

American Christmas Tree Now Threatened With Extinction

Washington, Dec. 15.—Each holiday brings the usual story about the Christmas tree—where they come from and the means used to bring millions of them to the homes of the people.

The Christmas tree and the holly are the two species which go so far back in time that they are almost deemed to be extinct unless special steps are taken to reproduce them.

The state of Vermont alone furnishes millions of trees for the eastern states each Christmas time and unless special steps are taken to conserve and reproduce the supply some time will be required. The American Forestry Association has issued a Christmas tree leaflet on the subject.

The first step to save the Christmas tree is to stop the better fire prevention methods. Wholesale cutting by those who never go into the woods to get the trees and the "holding" of trees in the cities are denounced. On the other hand proper cutting aids the growth of the larger trees and if propagation is a help. The holly is being cut in a way that is causing its extinction. The right cutting will save this valued tree for the holiday season.

WHAT KINDS OF TREES.

There are 25 kinds of fir trees in the world are native to North America, eight occur in the Pacific region and in the Rocky mountain region and only two are found in the eastern United States, and one of these is limited to the high mountains of Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Most important in the Western group are the Grand Fir, Noble Fir, White Fir and Red Fir. The Balsam Fir is unquestionably the best of our native firs. It is one of the most beautiful evergreen trees native to North America. It frequents bogs, swamps, and other wet places. Among its chief associates are the American Larch, Arbor Vitae, Black Spruce and Red Spruce. Its companion species are not many for few trees can withstand the extreme wet and cold conditions of our northern bogs and swamps.

"The Balsam Fir is a tree which satisfies many human wants, but the greatest of all its gifts is the Christmas tree. As a Christmas tree it has no superior, and in many localities no other native tree has Christmas tree qualities that even approach it. The European fir, so common throughout many parts of Continental Europe, has many characteristics in common with our Balsam Fir. It, too, has been used for centuries as a Christmas tree. The similarity between these two trees is very marked, which may have helped develop our high regard for the Balsam Fir and rate it as the foremost Christmas tree of the eastern United States.

"On the trunk of the Balsam Fir are found a large number of little blister-like sacs of balsam. A finger nail will puncture the little blisters and there will flow a small quantity of balsam, clear as crystal. When refined, this is used in making microscopic slides in our scientific laboratories. It is used chiefly to attach cover glass to the slides. Balsam is also regarded as an excellent medicine.

"Cones and buds of the Balsam Fir are also very distinctive. The buds are almost round, about one-sixth of an inch long, clustered at the end of the twig and appear to be covered with a coating of varnish. The cones are from two to four inches long, cylindrical, and stand erect on the twigs. Their scales fall off soon after they reach maturity and leave a bare central axis. This is an unusual habit among evergreen trees. In the Northwoods many collect the cones and use them in filling pillows and cushions, for the leaves when dried emit a very fragrant odor. The wood is soft, does not contain resin passages and ranges in color from white to brown. It weighs about 24 pounds per cubic foot and is used extensively

TWENTY KINDS OF SPRUCE.

There are twenty kinds of Spruce trees and they occur in every country in the Northern Hemisphere. Eight are native to North America, three being found in the eastern part and five in the western part.

"Deep green leaves which are armed with spines along the margin distinguish Christmas Holly. The leaves are so bright they often reflect light as mirrors. The small bright red berries are also a helpful means of identification in Fall and in Winter. An old manuscript in the British Museum states that the Holly hath berries as red as any rose." Devout people regard the leaves of the Holly as a symbol of the Saviour's crown of thorns.

"Unfortunately the methods of collecting the branches is very destructive. In many instances the tops of the trees are cut out completely, leaving nothing but an erect bare trunk. We need the Holly sprig for decorative purposes at Christmas, but in order that a future supply may be insured, special steps must be taken at once to regulate the cutting in such a way that all the existing trees may continue to produce annually an abundant supply of thrifty branches.

CHRISTMAS HOLLY.

The American Holly, also called Christmas Holly, and the closely related European Holly, are linked with our Christmas traditions. Many people are familiar with the holly leaves and berries, but few of them know that they grow upon trees which are common in the coastal plain regions of the South and found locally as far north as Pennsylvania and along the Atlantic Coast to southern Maine. While the Christmas Holly may reach a height of 20

feet and a diameter of 2 to 3 feet in Arkansas and Texas, it rarely exceeds 20 feet in height and a few inches in diameter in the extreme northern part of its natural range.

