

Gardener's Notebook

Horticultural News and Research

Phase Out of CCA-treated Wood Over Two Years

ON FEBRUARY 12, 2002 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Christie Whitman announced that the lumber industry had voluntarily agreed to a two-year phase out of CCA treated wood (marketed as Wolmanized® CCA pressure-treated wood) to reduce exposure to arsenic, a known human carcinogen, used in treating the wood.

Calling this agreement "a responsible action by the industry," Whitman outlined a phase-out schedule that will move consumer use away from CCA-treated wood, an enormously popular material that is employed in all manner of residential, garden, and park structures. A 22-month transition period will allow some 350 wood treatment plants around the country to switch over to new, arsenic-free preservatives. During this time, existing supplies of CCA-treated wood will still be sold. After January 2004, the EPA will no longer allow CCA products for residential uses such as decks, porches, seating, fencing, picnic tables, and play structures.

CCA stands for the mixture of copper, chromium, and arsenic that is injected into the wood in a high pressure process that preserves and protects the wood from dry rot, fungi, molds, termites, and other

insect pests. This process has been used since the 1940s.

Research suggests that arsenic leaches from treated wood into the soil at varying rates and amounts, depending upon climate, age, and strength of the preservative. Nevertheless, the EPA is not recommending that existing treated wood structures be removed or replaced. The agency does, however, suggest that people use the following precautions around CCA-treated wood:

- Apply a penetrating coating such as oil-based, semi-transparent stain on a regular basis to possibly reduce the migration of chemicals from the treated wood.
- Don't burn treated wood in open fires, stoves, fireplaces, or residential boilers.
- Don't allow food to come in contact with treated wood.
- Always wash hands and exposed parts of the body after contact with treated wood.
- Always wear a professional quality dust mask when working with the wood.

There are also many alternatives to CCA-treated wood, including naturally rot-resistant woods such as redwood and cedar; recycled plastic products; and resins. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/1file.htm.



Pressure-treated wood was, until recently, the material of choice for constructing decks, stairways, raised beds, and other garden structures.

REGIONAL PLANT PICKS FOR 2002

HOMEOWNERS IN Nebraska's climate of extremes have only to check with the state's GreatPlants Program to know what is likely to succeed in their gardens. Each year, the program, sponsored by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, recognizes a tree, a shrub, and a perennial that thrive in Nebraska. The 2002 GreatPlants tree of the year is the Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), a



Kentucky coffee tree

rugged, handsome native with textured bark and large compound blue-green leaves that turn clear yellow in fall. Kentucky coffeetree can reach 60 feet and grows broad with age. Female trees produce the mahogany-colored seedpods, once used as a coffee substitute, that give this tree its common name. Other 2002 GreatPlants are shrubby St. Johnswort (*Hypericum kalmianum*), shrub of the year, and bloody cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*), perennial of the year. For more information on these plants, visit www.ianr.unl.ed/greatplants.html.

Other regional gardening groups that have recognized plants in 2002 include: ■ Florida Nurserymen and Grower's Association (www.plantforlife.org/plantofyear.html)

■ Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/GM/2002win.htm) for Mid-Atlantic and Northeast

■ The Cary Award, sponsored by a cooperative of New England horticultural societies and nursery associations (www.caryaward.org)

■ Great Plant Picks program sponsored by the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden in Seattle (www.greatplantpicks.org)

■ Denver Botanic Gardens and Colorado State University (www.ext.colostate.edu/psel/index.html)

ANTI-FUNGAL USE FOR MILK

WHAT DO Brazilian zucchini farmers and New Zealand's melon growers have in

common? Both groups are using milk instead of synthetic fungicides to control mildew on their crops. And it's working.



Although nobody knows exactly how it works, Brazilian scientist Wagner Bettiol's experiment using weekly sprays of at least a 10 percent milk solution

(one part milk to nine parts water) suggests that the milk is both an immune stimulant and a lethal fungicide to *Sphaerotheca fuliginea*, the organism that causes mildew in squashes, melons, and other cucurbits. Bettiol used fresh milk straight from the cow. For farmers and gardeners without access to a bovine supplier, skim milk has been shown to be just as effective by researchers in New Zealand.

