



What's That On Your Neck?

Now there's a loaded question. One that brings a "Yeah, right" out of the cynical or elicits cold, screaming fear from another. Either way it's usually good for a laugh, unless someone gets hurt. Sometimes, even then...

So we have a crew working at a client's home doing some lot clean-up when one says, "Hey Donald, what's this?" I walk over to see the cute, fuzzy guy to the right lying on the ground and Cory rubbing on the back of his neck. He said he kept feeling something tickling the back of his neck but when he stopped to feel for something, nothing was there. Well, he eventually found the offending tickler and removed it. Unfortunately the damage had already been done.



By this time he noticed a burning sensation on the back of his neck. I took a look and noticed some general redness as well as some small bumps beginning to rise up. He said he felt ok but we got some cold water on it and dosed him with some Benedryl just in case. After about 10 minutes I checked his neck again and the small bumps were growing and turning an angry shade of red, adding to the growing area of redness covering the back of his neck. He rinsed his neck several more times and the angry red subsided somewhat but the bumps remained and he reported feeling a little light-headed. He took some breaks and managed to make it through the rest of the day. It took about a week for most of the bumps to subside in intensity but some were slower to fade.



The Buck Moth caterpillar (*Hemileuca maia*) is found in Maine all the way down to Florida. A startling black and white color this caterpillar has a sting which is still visible up to two weeks later. Look closely and you will notice that the end of its barbs become quite slender, tapering down into hair-like hypodermic needles. The spines, aka urticating setae, funnel poison from glandular cells. The spines will break off, stick in you and spill poison onto your skin. Rash and bumps will then develop and sensitive individuals may require a visit to the hospital.

Another particularly nasty beastie is the Saddleback caterpillar (*Sibine stimuli*). Failing to see the tiny, barbed spines that decorate fleshy appendages, its unique coloring encourages you to pick it up to take a closer look. This is an action you will regret and not soon forget. This and other stinging caterpillars are found all across the U.S.



In the insect world bright colors are often nature's way of saying "Do NOT Touch!" When birds or other animals attempt to eat them and receive a foul taste or equally foul sting they remember the experience and associate the color patterns with danger. No wolves in sheep's clothing here!



There are safe exceptions to the bright colors and scary looking protrusions that most caterpillars possess. The Hickory Horned Devil is the larva of the Regal or Royal Walnut moth. Want to see a parent faint dead away or throw a serious hissy fit? Just hand one of these guys to their child and

watch 'em go ballistic! While they are completely safe to handle (toxin-wise), they do have some serious jaws and could possibly give a nasty bite, although none have been reported. Many people actually keep them as pets while in this stage, which is just prior to their over-wintering pupation.

So, while there are many wondrous and beautiful creatures in the natural world, at times one might be better served to look and not touch!

Calling All Peepers!

This weekend the temperature, albeit briefly, dipped down into the 30's. That is usually one of the prime triggers of leaf color change here in N. Georgia. The Dogwoods and Sourwoods are already turning their characteristic blood red. This summer's drought caused worry that the fall colors would pretty much be from green to brown but we received a much needed reprieve last month in the form of one heavy downpour and several smaller showers throughout the rest of the month.

With fingers crossed we await the profusion of pigment that leaps forth from nature's paintbrush. The shades of color, other than green, remind us that the normal procession of growth experienced during the Spring and Summer has officially come to an end. As the tree's sap begins to ebb and the sun's radiation lessens, the chlorophyll begins to leach from the tissue. The resulting color is a direct effect of the carotenoids present in the leaf tissue. Actually, carotenoids are only responsible for the yellows and oranges. Anthocyanins provide the red and purples. The two combine to make an infinite variety of shades you won't find in any box of crayons.

I came across a website that you day-trippers of foliage might find useful. Here is the link <http://georgiastateparks.org/leafwatch>. It has more info on the best sites from which to view, and other useful links, than you can shake a stick at.

