

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION—Cuyahoga County



<b>Inside this issue:</b>	
<b>A Gift of Sauerkraut</b> Richard Huff, MGV Emeritus	2-3
<b>Garden Dahlias</b> Kathleen Szabo, MGV 1993	4-5
<b>A French Chateau in the Loire Valley</b> Janer Danfoth Belson, MGV 2016	6-9
<b>2019 Year of the Salvia</b> National Garden Bureau	10-11



**Growing Up Frankenstein**

*Anne Evans, Intern 2018*

My father is no ordinary gardener. When I was young, my teachers reminded me that, though my drawings of trees covered in multi-colored fruit were creative, every tree grows just one type of fruit. I wasn't as imaginative as my teachers thought. Thanks to my father's prodigious skill for grafting, the fruit trees in my life never really represented what nature intended. He is a veritable Dr. Frankenstein in the orchard. His orchard boasts a peach-plum-arine tree and other monstrous specimens, like almo-cots and app-pears.

No fruit tree remains untouched in my dad's yard. Many of the grafts are clean, though some of the more distant fruit relatives have melded less easily. The almonds on the apricot tree hang on by a combination of plastic tape and prayer. Nevertheless, my dad tenaciously pursues his conquest of nature, forming the annual fruit harvest as guided by the multi-hyphenate arboreal visions that dance in his head.

My careful observation revealed that my father's long Sunday walks were less exercise than reconnaissance. He spoke of the snippings he returned with as donations, but I soon realized he was surreptitiously sneaking bits and pieces of the heartiest specimens on the block. Represented in his orchard were trees from our neighborhood, his mother's neighborhood, my grandmother's neighborhood and everywhere in between.



I was eventually recruited as his young assistant. I still remember how my hands trembled as I stripped away the bark of a young graft to be, carefully positioned it on the prepared branch of the recipient tree, wrapped it tenderly with black electrical tape, unwrapped and re-wrapped it, knocked off the graft while determining whether it held, picked it back up, repositioned it, and repeated the whole misadventure several more times before he finally told me to leave the damned thing alone.



As an adult, I've incorporated my dad's techniques in my own yard. This year, I planted a handful of fruit trees. As a matter of necessity, I will rely on grafted branches to provide cross-pollination for my tender fruit crop. I plan to rely on voluntary donations, rather than garden-robbing to supply my grafting scions, but I'm already consumed with visions of trees with stop-light green, red and yellow apples rubbing shoulders with plump golden pears. With any luck, my own daughter will never know the awful banality of a one-crop tree.

This summer, I returned to my parents' home to a bumper crop of Santa Rosa plums on one of my dad's still-thriving Franken-trees. After long, hot hours picking pound after pound of the juicy red-green fruit, I gazed in horror at the army of blue plums inexorably ripening above me on adjacent branches. Not to mention the white nectarines that were just about perfect on some of the lower branches of the same tree. Even as I follow in my father's Frankensteinian footsteps, I do so with some trepidation. A mad tree scientist's work is never done.