

“Amelanchier” Big Tree for April



Giant Serviceberry tree along Souhegan River.

By ANNE KRANTZ

AMHERST - Look along New Hampshire roadsides in April for the first spring blossoms that pop open on shrubs and trees of the amelanchier family: shadbush, shadblow, serviceberry or Juneberry. The white blossoms open just as the leaves are unfolding, so they appear to be growing on dead branches.

The flower's five petals are long and floppy, with a cluster of long stamens and pistil in the center pollinated by early spring bees. The effect is like a white cloud of blossoms that seems to float in thickets or along woodland edges.

Both the shrub and the tree form grow in New Hampshire. The many forms of the species confuse even experts who can't agree whether there are many different species, or many natural hybrids. No two books agree or provide consistent information. So last spring I was determined to figure out for myself the difference between the blossoms of the shrub form and those of the tree. I just became more confused. But in the process I discovered amelanchier shrubs and trees everywhere. I carried my camera with me and found taller and bigger tree forms as I learned to look higher and higher in the roadside thickets for blossoms.

The ultimate coincidence occurred the day I took my car in to the garage in early May for its annual servicing. When it was ready, I was told to find it in the back lot. It was a glorious spring day and I marveled at a small pin cherry tree in the overgrown field behind, literally bent over with the weight of blossoms. Then I happened to glance up and saw more blossoms at the very top of the grove of trees growing along the Souhegan River. Of course there was no way to reach these blossoms to inspect closely. But I had my cam-

era. None of the surrounding trees had leafed out, so blossoms were really like a white cloud at the very top of the tree canopy. The trunks of the two trees with the blossoms looked nothing like cherry bark, so I was confident that these were amelanchier trees.

I quickly rounded up the Big Tree Team for Hillsborough County and we were able to find the top of our biggest amelanchier tree and get the Big Tree measurements: height, 78 feet; diameter of the trunk four feet from the ground, 31 inches around, a giant for the species! When young, the bark is smooth and grey, becomes striped with age, and finally develops longitudinal furrows.

A gardening friend who grew up in the state explained the story behind the name serviceberry - it blooms when the ground thaws and spring burials take place. The flowers are cut for the service. For this reason it is planted in cemeteries. Its 'clock' function is also the reason for the name shadbush -it blooms when the shad run up the rivers. Its fruit ripens in June; the reason for the name Juneberry.

The blue fruit that resembles small crab apples with multiple small seeds are very high in vitamin C and other nutrients. Birds seem to know this and gobble up the treats as soon as they ripen.

If you notice a giant serviceberry tree this spring, estimate its height and measure the trunk to compare to the champion trees for the counties of NH. To see the NH Big Tree list and to learn more about the NH Big Tree program, go to: <http://extension.unh.edu/forestry/BigTree.htm>, or NHBigTree.org.

If you discover a contender, submit a nomination form to the NH Big Tree State Coordinator, Carolyn Page: carolyn_page@hotmail.com, phone: 664-2934.

Events from Amherst Recreation Department and Peabody Mill Environmental Center

Adult Yoga

Come and join our instructors in each of these yoga classes and gain strength, balance and tone. Exercises through controlled breathing techniques will benefit you by reducing stress and gaining physical exercise. Please wear comfortable clothes.

When: Thursdays, 5/7-6/25

Where: PMEC

Time: 10:00-11:00AM

Fee: \$80 Amherst Resident; \$90 Non Resident

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 603-673-6248. All programs require pre-registration.

Under the Moon Hikes

Join us for stories and a walk in the woods along easy paths that accommodate people of all ages. Let PMEC staff help you find your way around the night sky. Bring a flashlight to help you navigate uneven terrain.

When: Full Moon Hikes

Saturday, 6/6 at 8:30PM

Friday, 7/10 at 8:30PM

Friday, 8/7 at 8:00PM

Friday, 9/4 at 7:30PM

New Moon Hikes

Saturday, 6/20 at 8:30PM

Friday, 7/24 at 8:30PM

Friday, 8/21 at 8:00PM

Friday, 9/18 at 7:00PM

Where: PMEC or pre arranged site-Participant will be notified.

Fee: \$6 Amherst Resident, \$8 Nonresident

\$15 Amherst Resident family (3+ people), \$20 Nonresident family (3+ people)

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 603-673-1141 or 603-673-6248. Please visit our website at www.pmec.org for more

information. All programs require pre-registration.

