

# A tree by any other name would smell as sweet—or would it?

For many years my father talked about planting a weeping cherry tree by the house. He just never got around to it.

So four years ago, as a gift to our parents for their anniversary, my siblings and I decided to buy one and plant it in the yard.



We have a family tradition of naming things—everything from goldfish to cars—so obviously the tree had to have a name. And because it was a cherry tree, we called it George, in honor of George Washington and the cherry tree he chopped down. It made sense at the time.

Fast forward a couple years and all of a sudden we had a new George in our lives—and he wasn't a tree.



"It's sort of awkward," my mother said one day, "to have a tree that shares the same name as your daughter's boyfriend."

Well, now that George is my mother's son-in-law. Does that make it more awkward or less? My theory is that there shouldn't be much confusion over which George we mean. After all, one is a tree and one is human.

But the human George's wife tells me there are days when my mother will tell her over the phone, "George looks very pretty today," and it takes my sister a second to figure out what the conversation is about.



Over time—especially after the human George proposed to my sister beneath the cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C. last spring—I stopped calling the tree George and started calling it "the cherry tree."

It didn't matter, though, because I have a 5-year-old son who loves names and has a fantastic memory for them. He insists on calling the tree George.

"Mama," Leo said the other day, "why is the tree named George?"

And so I told him the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. Little George couldn't tell a lie, I explained, so he told his father he had chopped the tree down. And this is a cherry tree, so we named it George. And I acknowledged that he also has an Uncle George, but that we hadn't really known him when we named the tree.

Leo thought for a moment.

“Then why don’t we call it George Washington?” he asked.

By George, I think he’s got it! But I think that name might already be taken, too.

Whatever the tree’s name, though, this is the time of year when we admire George the most. And, with much respect given to my sons’ uncle, yes, I mean the tree.



*The last two photos were taken by Treasa Matysek.*