



Get After the Weeds!

WEEDS aren't getting their fair share of attention from the CCC, in the opinion of Prof. M. L. Fernald of Harvard University. The efforts of the young men could be better spent against "the vagrant pests which crowd us" than in much of the work they are doing in woodlands, where "they unconsciously become destroyers of the natural equilibrium of nature," he declares.

A good deal of "tidying-up" has been done in forests, and this is highly destructive of some of our choicest wild flowers and ferns, as well as disruptive to the economy of ground-dwelling birds and small mammals, Prof. Fernald points out. Wildlife generally needs a certain amount of judicious letting alone.

But nobody could object to a wholesale assault on such open and acknowledged pests as poison ivy, ragweed and Japanese honeysuckle. Our worst weeds are either uninvited immigrants or native species that have been encouraged to become vegetable gangsters through man's disturbance of the original state of nature. Like certain human types, they thrive best under conditions of constant disturbance.

Sometimes plant immigrants will be decent and well-behaved for a time, but fall into evil ways when conditions change. The esteem in which such plants are held is apt to undergo a corresponding change. Prof. Fernald mentions two examples: a plant originally known as Venus' Paintbrush is now called the Devil's Paintbrush; another, first called St. James' Wort, lost its odor of sanctity and now bears the ignominious title of Stinking Willie.

These aggressive foreigners, and natives gone to the bad, press hardest on the rarest and frequently the most beautiful of plants—at any rate, plants of

greatest interest and importance from the scientific point of view. And man aids and abets the weeds to which he has given their start in evil life by forest fires, by clearing out underbrush, by polluting rivers, and in a dozen other of his blundering ways.

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RADIO

Television Station Has Radically Designed Antenna

See Front Cover

A NEW type, cubic-shaped antenna for the 10-kilowatt television station of the General Electric Company atop a 1,500-foot mountain in the Helderberg hills region near Schenectady, N. Y., is nearing completion. It is pictured on the front cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER.

Radical both in shape and design, the antenna will radiate picture-carrying waves polarized horizontally so that the signal will have more power than any existing television station in America.

Using four and one-half meter waves, the station, W2XB, will blanket the region of Albany and the entire capital district of New York state. Expected range of the station is about 40 miles, the distance to the horizon.

The radiating parts of the antenna are eight hollow copper bars, each four inches in diameter and seven feet long, arranged in sets of four to form the top and bottom of a perfect cube.

Schenectady's new television station will soon be completed but because there is much engineering investigation to be done prior to actual broadcasts, public transmission will not start before early summer.

Part of the system is an ultra short wave transmitter which will relay programs from Schenectady out to the mountain top station.

This relay station may be the forerunner of future chain television broadcasting for it has been suggested that major cities might be linked through such small relay stations spaced at intervals of 10 or 12 miles across country.

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of the people with vivid reality. Among thousands of such vases Dr. Salaman points to some shaped like potatoes, amazingly real; some that represent human beings, grotesquely decorated with potato "eyes"; and some that are

lumpy potato-shape with faces of men marked on them.

Some of the human faces are shown terribly disfigured by marred lips and noses. Dr. Salaman interprets these as exhibits of actual rites, done to human beings long ago. The theory is that Peruvian Indians thought of potato "eyes" as mouths, and the potato buds which sprouted from them resembled teeth in their imagination. Hence, they attempted to imitate this effect in human sacrifice, by the reasoning that savage minds have so often relied on. Supposedly, the spirit of the potato would be induced magically to bring to the fields the good crop that the sacrificial victim symbolized.

Dr. Salaman points out that these Indians regarded people born with hare-lip as endowed with peculiar powers, particularly with relation to frost. Therefore it was probably an additional advantage that a surgical rite to impress the potato spirit should convert the victim into a superhare-lipped individual, with upper lip cut away to expose bared teeth.

Disfigured lips and noses are prevalent in Peruvian art, apart from any potato association. Ordinarily, they are attributed to uta, a disease that destroys flesh of nose and lips, and it is usually supposed that a benevolent Stone Age surgery, not a cruel rite, was responsible for the trimmed away features to stop spread of the disease.

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METEOROLOGY

Lake Forms in Death Valley; Heavy Rains Responsible

WHEN really heavy rain falls in California, that's "unusual." But when enough rain falls to make a lake in Death Valley, that's news.

And that's what has happened, U. S. National Park Service observers report from the famous desert valley. The Armagosa river, usually nothing but a dry wash, has overflowed its banks and spread out into a lake dozens of square miles in extent.

Death Valley is not completely rainless, even in "usual" years. Its annual precipitation averages a trifle under an inch and a half. Even this little is enough to carpet the earth with flowers for a short time in the spring. This year, because of the heavy rains, the spring wildflower show is expected to be even finer than usual.

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