

# APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS



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## Jo Ann's Corner: The Spirit of Spring

By Jo Ann Bullard

Good morning. Welcome to Jo Ann's Virtual Café 2023. Come on in and help yourself to a breakfast beverage. Let's talk. Well, it's finally here. It's Spring. Joe has a story about that.

One year long ago, Little Bear was worried. According to the Great Medicine Man, Blue Smoke, Spring was supposed to come, but it hadn't. Little Bear went to Blue Smoke and asked, "Where is the Spirit of Spring? We need the grass to grow and Mother Earth's ground to warm so we can plant our crops to eat."

Blue Smoke lit a small fire and made smoke with wet wood. The smoke drifted South. Blue Smoke replied, "The Spirit of Spring is still far to the South. He lives there in the Winter. Someone must go and tell him that he must come North to warm the earth and free us for The Spirit of Winter."

Little Bear was a young brave. "I will go and find The Spirit of the South and bring him back to us." Blue Smoke replied, "You are young, Little Bear. It is a long journey to the South to find The Spirit of Spring. We do not have time for you to travel that far."

Little Bear replied, "I will take Little Eagle with me. We will climb the sacred mountain and ask The Great Eagle to let us ride on his back to the South to find The Spirit of Spring."

Blue Smoke replied, "My daughter is your age. You must ask her if she wants to join you on such a dangerous journey. I will let her go with you if she comes to me." Little Bear ran to find Little Eagle. "Little Eagle, will you join me to find The Spirit of Spring? We need the Spirit to come and save us from The Spirit of Winter."

Little Eagle asked, "Why do you want me to go with you on such a dangerous journey? You hardly ever speak to me. Is it just that you need me to ask the Great Eagle to fly you South?"

Little Bear answered, "You are right. I should have been more friendly to you. I do not know how to talk to young women. I am brave, but not with pretty, young women. I worry that they will laugh at me. I know you are smart, strong, and have courage. I know it will take a smart woman to get The Spirit of Spring to come back to us."

You are the smartest young woman I know. You are the only one that can convince The Great Eagle to take us. I have deep respect for you and your knowledge of Nature and Medicine.” To show his respect, Little Bear bowed his head to Little Eagle.

Little Eagle was surprised that Little Bear showed her that much respect. “Because you were so truthful to me and respect me. I will go with you. We will leave for the Sacred Mountain early in the morning. Take only your medicine bag and put only things in it that you think will help us persuade The Spirit of Spring to come.” The next morning, they climbed up to the Sacred Mountain.

When they got to the top of the mountain, Little Eagle sang the sacred song of the eagles. The Great Eagle flew down from high in the sky, landing in front of them. “Why do you call to me Little Eagle?”

Little Eagle answered, “Because we need to go South and find The Spirit of Spring to come. The spirit is late. Spring needs to come for all of us to live in this Northern land to survive. Without Spring, there will be no flowers and no grain, and ice will start to cover all the rivers. You and your offspring will not have food for your new eaglets. You will be forced to leave this land forever just like us.”

Great Eagle answered, “What you say is true? But how can you persuade The Spirit of Spring to come.” Little Bear replied, “Our hearts are pure, and our Wisdom comes from our ancestors. We will persuade the Spirit to come North.” The Great Eagle spoke, “Climb on my back! We have no time to waste. Your words are true, and your hearts are pure. I know where the Spirit spends his Winters.”

The Great Eagle flew them South toward the Great Southern Sea, landing on an island at its highest peak. “I will return to get you if I see Spring coming to our Northern land. If it doesn’t, you will remain here forever.” The Great Eagle flew away.

They felt a warm wind starting to blow behind them. An old man appeared before them. “I am The Spirit of Spring. Why are you here at my home?”

Little Eagle spoke, “We are from the Northern lands. You have not come to bring Spring to us. We are asking for you to come.” The old man replied, “It is warm here and beautiful. Why should I make the long trek North?”