Kids Culinary Arts

Kids Culinary Arts offers a 5 week after-school program for middle school students in the Life Skills room at the Amherst Middle School. Our classes are hands-on and focus on healthy, tasty choices while taking advantage of seasonal and locally grown ingredients whenever possible. Our classes are more than just educational - they are fun, too! Each program contains curricular components linked to the New Hampshire requirements in Science, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies and Health.

Let's Get Cooking

If cooking simple recipes, learning how to set a proper table, or how to fold fancy napkins sounds like fun, then this class is for you! This class includes both low or no cook recipes. New recipes are introduced each week.

Who: Grades 5-6

When: Tuesdays, 5/12-6/9

Where: Amherst Middle School Life Skills Room

Time: 2:45-5:00PM

Fee: \$120 Amherst Resident; \$130 Non Resident

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 603-673-6248. All programs require pre-registration.

What's for Dinner?

Turn the tables on your student and ask them what they are making for dinner! In this class each student will learn how to prepare a meal (main dish, plus 1-2 side dishes) for his/her family and bring the meal home. Meals will serve approximately 4 people. New menus

are introduced each week.

Who: Grades 7-8

When: Thursdays, 5/14-6/11

Where: Amherst Middle School Life Skills Room

Time: 2:45-5:00PM

Fee: \$150 Amherst Resident; \$160 Non Resident

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 603-673-6248. All programs require pre-registration.

Monthly Creature Feature

How long can a beaver hold its breath for? What is the only bird that can fly backwards? Do frogs drink through their skin? Why do only the female mosquitoes bite? Learn the answers to questions like these and more during "Creature Feature" at the Peabody Mill Environmental Center. This monthly program is geared towards people of all ages who want to see live animals up close and personal. Those brave enough might get the chance to hold or touch one of our featured creatures. A different local or exotic animal will be featured each session.

When: Saturdays- 6/6, 8/1

Where: PMEC

Time: 2:00-3:00PM

Fee: Free to Amherst Residents (donations accepted), \$1 Nonresidents

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 603-673-1141 or 603-673-6248. Please visit our website at www.pmec.org for more information. All programs require pre-registration.

Leave No Child Inside -

An Evening in the Woods

Send your child to the PMEC to reconnect with nature! The Joe

English reservation is an enchanting place at night. Your child will love outdoor activities such as star gazing, night hikes, and observing animal habitats. Once inside, children will enjoy snacks, games and crafts. Each child will come home with a nature themed craft. Children must be school aged. Please dress your child in appropriate outdoor clothing. Children grades K-8.

When: Fridays - 6/12, 7/10

Where: PMEC

Time: 6:00-9:00PM

Fee: \$20 Amherst Resident/night, \$30 Nonresident/night

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 603-673-1141 or 603-673-6248. Please visit our website at www.pmec.org for more information. All programs require pre-registration.

Hartshorn Summer Program

Join us for the 20th season of the Hartshorn Summer Program. Classes are available for toddlers to adults. Week long classes are 9am-12pm, unless noted. Extended day options are available with before care 7:30am-9:00am and Hartshorn in the Afternoon 12:00-5:30pm. Please visit www.amherstrec.org for the most up to date Hartshorn class and registration information.

When: Mondays-Fridays, 6/22-8/21

Where: PMEC (unless otherwise noted)

Register online at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-1141 or 673-6248. Please visit our website at www.pmec.org for more information. All programs require pre-registration.

Amherst Town Band Summer 2009 Performances

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|-----------------|-------|--|
| Wed., June 17 | 7 PM | Concert at Emerson Park, Milford |
| Thu., June 25 | 7 PM | Greeley Park Concert on the bandstand, Nashua |
| Fri., July 3 | 8 PM | Independence Day Concert, Souhegan High School football field |
| Sat., July 4 | 10 AM | Fourth of July parade, Amherst |
| Sat., July 18 | 7 PM | Concert on bandstand, York Beach, Maine |
| Tue., August 18 | 7 PM | Concert on the Amherst Town Green, sponsored by the Amherst Lions Club |
| Wed., August 26 | 7 PM | Concert, Wilton |
| Sat., August 29 | 10 AM | Wilton Old Home Days parade |

For more information, see www.amhersttownband.org.

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On the Village Green


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