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This Week

Research Notes

Articles

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Letters

Look out below!

Researchers studying eastern white cedars of the Niagara Escarpment ("Cliffhanging Science," SN: 9/26/92, p.200) should take advantage of the thousands of years of Japanese and Chinese experience with bonsai culture.

For example, there should be no "puzzle over the logs' preservation." Bonsai culturists know that, because of its higher density, slow-growing wood is less structurally compromised over time than is faster-growing wood. (Higher density is caused by drier, tighter packing between cells.)

Also, size is not the primary factor in blowdown. Clearly, one should look downward for the "root cause."

Hector Samkow
Lake Oswego, Ore.

The organisms on the Niagara Escarpment are extremely stressed. As a resident of this region, I have experienced changes in temperature of more than 50° in several hours. Such rapid fluctuations cause dramatic microscale changes in rock structure. The roots of the cedars under study could have more moisture available in the course of a day than in the preceding several decades.

The dendrochronological evidence derived from this study may be used to corroborate other findings, but it should not be used as a primary source upon which to base theories of our regional climatic history.

Todd K. Parmington
Tonawanda, N.Y.

No laughing matter

In "The reproductive hazards of nitrous oxide" (SN: 10/3/92, p.215), the researchers may have overlooked a very simple explanation. Did anybody ask the women how often or when in their menstrual cycle they had intercourse? Perhaps "laughing gas" simply reduces sexual desire or ability.

Wayne Wyrick
Warr Acres, Okla.

Surely the researchers could easily have discovered the earlier and possibly more comprehensive studies that led the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to publish in 1977 its "Criteria for a Recommended Standard [for]... Occupational Exposure to Waste Anesthetic Gases and Vapors" [DHEW pub. no. (NIOSH) 77-140].

The publication emphasized primarily hospital operating-room personnel exposed to nitrous oxide and the higher-than-normal incidence of birth defects among them. The effects extended in some instances to the wives of male anesthesiologists.

Since 1977, all new or remodeled operating suites in California have had special evacuation systems for waste anesthesia gases.

Norman MacRitchie
San Francisco, Calif.

CORRECTION

Photographs of the jellyfish polyp and ephyra in "Biomedicine Blasts to New Heights" (SN: 10/17/92, p.268) are reversed.