Little Bear answered, “Because we in the North have always waited for you to come and warm our land. The flowers come, the grass grows, and our grain grows to feed us.

Without you, we will die.” The old man replied, “I am tired of wandering North each Spring.”

Little Bear and Little Eagle both reached into their medicine bags. Little Eagle pulled out a snowball she had, “It is cold and kills our plants.” Little Bear went over and plucked a beautiful flower. He took the snowball and rubbed the flower. It started to die from the cold snow.

“You see, the snow kills even the most beautiful of plants. See these seeds from my medicine bag? They will not grow without you. There is one other thing you need to think about. The Spirit of Winter likes it that you are no longer going North. He will get stronger each year and come farther South. You will get weaker each year and older until you are gone. He will have won your fight forever. There will be no place for you.”

Little Eagle spoke, “Look at your hands and look into my eyes at your reflection.” The Spirit of Spring looked at his hands that were of an old man. He looked into Little Eagle’s eyes and saw an old man.”

Little Eagle spoke, “Without you going North to restore the rebirth of the land, you will not be reborn each Spring into a young man. You will die.”

The Spirit of Spring spoke, “Your words are true, and your hearts are pure. Both of you have the Wisdom of your ancestors. I will go but I cannot take you. Only the Great Eagle can do that.” The old man turned into a warm breeze and blew North.

They watched as the migrating birds flew North behind him. The only thing that Little Bear and Little Eagle could do was hope that The Great Eagle would return.

They built a shelter near the ocean. They fished and ate the fruit. Several months passed and still no Great Eagle.

Little Eagle and Little Bear enjoyed being together. One beautiful sunset, Little Bear took her into his arms. “I love being with you. If we don’t get off this island, I am happy to be here with you.” Little Eagle replied, “You are wise to be so young. I am happy to be with someone that respects me and is kind like you. I feel the same as you.”

A few weeks later they saw a big bird in the distance. There was another big bird with several little ones flying with it. The birds landed close to them. “I see you are doing well. I couldn’t come until my family was ready. Our eaglets are big enough to fly with us now. We have come to take you home.

The Spirit of Spring has come, and your tribes and all others are safe from The Spirit of Winter.”

Two days later the Great Eagle and his family landed in the middle of Little Bear and Little Eagle’s village. The Great Chief said, “Both of you are now legends in the land of the North. We will feast tonight in your honor.” The Spirit of Spring now a young man spoke, “Because you came and persuaded me to come North, you must each year come and remind me to come North. The Great Creator commands it of you.”

Little Eagle replied, “We will do that on one condition. We must be married. It is what is in our hearts.” So, each year Little Eagle and Little Bear would travel South. In time, it took all of the Great Eagle’s family to take Little Bear and Little Eagle’s children with them.

Having said that, let’s share a breakfast beverage and a Native American Proverb.

The Proverb goes like this:

“Walk tall as the mountains; be gentle as the Spring winds; keep the warmth of Summer in your heart, and the Great Creator will always be with you.”

Thanks for coming. Enjoy your gift of today. Have a great day! We look forward to seeing you again soon!

## Gardening Folklore, Superstitions, and Myths

By Banjo



Spring starts Monday, March 20, 2023, at 5:24 p.m. EDT. Many of us are counting down the days until its arrival.

Spring is a time of rebirth and renewal. It is also a time to cut, break, and till the dirt. A time to sow and plant. Tend and pull weeds. And cross our fingers for a big harvest.

Some of us have a "green thumb," and many of us do not, so we tend to do other things besides fertilizing. For instance, some of us might celebrate spring by remembering some of the folklore and superstitious ways of a Grandmother.

For example, I am extra good to Mr. & Mrs. Scarecrow who reside in my vegetable garden, year after year, because Mamaw told me to be. Mamaw explained that if I was not kind to the couple, my crops would die. I'm sure each spring of every year, they get new clothes (new to them, but some of my old clothes) including a special straw hat to help keep them cool in the summer sun. Now, once you have given clothing to a scarecrow you can never wear it again, or it will bring bad luck. Folklore tells us that a scarecrow should not be put out before Easter and should always be taken down and burned before midnight on Halloween. And a scarecrow is always to be given a name.

