

DAVIS COLUMN: Autumn's arrival gathering pinnacles

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Regardless of how we take in autumn, gathering by catching, taking possession, and other ways of acquiring the displays, by sounds, tastes, feels and smells, autumn is ready.

Saturday marks the beginning of archery and crossbow deer hunting, ruffed grouse flushing, wild turkey yelping, crow calling, squirrel chatter, and continuation of black bear, goose, and mourning dove hunting.

Digging ginseng and hook and line lake sturgeon catching continue, too.

There are myriad of ways to smell (goldenrod), taste (pumpkin spice), see (golden ginseng leaves), feel (hitchhiking burs), and hear (owls hooting) fall. Now is the time some are dubbed leaf peekers who scribe, photographing, collect, post, and smell plant's last hurrah.

Let it be known, however, that leaves are not alone in signaling autumn's arrival, albeit too short a stay. Some plants are still flowering (goldenrod, various sunflowers, prairie grasses, and other late bloomers). Many turn their fruit red (rose hips), orange (bittersweet), white (poison ivy), purple (woodbine) or blue (wild grapes).

Even stems and bark (red-osier dogwood) put on a different paint.

So, too, do animal coats (white-tailed deer are darkest brown) change.

Evergreens (red cedar) may turn a silvery-gray and most cones (white pine) and hard mast (acorns) are falling.

All of this is autumn, pick a favorite day, maybe sunrise, sunset, even drizzle works, and allow nature's textures, shapes, tones, and hues to take over.

Two lake sturgeon have been registered at Wilderness Fish and Game in Sauk City, according to Wally Bamfi, assistant store manager.

"Both were 60+ inches (legal minimum) and about 40 pounds," he said. "Dove hunters and goose hunters have been successful; brown and rainbow trout have been taken out of Devil's Lake, while small mouth bass are biting on the Wisconsin River. Fall colors are beginning to show up here, too."

John Borzick, at Tall Tails in Boscobel, said crappies, bluegills and walleyes are being taken in the Mississippi River. Hunters are getting excited about deer, and there are a lot of ducks in the area."

Don Martin, at Martin's in Monroe, just received a shipment of the one-in-all hunting regulations pamphlets, but is hit or miss on having shotshells for hunters in many of the popular gauges.

Doug Williams, at DW Sports Center in Portage says he's seen the beginning of leaf changes and many of the animals are showing signs of autumn in terms of coat colors on deer, antlers without velvet, and a tendency to feed more to put on fat.

"I don't know how else to put it but hunters cannot procrastinate on gear, ammunition and footwear. Consider all the sources for ammunition, including sharing it with others," he said. "Fish seem to be in a feeding mode, too, so get out there right now if you want to have fish to eat."

Aaron Fortney, Gays Mills, is buying ginseng from diggers, so leave a message at 608-606-4742 for more information or an appointment to sell green roots. His price per pound ranges \$210-\$235.

Wayne Smith, Lafayette County, baiting bears in Ashland and Bayfield counties, noted that one group of hunters took a 300 pound black bear and walked away from several others they treed.

“I’ve seen a few ruffed grouse on the roads and trails,” Smith said.

In spite of a shortage of some outdoors gear and supplies, other companies are advertising products, usually for sale on line, so start there. As with ammunition, hiking boots, and including some running shoes, the adage of “if you see it, and need it, buy it now.”

DrySee has thin film, waterproof dressings (bandages) available in several sizes and convenient for outdoors enthusiasts. Go to DrySee.com.

Free at some license outlets are waterproof sticker to avoid lost forever outdoors items. It’s sticky enough and large enough to be trimmed. Contact uscgboating.org.

Campfire starting, as well as wood stove and fireplaces lighting, can be easy with Pull Start Fire, which requires no matches, is windproof, lights wet wood and will burn for 30 minutes, which is longer than it usually takes to get green to the point of generating enough heat to dry a major fuel. Visit PullStartFire.com.

An excellent plant identification book, *Prairie Plants of the Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum* deals with more than 360 native species and includes 1,200 color photographs for sure identification. This is not a dry manual, but a lively, well written, illustrated book. Order on line or purchase from many local book outlets. T. S. Cochrane, K. Elliot and C. S. Lipke are authors.

A mushroom knife, one with a curved blade and brush is available from **Baladeo.com**. Well worth a look and makes a pleasant task of cutting a sulphur fungus from a standing tree, stump or log.

Morrison Outdoors , **MorrisonOutdoors.com**, has an armed sleeping bag for tikes 6-24 months old. The LittleMo40 is ideal, safe and attractive.

PediPocket, **Pedipocketblanket.com**, is advertised as “give your feet a treat,” is a blanket, in several colors, with a large pocket for your feet to slip into. I believe the blanket could be turned around using the pocket for a hoodie. Ideal for cabin coziness or outside lounging.

Mozy is advertised as “the jacket for your legs” and is 500 percent warmer than stadium blankets. Any outdoorsperson can think of other uses, but literatures touch points are “at the rink, in the stadium, at the field, and in the snow.”

Contact Mozy at **getthemozy.com**.

Now is not a time to say, I don't have anything to do outdoors.

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