

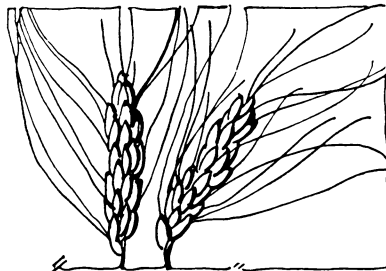
## Do You Know?

New Mexico claims to have enough salt to supply the entire Western Hemisphere for thousands of years.

Aerial photography is saving cities millions of dollars in survey work; it is particularly helpful in planning highways and in land use studies.

Even a very thin scale deposit on the inner walls of tubes in boilers, caused by minerals in the water used, has a marked effect in reducing the rate of heat transfer, thus decreasing the efficiency of the boiler.

"Drunkometers" are devices now used by several American cities with persons charged with drunk-driving; the suspect blows a measured quantity of breath into a rubber bag within which is a series of tubes containing chemicals which determine the alcoholic content.



We Eat Weeds

➤ GARDENERS and farmers wage endless war on the plants they do not want, and stigmatize as weeds. They pull them up by the roots, they slay them with hoes and chemical sprays, they massacre them in millions with steel-bladed and flame-throwing implements. If weather or other conditions interfere with their weeding schedules they are in despair.

Yet ecologically speaking most of the crop plants they nurse so tenderly behave very much like weeds. One of the reasons why weeds prosper so annoyingly on cultivated land is that they and their cultivated rivals like exactly the same soil and moisture conditions: good, loose tilth (which means a disturbed soil), and neither too much nor too little moisture.

A great many of our cultivated plants which are known in the wild state look like weeds and for all practical purposes are weeds. They do not compete successfully with the stabilized populations of grasses and other herbs that form meadows and prairies, and they cannot thrive in the shade of woodlands, or even brushlands. They like the open, slipping, eroding soils of steep hillsides, or the often-disturbed floodplains of streams.

To take a few random samples: The wild form of wheat is a hill plant in Asia Minor, and wild oats grow in similar locations in North Africa. Wild potatoes are plants of the open on the west coast of South America, and wild tomatoes belong to the jungle-edges farther east on the same continent. Nobody has ever seen wild corn, but a shrewd guess puts its probable habitat (if it still survives) on the "wrong side of the Andes." Wild tobaccos grow on the uneasy soils of tropical American mountains.

There is further evidence in the habits of cultivated plants that have reverted to the wild. Wild lettuce and wild chicory are weeds of vacant lots, trash dumps and neglected roadsides. Wild carrot has become the familiar weed, "queen's lace", that flourishes in abandoned fields, and has to be fought hard in cultivated ones. In California, wild oats grow on open soil in open places, as does also that plant reminiscent of the Biblical parable, wild mustard.

All these once cultivated species that have "gone native" thrive so long as they have no close competition, or when the only competition is that of cultivated plants in loose soil. If their habitats are left undisturbed and become stabilized with a good, solid sod, they become less numerous and as a rule ultimately disappear.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1948

### CHEMISTRY

## 2,4-D Increases Yield Of Turpentine and Rosin

➤ MORE efficient extraction from Southern pines of the gum that yields turpentine and rosin is promised through a 2,4-D treatment developed by C. E. Ostrom and C. S. Schopmeyer of the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, Lake City, Fla. They have dedicated U. S. patent 2,435,724, recently issued on their discovery, to the American public for its free use.

The treatment consists simply in spraying the cuts made through the bark of the trees with a dilute solution or suspension of 2,4-D or one of its compounds. In tests conducted there, yields from treated trees were from two to seven times higher than those from similar trees that were merely slashed and not sprayed.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1948

## Expecting?

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