If you need a little extra luck for growing your garden, here are some of the things old folks used to do.

Some gardeners believe that plants will grow so much better if stolen. Some even believe this so much that, when they give someone a plant, they will put it down and turn their back on it. That way, the other person can “steal” it. And NEVER thank someone for a plant. The plant will die.

About the same time that Mark Twain was writing the book *Huckleberry Finn*, many gardeners practiced what Twain talked about in one part of his story: you, “talk to the bee's.” According to this myth, you need to tell your bees about everything that’s going on in the house. Every evening, stand by your beehive and talk to your bees. It is believed that this encourages the bees to be more productive. The happier the bees, the sweeter their honey, or so the myth goes.

Furthermore, if someone in the household passes away, the bees need to know about it within a week or they, too, will die. Some beekeepers went as far as draping the beehives with a black cloth in case the bees weren’t paying attention when told about the death in the family.

- Work animal fat into the soil of your rose garden. It is said to enhance the blooms and the plant will be fuller.
- Don’t plant your garden until the oak leaves are the size of mouse ears.
- Always plant your potatoes on Good Friday. Plant your green beans on Good Friday.
- Anything planted on the first day of Spring will live.
- Bury nails around the roots of Hydrangea to make the blooms blue.
- Grass won’t grow where human blood has been spilled.
- Tomatoes should be planted on Memorial Day.
- After planting a hill of beans, press the soil with your foot for good luck.
- Planting peppers when you’re mad, makes the peppers grow hotter.



- If 2 people's hoes hit together, they will work in the same field next year.
- Trees that bloom twice in one year will have a bad crop.
- Lay off your rows straight. Rows have to be straight because God wants everything straight as an arrow.
- Rows should run North to South.
- When planting seeds, always plant three in a hill – one for the good, one for the crow, and one to grow.
- Plant crops that grow above the ground during a waxing moon, and plants that grow below the ground on a waning moon.
- Burying a piece of iron next to your roses is supposed to make them more fragrant.
- Nothing grows under a walnut tree.
- In a vegetable garden, never plant the same plants in the same spot two years in a row. Rotate where they are, and you'll save your soil.
- Flowers which bloom out of season are evil.
- To keep crows from bothering your garden, kill one and hang it nearby.
- Plant green beans when apple trees are in bloom.
- Sow peas when daffodils are in flower.
- Plant melons when iris bloom.
- Plant tender annuals, beans, cucumber, and squash seeds when lilacs bloom.
- Plant marigolds around vegetables to deter pests.
- Plant three crops of parsley: two for the devil, and one for yourself.

There are also many Appalachian superstitions surrounding parsley. According to Pennsylvania Germans, Good Friday is the only day you can transplant parsley without

bringing death on the family. If you've ever tried to transplant parsley, my advice is to leave it well alone!

Cooking potatoes for dinner? You can use the potato water - don't tip it away! Save water after boiling potatoes and spray it onto plants that need protection. The starch is said to provide a protective layer on foliage.

It is considered bad luck to plant anything on the 31st of any month.

Some old folks say that you can keep moles away by laying out Juicy Fruit gum or human hair.

Not only do gardens put healthy and tasty foods on our supper table, but they offer other benefits. Colonial America Quakers believed gardens helped relax and restore the soul. They also believed growing plants and designing a garden stimulated the creative juices. So, not only can gardens help improve your mood, but they can also help with mental illnesses like depression and anxiety.

One last thing. No matter how tired you are after a long day of gardening, never forget to leave the hoe a safe distance away from the house. It's very bad luck to carry a hoe in your house.

