



Trees of life, coconut palms provide food, livelihood and welcome shade. In the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, the trees are being destroyed by an epidemic of lethal yellowing, caused by deadly

mycoplasma-like organisms (MLOs) that are transmitted by planthoppers. Millions of producing coconut palms are endangered.

No Relief Is Seen

Millions Of Palm Trees May Topple In Epidemic

What's a tropical paradise without palm trees?

In a recent two-and-a-half-year period, majestic coconut palms that had enchanted and shaded vacationers all but disappeared from a resort island off Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Popular palms also have vanished from other parts of the Caribbean, the Bahamas, Florida, Texas, and Mexico.

An epidemic of lethal yellowing is infecting the trees, mainly the coconut variety known as Jamaica Tall. Widely cultivated, it is valued both for its tropical beauty and its annual yield of millions of dollars' worth of products such as copra (dried coconut meat), coconut oil for soaps and detergents, and even coconut-shell charcoal used in air-purification systems.

Island-hopping across the northern Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, lethal yellowing appears undeterred by such natural barriers as open seas and prevailing winds. On land it spreads as fast as 1.3 miles a month.

The disease invaded Mexico in the early 1980s and killed more than a quarter of a million coconut palms.

"It is only a matter of time before the disease affects the entire Gulf coast of Mexico, with incalculable damage to the coconut industry," plant pathologist Randolph E. McCoy writes in the current National Geographic. Mexico is the leading coconut-producing country in the Western Hemisphere.

Lethal yellowing, first reported in Jamaica in the late 1800s, is caused by deadly microbes known as mycoplasma-like organisms. They are carried from tree to tree by minute insects called planthoppers. When planthoppers feed on palm leaves, they inject the organisms into the tree's food-carrying veins, much as mosquitoes inject malaria-causing parasites into human victims.

Lethal yellowing generally kills a tree within five months after symptoms appear. "First the immature coconuts begin to drop, then the flower buds wither, the leaves turn yellow, and the tree's crown falls to earth," McCoy writes. "The barren trunk stands like a warped telephone pole until it, too, roots and collapses."

The catastrophic toll extends far beyond the coconut industry. In 1955 the disease invaded Key West, Fla. It spread north to the mainland and by the early 1970s

had shown up in Miami. Within four years, more than 90 percent of the city's coconut palms died.

In 1978 lethal yellowing appeared across the Gulf of Mexico in the lower Rio Grande Valley of southern Texas, ravaging ornamental date palms. By 1982 it had arrived on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. Meanwhile a new outbreak has occurred along Florida's west coast.

Can the palms be saved? There is no permanent cure. On plantations of tens of thousands of trees, the only workable solution, McCoy writes, is replanting with varieties resistant to lethal yellowing.

Highly resistant Malayan Dwarf palms are replacing Jamaica Tall in Jamaica, Florida, and Mexico. Despite their name, Malayan Dwarfs reach heights of 50 to 60 feet.

But before the epidemic runs its course, McCoy believes, millions of producing coconut palms will die. Resistant varieties are the only hope.

Norlina Man Is Arrested, Drug Crackdown Continues

A Norlina man has been "busted" in the town's continuing efforts to eliminate the drug problem that has plagued Norlina residents, Norlina Police Chief Charles Galantis said this week.

Douglas McArthur Compton, 26, of Harris Street in Norlina, was arrested Saturday morning, following action taken by law enforcement officials based on information they had received. A search of the Compton residence revealed a quantity of marijuana, estimated at three to four ounces, that had "already been

bagged up" and was ready for sale, the police chief said.

Estimates of the street value of the weed range from \$1,500 to \$2,000, Galantis said.

Officials also confiscated \$251 in cash from the premises.

Compton has been charged with possession of marijuana for the purpose of sale and maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of selling and delivery of marijuana. He was released following payment of a \$500 bond to await his court appearance on Aug. 9.

Assisting Police Chief Galantis in the investigation were Norlina Police Ptl. H. W. Aycock, Warren County Chief Deputy Bobby D. Bolton and Warren County Deputy R. A. Coleman.

"We will continue to work on this problem and do everything we can to eradicate drugs in the town of Norlina," Chief Galantis said.

Chocolate cakes look and taste richer if the greased pans are dusted with dry cocoa.

THE HOWS OF SAVING WATTS.



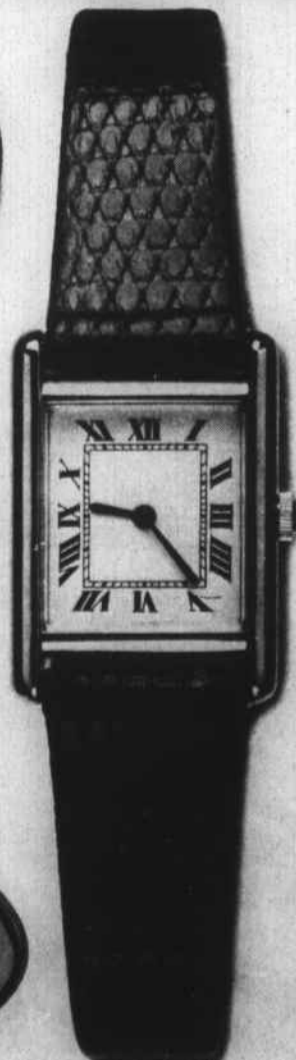
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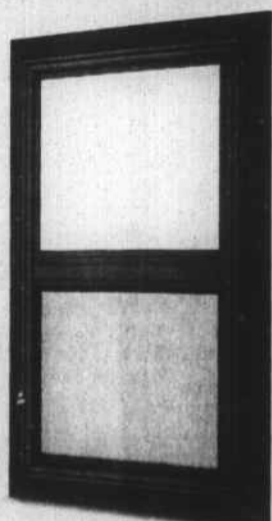
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