Fall Color Report – October 30, 2020

As October closes and November begins, hit the road or wander through your neighborhood and enjoy the beautiful colors of fall in Illinois.

Northwest

While fall colors have peaked in some areas of northwest Illinois, colors still abound. Sugar maples are showing yellow, orange or a pink glow; silver maples are yellow and yellowish green; red maples have some pink/maroon shades, and crimson king maple leaves are reddish-brown. Green ash trees have mostly lost their leaves, but those remaining have some bright yellow, while white ash leaves are a pink/purple. White oaks have leaves changed or changing to red, yellow and brown, with hickories showing browns and yellows.

Northeast

Northeast Illinois shows a wide range of color on the rural and urban landscapes this week. The red oaks are quite red and brown, contrasting with the very red sumac. Maples are everything between yellow and purple. Oaks vary by type with black oaks yellow-brown and red oaks yellowish brown to reddish brown. Swamp white oaks are yellow/brown, white oaks are reddish brown, and bur oaks yellowish brown. Walnuts and hackberry trees are all but done in the region. Hickories are now a washed out yellow and sassafras are done.

North Central

Rain and wind events in recent weeks have stripped a lot of the yellow color out of the forest in much of north central Illinois, but the color is by no means gone. Many of the oaks that retained their leaves are turning now with various shades of red and reddish browns. The urban landscape is still full of specimen trees with beautiful maple cultivars and many different shrubs like sumac and burning bush holding their colors. There are still bursts of flower color in the roadsides from asters and goldenrods.

Central

Tree watchers mark this week as the height of fall color in parts of central Illinois. Urban streetscapes show beautiful trees holding most of their colorful leaves, but not for much longer. Red oaks and black oaks are still maintaining their yellow orange to orange red color. Many of the white oaks are still showing deep red to purple. Some of the hickories haven't turned brown, with some yellow and others more yellow orange or orange. See the show before this weekend's high winds strip it away.

West Central

There is a lot of color to see in west central Illinois this week, with colorful red maples showing some vibrant red. Sugar maples are still showing color, but many are dropping leaves. Oaks are starting to steal the show, with white oaks showing a lot of purple now. Dogwoods are turning purple. Hackberries are showing a lot of bright yellow.

Farther south in western Illinois, hickory, Paw Paw, Osage orange, mulberry, catalpa, and black oaks continue to yellow, while sugar maples are readily showing yellow/red/gold/orange. Patches of sumac and individual sassafras and dogwood continue to redden. Areas with heavy populations of sugar maples that were sheltered from high winds are still colorful. Lots of walnuts, cottonwoods and ash shed their leaves in the wind events in recent days.

At Pere Marquette State Park, sassafras leaves are golden yellow and maple trees are various tones of red and orange. The beautiful blue sky and crisp autumn air this weekend make for an ideal time to visit the region.

South

Throughout much of southern Illinois, the sumac and dogwoods are showing magnificent hues of red, along with most white oaks that are scarlet red and even have a purple tint to them. Green ash which turn yellow lost many leaves with the wind events last week but the white ash leaves are still holding some deep purple colors that are a favorite each fall. Hickories are turning orange-yellow and then brown. Some trees in the red oak group (pin, black, northern red) are beginning to turn burnt orange hues, but many are still green. Many low lying areas that are comprised of walnut and cottonwood have lost most of their leaves. Bush honeysuckle, a non-native invasive

shrub, is 3-15 feet tall and still very green in the understory of many woodlands and are very noticeable this time of year.

The sassafras is done turning colors, while sugar maples are still turning yellow and red maples are still turning red. In deep southern Illinois, bald cypress trees in swamps are a beautiful sight to see. The water tupelo leaves in the Cache River basin are yellow and the trees are losing leaves with each breezy day. The tupelo droops (seeds) are dotting the ground looking like a black olive with white speckles. While most trees in the canopy are noticeably thinning, many oak trees are still hanging on to the green. Most black gum trees (sour gum) and hackberry trees are bare.