Happy gardening!  
Banjo

## Strange Times in Appalachia

By Gurudev Ball

We live in a strange time here in Appalachia today. At best we are governed by uninformed and unempathetic leaders who don't see improving their constituents' lives as a priority. At worst, however, we have politicians who are following a downright fascist playbook, actively bringing the hammer down on marriage rights, bodily autonomy, and now gender nonconformity.

In Tennessee, Governor Bill Lee signed a bill amending the Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 7-51-1401, changing the description of adult cabaret performance to include "male or female impersonators who provide entertainment that appeals to a prurient interest".<sup>1</sup> To save you a google search, here is what that means according to the Supreme Court: "that which incites lasciviousness or lust".<sup>2</sup>

Now, I shouldn't have to spell it out that this is as strict of a legal definition as something like, "that which any reasonable person would conclude." A reasonable person in the context of law is a hypothetical person used to portray what the "average, cautious, and sensible" person would decide.

What could go wrong? It is precisely this ambiguity which conservative politicians are exploiting already in their rhetoric, claiming that dressing in drag or being a "male or female impersonator" is inherently sexual and therefore should be illegal in public spaces or where minors are allowed.

The fact is that drag is not inherently sexual, no more than a cisgender woman wearing an extravagant outfit is inherently sexual. Nor is wearing "masculine" or "feminine" clothing inconsistent with one's assigned sex at birth prurient in any fashion. It is perfectly acceptable for a cisgender woman to wear feminine clothing in public, so why is it suddenly inappropriate if she is trans?

Consider the discrepancy between this line of logic and the continued legality of establishments such as Hooters to permit underage patrons. It is literally a restaurant whose primary theme is attractive female waitresses in intentionally skimpy outfits. Their selling point is lust. If that doesn't match the definition of "prurient interest" in the eyes of the law, I shouldn't have to spell out what's wrong with classifying drag and gender non-conformity as such.

This, however, has not stopped conservative politicians from making claims that drag queens are "grooming" children by, for example, reading them storybooks at the library. To be clear: there is absolutely nothing akin to actual adult cabaret occurring in these "drag

queen story hour” style events, but this is what the conservative narrative would have you believe.

Moreover, this narrative coupled with this new legal definition would allow law enforcement to make that judgment for themselves in order to arrest a drag performer regardless of whether anything sexual in nature was portrayed or suggested. It seems like an officer is well within the law to decide that a transgender individual simply existing in public constitutes a “male or female impersonator” and therefore arrest them and charge them with a felony.

The loose and rather subjective description of this law will enable and legitimize extreme legal persecution of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, a group which already faces an uphill battle for social acceptance and legal recognition. So, what are we to do? As a member of the queer community and a close friend to many transgender or gender non-conforming people, I have lately felt at a loss of what I can do.

I can only imagine how some of my peers feel, and all I can do is listen to them, hear them, and help them in any way I can. It can feel as though we are running up against a monolithic, bureaucratic machine of politics in our efforts to protect LGBT folks, but this is what we must do.

We must educate our friends, keep the conversation going, and never ever let up the pressure. We will fight for our rights for as long as breath passes our lips. In Appalachia we stand together, cause there’s love in them/their hills.

[1] <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/SB0003.pdf>

[2]

<https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/osg/briefs/1984/01/01/sg840109.txt#:~:text=In%20a%20footnote%20in%20Roth,20.>

## “Is there free will” by A’Sun

By Asante Knowles (AKA A’Sun)

Is there free will for a thug  
Or is he just the product of they put in the mud  
They say we’re nothing more than a neurochemical  
drug  
If so, then I’m looking for neurochemical love  
But insurance doesn’t pay for pharmaceutical hugs  
Brain cells self organize so nigga I am the plug  
Overdosing on Agency I’m on a new prescription  
Refute determinism when I embody my cognition  
Free will comes the spontaneity of my decisions  
If dopamine dreams can excite my inhibition  
Which neuron can measure the morphology of my intention  
Non invasive surgery these lyrics cut deep with precision  
The self gets vulnerable and the ego starts the splitting  
There’s Freedom when kundalini hits the optic nerve  
but science ain’t got the vision  
I got more focus to sustain my attention  
than a nigga suffering from a cocaine addiction  
Fight flight freeze and fuck but the fifth f is for freedom  
Free agents make leaders and leaders make kingdoms  
When niggas lose guidance they just need someone to teach em  
Why would the environment afford goals if free will wasn't meant reach em  
This agenda seems deceiving  
I act in accordance to only what I’m perceiving  
Being free and conscious is knowing how to generate value with meaning  
I don’t need theories I create what I’m dreaming



