

# Minisode! Fallogies

## Ologies Podcast

### October 25, 2017

Heeeyyy. Hi Ologites. This is the very, very first minisode of *Ologies*. I thought, “Why don’t I toss you a little one?” That way you can catch up on Horology, Primatology, Gemology. Maybe you’re an episode behind and you just want a short one. Here’s the deal. It’s a million degrees and it’s October and I’m pissed about it. I have scarves I can’t wear. It’s hot. I want it to feel like Halloween, and I’m getting really nostalgic, and I’m having this hunger for autumn. So I decided to look up some of the ologies associated with autumn and I thought I’d tell you about them because they’re crazy. Okay, you ready? Let’s just call this Ologies October. Cool? Octoberologies.

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The first ology I want to tell you about: cucurbitology. Cucurbitology is the study—you’re so not even ready for this. This is so awesome—Cucurbitology, the study of pumpkins and gourds. This is a real thing. I was researching a little bit because I was like, “I don’t know anything about cucurbitology.” Turns out jack-o-lanterns in Ireland, do you know that they used to be made out of hollowed-out turnips? I don’t know what kind of elbow grease it takes to hollow out a turnip, but I’m not interested. Also, I looked at pictures of them. Damn. They look like mummy babies. They’re horrifying. They’re so much more scary than pumpkins. Very unpleasant.

I did look up some advice from a cucurbitologist. They say, “Hey, you’re gonna carve a pumpkin and you don’t want it to rot, why don’t you spray that thing with a weak mix of bleach and water? Stop that mold right in its tracks, you guys.” Advice from a cucurbitologist. Pumpkins and gourds.

What else says fall to me more than zombies? Entomopathology. What the hell is that? It’s when insects become zombies. People love zombies. I can’t even look at someone in zombie makeup without being really, actually afraid. I don’t know. I don’t understand. My brain sees someone who is an extra in a movie wearing prosthetics and I’m like, “No. That’s a real dead person.”

But in the insect world, there’s this one fungus zombie-maker called *Chordyceps* and it infests carpenter ant colonies. What happens is an ant gets a spore on it, gets infected by this fungus, and then the fungus takes over its behavior, and essentially leads it to crawl up a branch, hop on a leaf, which it never does, it never does this, and then use its jaws to bite on a leaf. There it dies with a death-clench onto a leaf, and then a stalk of fungus grows out of the ant’s dome like a fungal antenna. Then it rains spores down onto all of the ant’s friends and family like a fungus bomb at your family reunion. It’s the worst. Anyway. That ant wouldn’t have done that were it not possessed by a fungus zombie. So deal with that.

Another good October type of ology? Demonology. Heard of it? Demonology is a thing. People study demons. I came across one person who says she is a forensic psychologist who specializes in violent crime. She has a PhD in Forensic Psychology, a Master’s in Educational Psychology and a Bachelor’s in Personality and Religion. She literally wrote the book on demonology. And then she wrote a follow-up book called *Demonology II: A Course In Differentiating Medical Illness From Spiritual Possession*. I checked on her Twitter to see what’s on her mind, and her account had been suspended. I don’t know, maybe a demon hacked it.

Another good ology for this time of year: chiropterology. Chiropterology. So this comes from 'chiro' hand and 'ptero' meaning wing, so hand-wing. This is the study of bats. And do you know that there's a thousand species of bats but only three of them are vampire bats? The rest of the bats are like, "I just wanna eat mosquitoes or fruit. And I have such a terrible reputation."

Vampire bats, pretty cool. There's this one called a white-winged vampire bat. Lives in South America. Prefers the blood of birds if given a choice. In one study, they found out that they worked in pairs. They crawl like spiders across a floor undetected, then one of them nuzzles up to a chicken breast and pretends to be its baby. And the chicken's like, "Oh hello," and starts to incubate it while the other one pierces its foot and feeds on the fresh blood. And before you're like, "Dude. That's not cool. One of them's bogarting a live chicken foot and the other's doing all the ruse work." Well, some species of vampire bats, I'm not sure if it's this one but either way, will feed on blood and then they'll go back to their friends and they'll barf it up and be like, "Does anyone want some of this?" I think that's very nice.

Now the ultimate autumnal ology, phenology. This is the changing of the seasons. Spring phenology, you're studying buds, daffodils, shoots, grasses, the like. Fall phenology, the changing of the leaves. And what changes the leaf color? Well they're really orange and yellow underneath, but all the chlorophyll that they need in the summer turns them green. The chlorophyll dissipates, the leaves turn these beautiful orange and yellow colors.

This year though, it's been really warm, so the chlorophyll is breaking down slower than usual, but apparently it's supposed to cool down in November. They do say that 2017 is currently on pace to be the second hottest year on record. When was the first? Like in the 1800s? No, no, it was 2016, so whatever. Moral of the story? Ask smart people stupid questions before we all bake to death.

Speaking of death. Very special episode of *Ologies* comes out on Halloween. Thanatology, the study of death and dying. Weirdly, it was one of the most uplifting conversations I've had in my alive life. Do come back next week on Halloween for Thanatology.

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Meanwhile, thank you so much to everyone who's rating and reviewing and subscribing. I read your reviews. I'm a creep like that. I appreciate every one of them. And because of that, you guys have kept this in the top 25 science podcasts for the last month, which is so huge. Thank you to all of the Ologites over in [Patreon](#) who are supporting this show and making it possible. And then the [Facebook Ologies Podcast](#) group.

Also, if you're looking for holiday gifts, you wanna treat yourself, [OlogiesMerch.com](#) has you quite literally covered. There's shirts and totes and mugs and baby onesies. And we just put up today as I record this, enamel pins. There's Ology pins with different ologies on them. They're so dope and they're limited edition, so you're probably gonna wanna get 'em quick.

Come back next week and we'll address the Halloween spookiness of death and also I promise you will leave feeling more badass than you have in a while. So go romp in the sprinklers or some leaves depending on the weather. We'll see you back here next week for Thanatology.

*Transcribed by Deb Ward*

**Links to things discussed:**

**Cucurbitology**

[Disgusting turnip face](#)

[Gourd Care 101](#)

**Autumn phenology**

[Fall is so hot tho](#)

[Why the leaves turn — but not so much this year](#)

[Autumn, we want you back](#)

**Chiropterology**

[Vampire bats and their chicken lickin'](#)

[Bat facts a plenty](#)

**Casual demonology**

[The doctor is in](#)

**Entomopathology**

[Zombies are real, y'all](#)

[Like really](#)

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