Happy viewing... and keep an eye out for snakes under them thar leaves!

Fall Festivities

Here is a partial list of some of the festivals and various fall celebrations that are happening this month.

- 1. Sorghum Festival**

Date: October 8 & 9 and 15 & 16, 2011
 Time: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
 Website: www.sorghumfestivalblairsville.com
 Location: Meeks Park, Blairsville
 Contact: Blairsville Jaycees 706-745-4745
 Email: blairvillejaycees@gmail.com
 Date/Time Details: Saturday, October 8th & 15th 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. Parade
 Sunday 8th - 11:00a.m. Square Dance October 8th 8:00p.m. - 11:00p.m.
 Sunday, October 9th & 16th 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.
- 2. Garden Tour**

Date: October 10, 2011
 Time: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
 Website: <http://www.gmrec.uga.edu>
 Location: The Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center, 3 miles south of the Blairsville Square, on the east side of Hwy 19/129.
 Contact: Clare Johnston at 706-745-2655
 Email: gmrec@uga.edu
 Date/Time Details: Mondays, excluding holidays, from 9 am until 1 pm.
 Fees/Admission: Free!
- 3. Halloween Zip Line Rides**

Date: October 21, 2011
 Time: 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM
 Website: <http://www.ridgerunnerzips.com>
 Location: Andrews, North Carolina
 Contact: 828-421-8119
 Email: RidgeRunnerZips@gmail.com
 Date/Time Details: Friday October 21
 Saturday October 22
 Friday October 28
 Saturday October 29
 Fees/Admission: \$68 per person
- 4. Annual Harvest Festival at Crane Creek Vineyards**

Date: October 22, 2011 Time: 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM
 Website: <http://www.cranecreekvineyards.com>
 Location: Crane Creek Vineyards
 916 Crane Creek Road
 Young Harris, GA
 Contact: Crane Creek Vineyards @ 706-379-1236
 Date/Time Details: Saturday, October 22nd
 11:00am - 6:00pm
 Fees/Admission: Tickets sold at the door
 Adults - \$20.00
 Ages 13 - 20 \$10.00
 Children under 12 Free

...a note from Cindy

Well, I never thought I would see the day when we would be sitting in the office talking about social media networking. My opinion has always been... Who has the time? But after doing a little research we decided that Facebook would be a great way for us to share our daily adventures of Complete Home Services. And we do have some adventures! From getting lost, stuck, running into critters, having trees fall, getting caught in storms and all the other crazy things that occur as we go about our day. So, "like" us on Facebook and stay tuned to the daily action up here in them thar hills. We would also love to hear your comments about our stories and other stories related to *your* adventures in North Georgia as well. You can link to our [Facebook page here](#) or from [our website](#). Hey, who says, "You can't teach old dogs new tricks?" Let us know what you think.

Cindy Cohen

5 Simple Rules to Happiness

Now I understand that most folks are quite complicated creatures. As such, they LOVE to make things a bit more complicated than they need be. Don't be fooled by the seemingly simplistic nature of the 5 rules. The happiest people I know live following these basic guidelines. I know because I am one of them. I run into people on a daily basis whose lives are so full of stress and worry that they can find no peace. They seem to resent that I refuse to dive into the depths of their misery and wallow around, thus keeping them company. I can only offer them the advice, "Don't worry so much!" The cheerful tone with which I make that statement seems to invoke irritation. Perhaps I should keep my happiness concealed instead of attempting to spread it around? I feel that would be like standing securely on the bank of the raging rapids as others are swept along in a river of despair of their own creation. I guess we can't save everyone. And, let's face it, some just don't want to be saved.

Of course, we currently find ourselves in tumultuous circumstances (economically & politically) thus bringing to mind the ancient Chinese curse "May you live in interesting times." Interesting times, indeed!

- 1. Free your heart from hatred.*
- 2. Free your mind from worries.*
- 3. Live simply.*
- 4. Give more.*
- 5. Expect less*