## Mountain Folk Forage: Bradford Pears

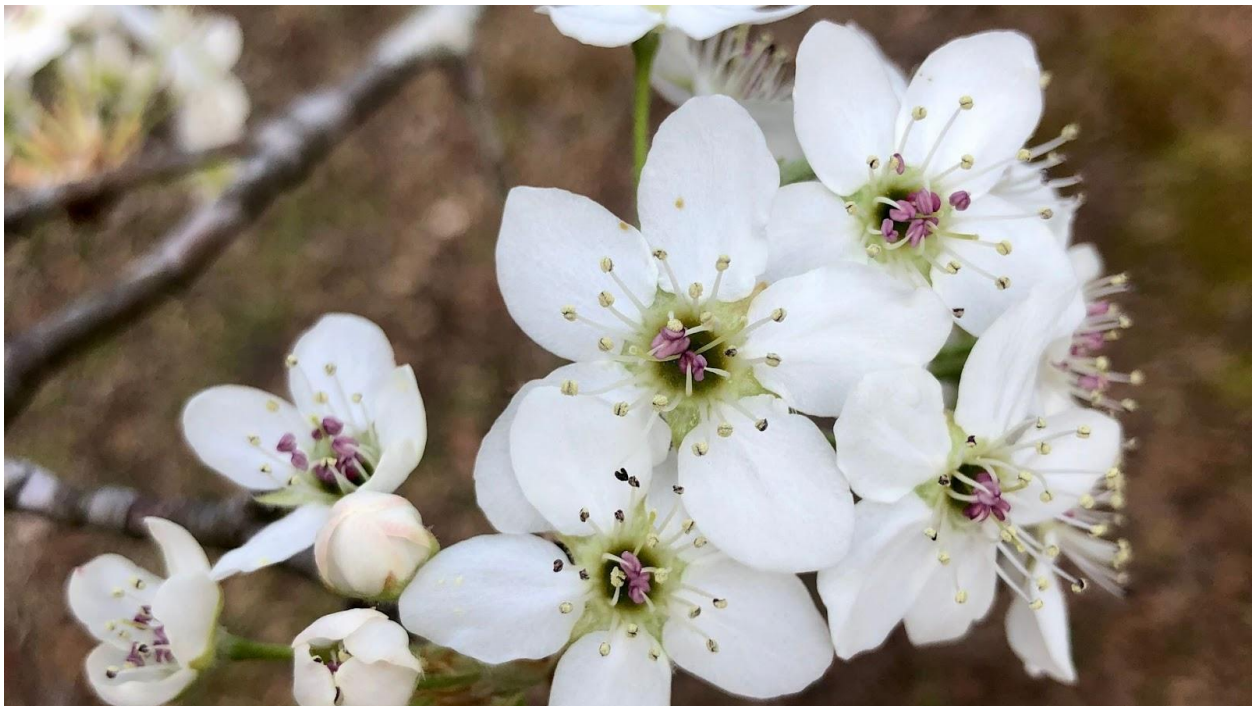
*\*\*Disclaimer: I am not a doctor, nor do I pretend to be. This article is informative and only covers the traditional uses for edible plants commonly found in the Appalachian region. It's always best to consult a health care professional or medical doctor when suffering from any ailment, disease, illness, or injury before trying any traditional folk remedies. \*\**

While the aromas of spring are usually associated with fresh flowers, afternoon thunderstorms, and warm air, there's one scent that always feels out of place: the Bradford pear.

