

# **LEWIS and CLARK Expedition**

## **TREE FACTS**

Southwestern Illinois Regional Urban and  
Community Forestry Council

ILLINOIS



DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES



## GENERAL INFORMATION

During the years 2003 to 2006, southern Illinois and the St. Louis area celebrate the 200th year anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their westward expedition mentioned several trees. The "Osage Apple" (today known as the Osage orange); the Osage Plum (also known as the Sandhill Plum); the native Pecan, PawPaw, Poplar and white-oak were just a few of them. Read the actual account below.

### PAWPAW

(*Asimina triloba*)



On their trip home in 1806, Lewis and Clark has little time to hunt for meat. They ate other foods that could be quickly picked and

consumed. In a Journal entry September 15, 1806 near Kansas City, Missouri is the record, "The men gathered Pawpaw or custard apples." Pawpaws produce a soft extremely sweet fruit and are abundant in southern Illinois.

## NATIVE PECAN

(*Carya illinoensis*)



Pecans in the Midwest have the reputation for being more tasteful than standard commercial pecans, but it is more difficult to remove their hulls.

The native Pecan was already notable before the trip began. Thomas Jefferson gave the pecans to Daniel Clark, Jr. (not to be confused with William Clark of Lewis and Clark Expedition) for cultivation as per a letter dated November 12, 1799 from Daniel Clark to Jefferson. "They grow everywhere on the Banks of the Mississippi River from the Illinois River to the Sea, generally in the low grounds & even in Places occasionally overflowed by the annual size of the Waters, the Tree grows to the usual size of Forest Trees and affords a

delightful shade in summer, it might be worth while to cultivate it in Virginia for use and ornament."

Jefferson responds: "Your Favor of Nov. 12 has been duly received as has also the parcel of Paccan nuts for which, as well the oranges, be pleased to accept my acknowledgement... the nuts. I have immediately forwarded to Monticello, my residence in Virginia to be planted. Two young trees planted in that part of the country in 1780. And now flourishing, though not bearing, prove they may be raised there; and I shall set great value on the chance of having a grove of them."

A May 29, 1800 letter from Clark to Jefferson states: "I am happy to learn that a few Pacans I sent you are likely to turn to some good account, and sincerely wish your Grove of them to Flourish."

The pecan may have been one of the many interests providing encouragement for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Since the native pecan is common in southern Illinois, the expedition could have consumed this nut.

It is noteworthy that Daniel Smith, a nurseryman of Burlington, New Jersey, offered in 1806 a pecan or "Illinois nut of the Western Country."

## REFERENCES:

Entries from Lewis and Clark's Journals; [The Journals of Lewis and Clark Expedition](#) by Gary E. Moulton; and [Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book](#) by Edwin Morris Betts.

## OSAGE ORANGE

(*Maclura pomifera*)

Lewis and Clark called the Osage orange - Osage "Apple".



In a letter from Lewis to Jefferson, dated St. Louis March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1804. "I send you herewith inclosed, some slips of the <great> Osages Plums, and Apples." ... "Mr. Peter Coteau, who first introduced this tree in the neighborhood of St. Louis, about five years since, informed me that he obtained the young plants from the great Osage vilage from an Indian of that nation, who said he procured them about three hundred miles west of that place. The general contour of this tree, is very much that of the *black haw*, common to most parts of the U. States, with these diferences however, that the bark is of a lighter colour, less branced, and arrives to a larger size, sometimes rising to the hight of thirty feet. It's smaller branches are armed with many single, long and sharp pinated thorns." (The Osage) "esteem the wood of this tree for the purpose of making their bows, and they travel many hundred miles in quest of it." ... "The opinion prevails among the Osage, that

the fruit is poisonous, tho' they acknowledge that they have never tasted it. They say that many animals feed on it, and among others a large species of Hare... The fruit is the size of the largest orange. The pulp is contained in a number of conical pustules, covered with a smooth membranous rind, having their smaller extremities attached to the matrix, from which they project in every direction."

In March 1804, Lewis sent some cuttings from the Osage orange to Thomas Jefferson and described them in detail after discussions with Jean Pierre Chouteau.

---

For more information check out the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Website at:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/forestry/Urban/Index.htm>

Illinois Regional Urban and Community Forestry Councils contacts:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/forestry/Urban/RUCFCCcontacts.htm>

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources receives federal financial assistance and therefore must comply with federal anti-discrimination laws. In compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act, Illinois Constitution, Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the U.S. Constitution, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources does not discriminate on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other non-merit factors including but not limited to sexual orientation, marital or parental status and/or physical stature. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 524 S. Second St., Springfield, Illinois, 62701-1787, (217) 785-0067. -TTY number (217) 782-9175; Relay number (800) 526-0844