



Week ending Friday, October 2, 2020

UV Protection

A new study finds that one species of maple offers the best protection from the sun's damaging ultraviolet (UV) radiation for those who want to plant shade trees. Writing in the journal *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, researchers say the crimson king maple (*Acer platanoides*) provides the most protection.

The University of Toronto team found that swamp white oak, hackberry and copper beech trees also offered good UV protection. "One way to reduce effects of UV reflectance is to increase tree canopy. This is particularly important in urban areas where concrete and other hard surfaces pose heightened UV exposure risks to humans," said coauthor Sivajanani Sivarajah.

Earthquakes

An Aegean Sea quake was felt from western Turkey to Bulgaria.

- Earth movements were also felt in southwestern Iran, Taiwan, New Zealand's North Island, India's Gujarat state, the California-Mexico border region and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Ash Damage

Farmers in central Ecuador were counting their losses after Sangay volcano spewed a massive cloud of ash over the region, coating their crops with the eruption debris. Agriculture officials say that banana plantations that provide the fruit to many international markets were among the hardest hit. The ash also forced officials to halt operations at Guayaquil's international airport for several hours while crews removed ash from the runways. Sangay's first recorded eruption was observed by Spanish colonists in 1628 and was followed by others in 1728, 1916 and 1934.

Orca Punks

Yachtsmen off the coast of northwestern Spain have experienced some terrifying moments in recent weeks as orcas inexplicably rammed their vessels, causing damage to rudders and hulls. Officials have since banned sailboats less than 50 feet in length from navigating the affected coastal waters except for a specific route to the high seas. Biologist Bruno Díaz of Spain's Bottlenose Dolphin Research Institute told reporters that the ramming is probably being done by "immature teenage" orcas getting rowdy.

Plant Peril

Almost 40% of Earth's plant species are now at risk of extinction due to human activities, according to Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Its latest annual report on the state of the world's plants and fungi says more than twice as many plants are at risk than previously thought. It points to agriculture and aquaculture threatening a third of the plants at risk, while climate change appears to threaten only about 4%. The Kew researchers say some of the plants in danger hold great promise for medicine, fuel and food.

Arctic Tinderbox

The start of this year's Arctic fire season two months earlier than normal is a sign that the Arctic is now burning in an entirely new and dangerous way, according to researchers at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Writing in the journal *Nature Geosciences*, the scientists

blame zombie fires, which smoldered in the ground over winter following the previous summer's firestorms, for launching the early fire season this year. They also point to vegetation such as tundra and brush that has become drier and warmer under global heating for providing the fuel for the unprecedented blazes. The scientists say these Arctic landscapes were previously resistant to such conflagrations.

Tropical Cyclones

Typhoon Kujira briefly reached Category-1 force over the open waters of the western Pacific.

- Hurricane Marie gained strength late in the week on a westward path between Mexico and Hawaii.

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