Bradford pears have a truly terrible stench this time of year, which often leaves people with the conclusion that Bradford pears are good for nothing other than creating a stench that would scare off even the most tolerant of noses.

However, like most invasive species in Appalachia, the Bradford pear has many uses. If we used the wood, flowers, and fruits of the Bradford pear the way humans have for thousands of years, they likely wouldn't have become invasive in the first place.

Let's talk about Bradford pears, discussing their history in the USA and Appalachia, how to forage for them, and how to use them.



## About Bradford Pears

**Folk Names:** Callery pear

The Bradford pear tree, most commonly grown in deciduous rainforest climates in the Southeastern USA and the west coast, is not a US native plant.

This ornamental pear variety comes from Asian [countries](#), such as China, Vietnam, and Taiwan.

Bradford pear trees came to the USA in the early 1900s as ornamental trees. These unique pear trees became a favorite tree among landscapers since they never got too tall, grew quickly, and put on a lovely display of bright flowers in spring and colorful foliage in the fall.

However, the biggest benefit of the Bradford pear was that it was sterile — meaning, its seeds did not produce more Bradford pear trees. One could only make more Bradford pear trees by grafting them.

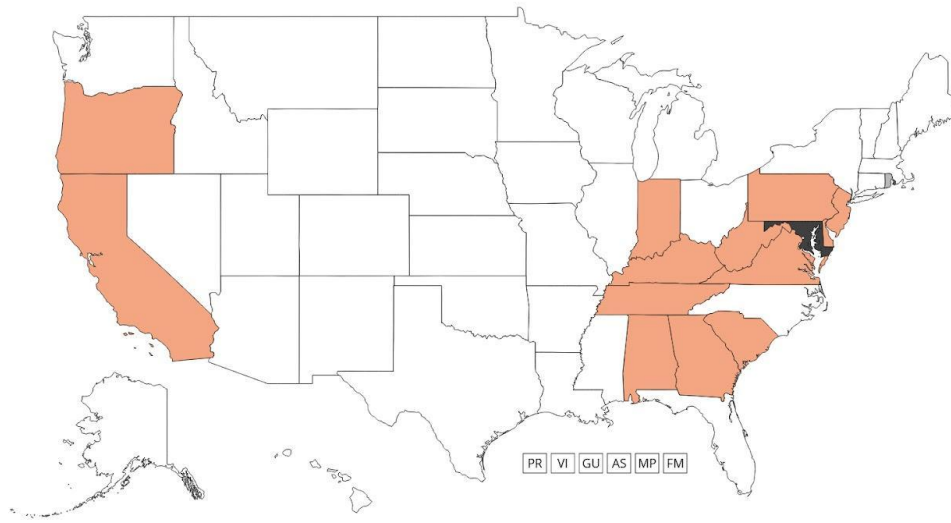
However, in the USA, some pear tree species were close enough to the Bradford pear to create many different hybrid species. Many of these hybrid species bore fertile seeds. It is from these seeds that the Bradford pear began to spread.

These days, Bradford pear trees are everywhere, and they are [invasive](#) in many states in Appalachia and on the West coast. In these habitats, the trees spread rapidly, as birds consume the seeds and scatter them all over.

It's also worth noting that landscapers are not helping anything by planting more Bradford pear trees practically everywhere. They're one of the most common trees in street medians and parking lots because they are small and won't cause root damage to the roads.

But... Bradford pear fruits are edible, and the wood is wonderful for woodworking. So, why don't we use these invasive plants for good and help to control their populations by enjoying them?

