

## AMERICAN TREASURES:

### Celebrating Geauga County's Biggest Black Walnut Trees

Easily recognized this time of year by the green tennis-ball sized and distinctly aromatic nuts falling from their branches, the Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) took this year's spotlight as the featured tree in Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) Big Tree Contest. With deeply furrowed bark and long, pinnately compound leaves, these native trees are sun loving, long living, and nearly disease and pest free. Known as one of America's most treasured trees, Black Walnuts are prized for their chocolate-brown, fine-grained, and durable wood. And let's not forget those abundant, nutritious nuts! When it comes to valuable Ohio hardwoods, the Black Walnut is cream of the (nut) crop.

With so many attributes of the Black Walnut tree, one benefit that's easy to overlook but we shouldn't "run off" without mentioning is their successful ability to clean water and protect soil. To date, plants and trees remain the most effective means of capturing and filtering runoff and sediment, therefore improving water quality and watershed health. It is estimated that a Black Walnut tree with a diameter of 45 inches can absorb as much as 6,213 gallons of stormwater runoff each year! So while the Black Walnut is commendable for its wildlife and economic value, the runoff reductions and clean water contributions are what really take these trees to new heights.

#### **Congratulations to Geauga County's 2020 Big Tree winner Mary Lou Barnes Raupach** for having the

winning Black Walnut tree! This tree grows majestically along Mulberry Road on the Barnes farm property in Munson Township. Impressive and immense, this tree stands at approximately 80 feet high, with an estimated crown spread of 89.5 feet, and circumference of 207 inches. With an overall tree index of 309.38 using Ohio's Big Tree ranking formula, this tree provides enormous ecological and economic value providing hundreds of dollars of annual benefits and intercepting thousands of gallons of stormwater runoff each year. Equally amazing is the longevity of this tree's life, which at one time was the second biggest walnut tree in the state! We're sure this legendary tree will continue to inspire others who drive by it and witness its enormous limbs stretching and shading both the homestead and the street.

As you are out and about this fall, take the time to admire Geauga County's biggest and oldest trees for all of the beauty and benefits they bring; and perhaps next year nominate one of your own. Geauga SWCD thanks all who participated in this year's Big Tree Contest. Stay tuned for more information as we continue our annual search for Geauga County's biggest trees!



*Mary Lou Barnes Raupach (right) of Chesterland stands with her grandson, Eric Osborne (left) and her Champion Black Walnut Tree. Raupach nominated her winning tree in the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District's 2020 Big Tree Contest. Located along Mulberry Road in Munson Township, this legendary tree continues to thrive and survive on the Barnes farm property.*