



The osage-orange tree was used by Indians for archery bows. In the foreground is a closeup of the brainy textured fruit.

A GREAT deal of discussion was generated when we placed an osage-orange fruit on display at the nature center.

This green, brainy textured, baseball-sized fruit is unfamiliar to most. Those of us who have seen them will likely remember spotting them along the road, serving as a natural fence.

They are fast-growing trees, resistant to pests and fungus, and are armed with stout thorns. For these reasons, farmers planted them as fence rows.

IF YOU EXAMINE a fruit, you will find it does have an orange-like fragrance. Wood of the tree is orange in color. The sapwood just under the bark is yellow, hence another common name — yellowwood.

Osage comes from the Osage Indians of the American southwest where osage-orange is native. Probably these people discovered the wood of the osage-orange was very good for making archery bows.

Before the days of iron ore and modern metallurgy, man used wood



nature  
**Timothy Nowicki**

for many things that are now made of metal. And just as we use different metals because of their differing qualities for various purposes, so were different woods used for different functions.

BLACK LOCUST, for instance, was fashioned into pegs and used in shipbuilding because they did not shrink.

Basswood is a very soft, even-grained wood commonly used by woodcarvers. It was also used to make rope. Long fibrous strands were peeled from inside the bark and woven into a strong rope, often used as the string of an archery bow.

Hickory was and is used for tool handles. It was a good thing I had a

hickory handle on my ax when I was trying to split some elm for the woodburner. I learned the hard way what they mean by elm being very stringy. There were several calories and choice words used during that session.

BUT BECAUSE of this quality,

elm was used as the hub of wooden wheels. Sycamore was often used as the rim of the wheel.

Large trees suitable for wheels were often hollow already, so pioneers only had to cut it to the proper thickness.

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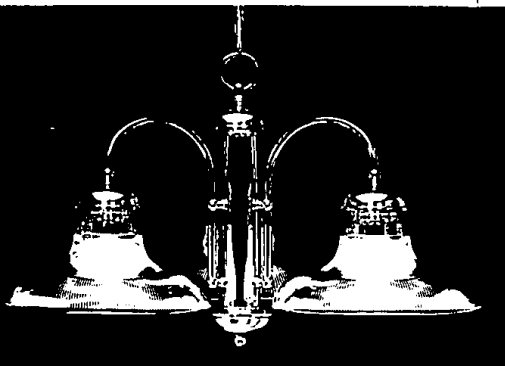
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