadine.

**SEVERAL BUDS** are very characteristic in color and shape, however, enabling one to identify a tree just from its twig.

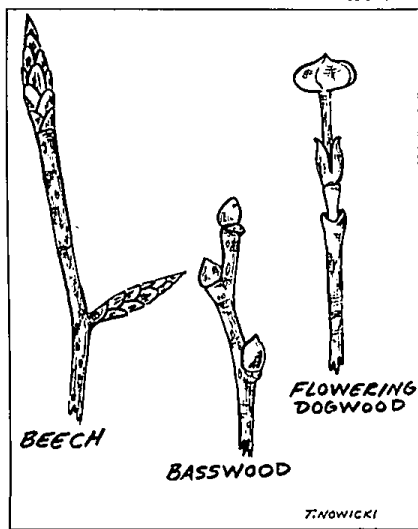
Beech tree buds exhibit a unique shape that is easy to identify. Each bud is long, narrow, and tapered sharply at the end. Combine this shape with its light brown or tan color and layered scales, like a closed pine cone, and you have identified a beech tree.

Flower buds of flowering dogwood are also uniquely shaped. On the end of each branch is a bulbous structure shaped like a fancy flat vase. Enclosed is one of the most beautiful flowers of the woodland.

Color, too, can be very characteristic for tree buds. Bitternut hickory has a fuzzy sulfur yellow-orange bud. There is only one tree bud in Michigan that has that color and texture.

Basswood, used by many woodcarvers, is a common tree in many woodlots around southeastern Michigan.

**WHILE LOOKING** at buds on a branch, observe the scars left behind from last summer's leaf. Leaf scars are often below the new buds of winter. A close examination with a hand lens will reveal some small scars within the leaf scar. These small scars are where water and food moved from the branch to the leaf during summer.



Tree buds are visible this time of year and are good clues in identification.

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