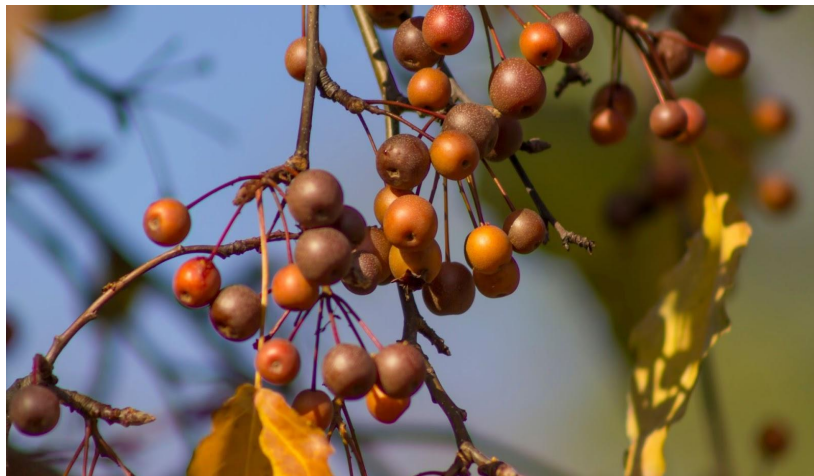
Callery pear (Bradford pear) (*Pyrus calleryana*)  
This species is not included on any national lists or laws



2/18/2021

## How To Identify and Harvest Bradford Pear Trees

Bradford pears are most recognizable for their smell, which people often compare to baby poop, vomit, or basically anything else that's foul-smelling.



However, right now, in early spring, Bradford pears show off their bright white flowers, which do look stunning!

The edible fruits of the Bradford pear will come later in the season, just after the first frost. Like rosehips, these fruits are bitter, sour, and sweet. To me, they taste a bit like crab apples or sour candy.

These fruits also have similar health benefits to rosehips, as they contain a fair amount of vitamin C, antioxidants, and minerals like zinc.



So, keep an eye out for nearby white flowers of the Bradford pear this season, and come back in winter to satisfy a sourly sweet tooth!

## How To Prepare and Use Bradford Pears

To prepare and use Bradford pears, you can eat the fruits raw right off the tree, use them in pastries and breads like you would use cranberries, make jelly and jam, or add them to smoothies for a sour kick.

I, personally, enjoy the taste of Bradford pear fruits when they are raw and fresh, but I have a taste for bitter, sour foods.

However, if you want to sweeten up the flavor, I highly recommend using [Southern Forager's recipe](#) for Bradford pear jelly! I haven't tried it yet, but I'll let you know how it goes this winter after my harvest!

Additionally, Bradford pear trees are great for woodworking projects. The trees themselves produce more limbs than their trunks can hold, so it's very common for Bradford pears to collapse into themselves. If you see any big limbs down, snatch them up!

Bradford pear is a favorite among wood turners, as the wood is very dense and the grain is so close that it's almost impossible to see.

## To A Garden Slug

By Aimee LaFon

The flowers  
are dying tonight, swarmed by  
    a hoard of gluttonous slugs.  
The daisies spoiled.                      Marigolds, long robbed of  
    ruddy hair. Bluebells  
decapitated. The enduring dandelion

Balks, no wish  
granted, no breeze to assume.  
    Some brackish fume of loss swarms  
the bleeding foxglove,                      soberly reaching,  
    slow and inert, down  
into the dusk. All that sap consumed by your shapeless

body; a  
glitteringly dull albeit  
    undeveloped mass, ever  
seeking an end to                      leafless stalks, searching  
    for an even match,  
perhaps, an eater that devours with the same ruin;

The beer can  
I planted in the soil,  
    is now encapsulating  
what was yours, writhing   embodiment of  
    sentience, stopping,  
heaving between toadstool spores, dragging you into a

Stupor, your id-  
ea lost in fermented pools,  
    livid fist resurfacing,  
fades, returns heavy    as I watch over  
    your body. I can  
only mourn what I remember. Know this: I'm sorry.

I fill the

can with a shroud of black mulch.

Silently find what's left of  
the daisies. Pick off the stems, one final  
selfish offering made  
with out fear. Dead petals to greet another wasted  
life, the riotous night now over.

