

I was putting away silverware this morning when I just happened to think of the name of the company that made a Swedish cake server I was wiping. I had never looked at the name before, but I remembered hearing it from one of Runo's sisters. And it started my thought processes this way: How much do we know that we have no need for? How much information is there that we all should have, that really isn't common knowledge? And, do we assume that others have the same font of information that we do, that there are things that "everybody knows," and others that might elicit this thought—"Nobody knows that!" I guess when the hands are busy, the mind can occupy itself with questions like this.

It was brought to mind again today. In a conversation with my cousin, she said that a man that took care of cutting a big limb from one of their trees had called a sugar maple an oak. She made a comment that would have alerted him that he misspoke, but he didn't react. She realized that he really didn't recognize that the tree was a maple.

I can't imagine living where we do and not recognizing the difference between an oak and a maple. But, maybe this is common? I hope not. I do know that many people call all evergreens "pines," and I find that very strange, too. But, on the other hand, I see lots of small plants in the meadows that I do not have names for. Knowing the botanical name or even the common name isn't really the issue. It is knowing the differences we see and understanding what those variations mean in the lives that interact with them.

I used to think that nearly everybody had a basic understanding of the system of government we have in this country, what our responsibilities as citizens are, and what our fealty to the Constitution of the United States really means. But, it has been clearly shown in recent years that many citizens of this country really have no idea how government is supposed to work.

It isn't always simple in execution, but the guidelines are pretty straightforward. It isn't rocket science! We understand that the laws we live by need to apply to everyone, that we have to accept the will of the voters, that our government must work for us, and that nobody is above the law. Just as an oak is not a maple, an ex-President is not a king.