

GARDENING

Spruce up your landscaping this autumn with a flowering tree

GARDEN SPOT



MARTY FIGLEY

pens. For instance, we are gener-

If you are planning to plant a tree this fall, a small flowering tree may be "just what the doctor ordered" to spruce up the landscape.

Sometimes we may want to stretch the zone limits a little and see what happens. For instance, we are gener-

ally in zone 5, but a protected area could be zone 6.

Gloria and Merrill Dixon of Troy planted a tree that has become quite a conversation piece, especially when it blooms as it did this year. It is a Southern Mimosa, also called the Silk-tree. The botanical name is *Albizia julibrissin*.

The couple brought the tree with them from Cumberland, Md., in 1986 when it was very small. Each fall the branches kept dying back to the trunk, but by 1995 it began to show steady growth when new "bumps"

appeared and branches grow from them.

It has had "very few" blossoms up until this year, 15 years from the time they planted it. Gloria and Merrill attribute this to the fact that the summer was so hot and humid.

The fragrant, powder puff pink, pincushion flowers are striking and appear in July and August. They look as though a puff of wind might blow them away. Gray-brown pods 6 to 7 inches long follow the flowers.

Care

Patience is a virtue, and the

flowers are the reward. Gloria and Merrill did nothing special to enrich the soil when they planted the tree in the lawn. It is fertilized when the grass is fertilized, although for the last few years they have been giving it Muracil.

The tree is approximately 30 feet high with an umbrella-like shape.

The leaves are similar to sunburst locust leaves and are a rich grass green, tropical looking with a form that resembles a fern. The new growth is lighter. It is interesting to watch the leaves at night, as they are light

sensitive and fold up then.

Michael Dirr, the tree expert, says this tree is cold tolerant in zone 6, and when the temperatures are around -6 to -10 degrees Fahrenheit stem dieback is likely, which corresponds to what the Dixons experienced.

He also says this variety is susceptible to insect and disease problems, although the Dixons' tree hasn't had any of those problems.

Dirr suggests the variety *A. rosea* "Ernest Wilson" because it is considerably more cold hardy than the typical species and tolerates -16 degrees Fahrenheit.

Health

I want to caution you to be extremely careful about Lyme disease when you are outside this fall. I have three friends, one in New Jersey and two in Rochester Hills, who have the disease.

The best protection is to wear clothing that covers you well and to examine any places on your skin that look suspicious. The most noticeable symptoms are fatigue and also fever, headache, muscle stiffness and joint pain.

The only way to find out if you have the disease is by a blood test. Ask your doctor to perform the test if you have any symptoms. Use a product labeled to resist the tick that carries Lyme disease.

Now to pets: Grow Info, a publication of the Master Gardener Association of Wayne County, reports that if you use cocoa mulch, watch to see if your pet exhibits symptoms of restlessness.

nees, panting, pacing or anxious behavior. It might be a reaction to theobromine, a central nervous system and cardiovascular stimulant, a compound in all parts of the cocoa plant.

The phone number for the ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center is (888)4-ANIMAL-HELP.

Chores

Here are a few fall chores to do now:

Dig and clip off the green tops of summer bulbs such as dahlias, cannas, gladiolus and callas. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place for the winter.

Compost and composted manure can be added to the soil while it is still warm. As the soil expands and contracts, these products are churned into the soil.

Remove fallen fruit from the ground to prevent overwintering of insects that could cause trouble next spring. Add the fruit to the compost pile.

Fallen leaves under rose bushes may harbor insects and fungus over the winter if they aren't removed. Rake them up and add them to the compost.

Refill your bird feeders to invite birds into your garden. Set a few near a window so you can watch the antics all winter long.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734)953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248)644-1314.

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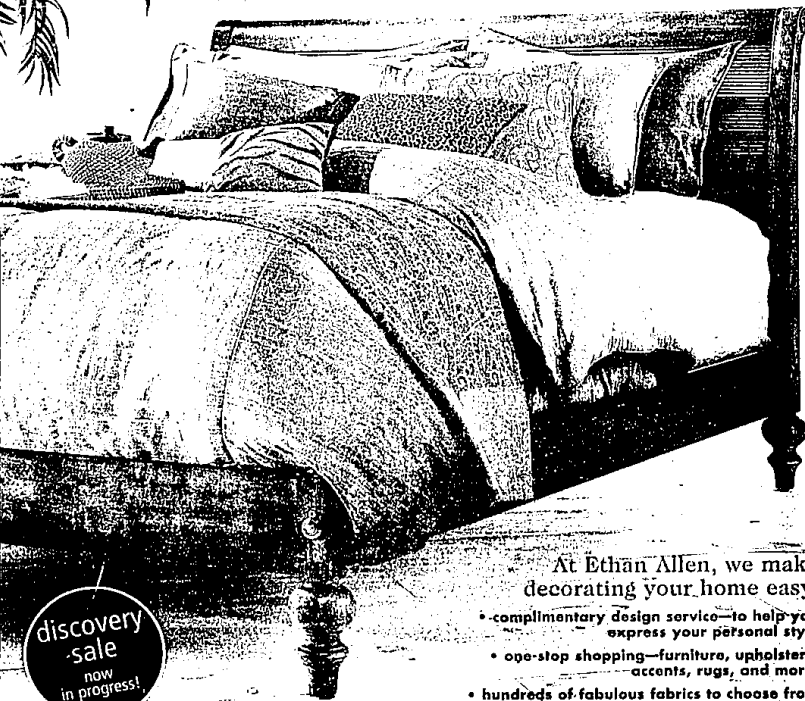
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GARDENING CALENDAR

Does your garden club have an upcoming event or meeting you want publicized? Send items for consideration, including date, time and location, in Gardening Calendar to Ken Abramczyk, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or e-mail kabramczyk@oe. homecomm.net. Please include any phone numbers that readers can call for more information. To send a fax, call (734) 591-7279.

TIME FOR CLASS

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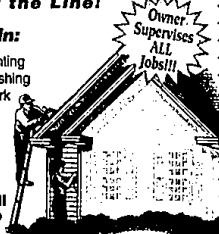
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