

Marcescence

IF YOU SPEND MUCH TIME out in the woods during late fall or winter, you have probably seen a tree with most of its leaves still on the branches even though its neighbors have dropped their foliage. I often see these young trees, usually oaks or beeches, when I am out in the woods enjoying creation. It can be a unique sight. Their dry leaves make a lot of noise when the winter wind blows.

This phenomenon of a tree keeping its withered leaves through autumn and winter is called marcescence. This often happens to immature trees or young parts of old trees. These leaves will hang on throughout the winter, often until early spring growth finally pushes them off. Trees with marcescent leaves lack the enzymes that cut off nutrients from the leaf so they release in the fall when they should.

Mature trees rarely have this issue, and they drop their leaves in the fall as they were designed to do.

These marcescent trees often remind me of some of my struggles as a Christian. Sometimes I hang on to things too long. There are issues I wrestle with or faults I fail to forgive. Sometimes my own failures stick with me. Seeing these trees is a reminder that I need to address the issues I'm facing and seek the grace and forgiveness that God offers.

I need to learn to be like mature trees. I need to forgive those things in myself that I've struggled with. I need to move on from failures and seek resolution. These mature trees remind me of God's grace—but only when I see nearby a young oak hanging onto its leaves. When I see the marcescent oak, it reminds me that my faith needs to continue to grow. It's a reminder of God's design for mature oaks and God's design for us. It's a reminder that I need to drop the things that hold me back.

It's a process we all go through. All of us begin like young oaks, stumbling and struggling. But God designed us to grow. God created us to mature and to strengthen our faith, to become more like Jesus each day.

Be like a mature oak and drop those leaves! **B**



Clayton Lubbers teaches science at Byron Center Christian School and has been teaching for over 25 years. He loves the outdoors and commonly meets and sees God while hunting, fishing, and exploring creation.