

Garden Time

Story of Green Leaf Explained By Expert

By M. E. Gardner
N. C. State University

It was not necessary for people in the lower Piedmont and Coastal Plain to travel to the mountains this year to enjoy the annual leaf color parade. The low temperature in October

in the mountains turned the leaves brown before color development reached the maximum stage of beauty. In our area, this same low temperature triggered the finest display I have seen for many years, if ever.

Our colors were as vivid as those ordinarily seen in the mountains. Maples, dogwoods, gums, hickories and certain oaks really put on a show. As I write this column (11-21-72) the Scarlet oaks are just beautiful. Maples, earlier, were just as pretty but are now naked and ready for their rest period and dormancy.

The change in leaf color from green to the



LOOK MOM, NO SADDLE! ... Mermaid Diane Gray amuses spectators as she breaks in new dolphin "prop" between shows in the underwater theatre at Florida's Weeki Wachee. Life-like and life-size, "Adolph II" now adorns the sun porch of the mermaid villa at the Florida west coast attraction.

many hues of red, yellow and orange is an interesting story. During the growing season, the leaves are green (chlorophyll) and engaged in food manufacture. All life on earth is dependent upon the green leaf because the leaf is the source of food and fiber to support our daily lives and that of our animals -- flowers, fruits, vegetables, grains, grasses, seeds, wood, gum, resins and many other plant products. Leaves are of enormous importance to us, quite apart from their beauty or diversity of coloring.

In the summer, when they are green and manufacturing plant food, we are not conscious of the many other colors (pigments) that are also

present in the leaf. In the fall when the days become shorter and the temperature cooler, the manufacturing processes slow down and the production of chlorophyll is reduced. This continues until the green color disappears and the other colors, which give us so much beauty and pleasure, organize for the annual autumn color parade.

And so, the leaf, so young, tender and green in the spring, performs its annual function of supporting all life on earth, and then drifts gently to the forest floor to enrich mother earth. Thus the life cycle

of the leaf is completed but the energy stored in the roots, stems and seeds of plants will renew the cycle in the spring.

The integrity of men is to be measured by their conduct, not by their professions.—Junius.

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