"Of course, nobody, particularly the young folk, wants to miss mistletoe. It is the only parasitic plant that is used at Christmas time. It is sometimes called a tree thief, for it gets all its nourishment from the trees upon which it lives. In the South one may see thousands of trees literally festooned with the mistletoe. It sometimes grows in the form of a witch's broom, or one may see it dangling down from the branches of a tree in graceful array. It always appropriates for its own development the lifeblood of the tree upon which it feeds. Some four hundred species of mistletoe are listed. Most of them occur in the tropics, and nearly all of them are parasitic. Many varieties are found in the United States. They occur from the coast of New Jersey southward and westward.

"In Oklahoma the mistletoe has been selected as the State flower. If you question an Oklahoman about the parasitic plant as a State flower, he is likely to answer that if man may tap a maple tree for syrup, and the pine tree for turpentine, it is fair for the mistletoe to tap trees so that it may develop and become available for decorative use. Examination of the leaves of the mistletoe show they are almost nerveless, thick and fleshy, and a magnifying glass will show only about 200 breathing pores to the square inch, while in the common holly there occurs at least 200,000 breathing pores to the square inch.

Large quantities of Trailing Pine, also known as Princess Pine, and Ground Hemlock are used for Christmas trees. These plants really are not pines or hemlocks, but are closely related to the ferns.

"As Christmas trees can be raised at a profit, so it is also possible to raise the Christmas holly and the mistletoe by artificial means. In that way an adequate supply may be insured for the future, and all those who contribute towards the developing of successful methods of propagating these plants will insure the welfare and happiness of future generations."

SHOP FORCES REDUCED.

Pensacola, Fla., Dec. 15.—The force at the Louisville and Nashville Railroad shops here was cut down yesterday 20 per cent, letting 105 men out of employment. No time is stated when they will be reinstated.

HARDING APPROVES DESIGN.

Washington, Dec. 15.—President Harding yesterday approved the design of the medal which, under the army bill of June 5, 1920, he was authorized to present to the City of Verdun in the name of the Congress and people of the United States.

"And There Wasn't the Slightest Smell from Dead Rats."

Writes John Simpkins, farmer of Annapolis, N. J.: "Rats were costing me hundreds yearly; tried dogs, ferrets, poison, could not get rid of them. Bought \$1.25 pkg. of RATS-NAP (5 cakes). Used half, not a live rat since. Dead ones a plenty. I like RATS-NAP because after killing rats it dries them up—leaves no smell." Three sizes, 35¢, 65¢, \$1.25. Sold and guaranteed by Wolford-Porter Drug Co., Charlotte Drug Co., Tryon Drug Co., and Southern Hardware Co., John S. Blake Drug Co., and Charlotte Hardware Co.

BASKETBALL EVENTS WILL BE UNCORKED

The last two days of this week will stand out brilliantly in the annals of the basketball season which is now just getting under way. Games will be played in the City League, by the Charlotte High school and the Varsity Y. M. C. A. gym.

The high school outfit will open its 1921-22 season with a tussle with the Churchland High school quint Friday night at the Y. M. C. A. This school locals last year in the season opener.

Billy Harvell, member of last year's squad, was Tuesday afternoon elected captain of the high school outfit. Coach A. J. Paul has cut the squad to the following: Harvell, C. Carmichael, Ware and Schiltz forwards; Keearns, Morris, Norris, and Jack Brown, guards; P. Carmichael, center.

Coach Paul says he has no idea who will take the floor in the initial go. Harvell will, doubtless, hold down one of the forward stations. The other three men are working neck and neck and Coach Paul says a toss of a coin could easily determine the first choice for Harvell's running mate. The same holds true for the guard candidates, he said.

Friday night at 7:15 o'clock before the Charlotte-Churchland tilt Polarines and Highland Park, and Tabernacle and Hornets Next Wednesday night the other game in the City League, Civitan club vs. American Trust will be played.

The varsity outfit of the "Y" will begin its season offensive with a game with the Concord "Y" Saturday night. The opening whistle will sound at 8 o'clock in the "Y" gym.

"Renny" Cuthbertson has been elected captain of the team. He is also coach. Billy Howell, Cunningham, Bill Yates, Marsh, Milstead, and McMillan are on the squad.

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