HISTORIC WITNESS

IS THERE A tree in your town, your local park, or your yard that has stood as a silent witness to an event of historical significance? Has it shaded the home of a famous citizen? Is it so big or so beautiful that it has

become a legendary landmark in your community? If so, nominate it for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Trees' nationwide campaign for new candidates. Anyone can nominate a tree and there is no fee. The trees selected for the Register will have their stories told in the book, *National Register of Historic Trees*, to be published in spring 2003, as well as at the Historic Trees internet site. To nominate a tree, go to www.historictrees.org.

ANCIENT SUNFLOWER SELECTION

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL excavations near Tabasco, Mexico, have debunked the notion that the sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) was first domesticated in eastern North America. Working with a team of archaeologists at the San Andres site, David Lentz of the New York Botanic Garden says, "we found big, fat, clearly domesticated sunflower seeds that radiocarbon analysis dated to around 2800 B.C." That predates



anything in the eastern United States.

Lentz has received grants from the National Geographic Society and the National Science Foundation to return to Mexico to look for the wild ancestors of sunflowers.

EASING QUEASINESS

CHINESE SAILORS may have been the first to chew on ginger root (*Zingiber officinale*) to combat motion sickness several thousand years ago. Over the centuries, ginger has become a standard remedy for nausea in India and has spread across the Middle East to Europe. Now, herbalists in the United States are embracing ginger root as the stomach-settler of choice. Several studies have suggested it is just as efficacious as standard over-the-counter remedies such as dimenhydrinate, sold as Dramamine, and scopolamine. Ginger, says ethnobotanist and former USDA scientist James Duke, "beats motion sickness drugs every time." Ginger may be taken in capsule, tea, or candied form.

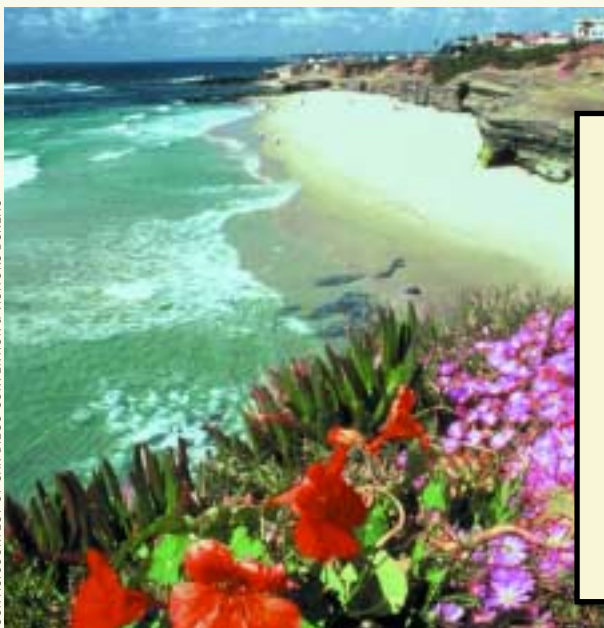
MILK PHOTO COURTESY OF DAIRY COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA



2002 American Horticultural Society TRAVEL STUDY PROGRAM

Gardens of San Diego and La Jolla

October 29–November 3, 2002



CONVIS/COURTESY OF SAN DIEGO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

The Travel Study Program to the gardens of San Diego and La Jolla highlights a wide variety of gardening styles, from traditional cottage gardens to woodland settings. Many of the gardens we will visit have been featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Sunset* magazines. A number of the garden owners have extended to us invitations for lunch and dinner.

Leading this program for the AHS will be Patrick Anderson of Fallbrook, California. Patrick helped lead our last Travel Study Program to the San Diego area, and it is through his personal friends and contacts that we have received special permission for our garden visits. We will have the opportunity to visit Patrick's and his partner Les Olson's garden for one of our luncheons. Their unique garden was recently featured in an episode of the PBS series "The Victory Garden."

For complete details of the exciting 2002 schedule, visit the AHS Web site at www.ahs.org or call the Leonard Haertter Travel Company at (800) 942-6666.

No member dues are used to support the Travel Study Program.