



Many Called, Few Chosen

➤ RUBBER plants by the score are being recommended every day to authorities in Washington, by citizens anxious to do something to solve the present serious shortage. Moreover, most of them actually contain rubber; there are very few miscues and false leads among them.

People generally have got the idea that any plant with a milky juice, or latex, is a rubber possibility. In general, that is correct. And there are many plant species native to this country, as well as many well-established exotics, that yield latex when cut.

Most frequently suggested among

plants, perhaps, is poinsettia. This is natural: almost every household has had a Christmas poinsettia at one time or other, so that its readiness to purl forth latex from the slightest wound, even at the breaking off of a leaf, has been practically universally observed. It grows luxuriantly outdoors, too, in the warmer parts of the country, as along the Gulf Coast and in Southern California.

Names of possible native rubber plants are legion. Milkweed probably tops the list, along with its botanical second cousin, Indian hemp or dogbane. Then there are the various spurges, including the attractive ornamental plant known as snow-on-the-mountain, as well as leafy spurge, which is a terrible weed in northwestern range country. Both plants are poisonous, and it would be a fine thing if an economic use could be found, to encourage their elimination from pasture lands. Other native latex-yielders include wild lettuce, several lobelia species, and even the troublesome wild morning-glory.

With all this wealth of milky-juiced plants, why aren't we using them?

Answers are several, but they all boil down eventually to one: It wouldn't pay. Rubber content in all these latexes is low, and mixed in with most of them are quantities of undesirable resins that would make the resultant rubber too "tacky" for most uses. So it appears better to spend our rubber-emergency

money, labor, and critical metals and chemicals on the most promising plants, such as the well-tried tropical rubber trees, guayule, kok-sagyz, Edison's gold-enrod and perhaps one or two others. There is no harm in knowing, however, the U. S. Department of Agriculture scientists patiently analyzed all suggested plants, no matter how unpromising, before they passed them over.

Science News Letter, October 31, 1942

PHARMACY

Chemical Society President Asks for Quinine Hoards

➤ QUININE, now worth several times its weight in gold to American forces fighting in malaria-ridden tropics, is lying idle in little hoards at universities and other institutions all over the country, Dr. Harry N. Holmes, president of the American Chemical Society, is convinced. He has issued an appeal to all laboratory heads having unused stocks of the invaluable drug to turn them in, as an aid to their country at war.

In addition to its unique use in combating malaria, quinine is used by organic chemists in preparing certain compounds of technical interest but no medicinal value. On a search for quinine kept for this purpose, Dr. Holmes asked his fellow chemists, during a recent lecture tour, to look at their stock shelves and see what they had on hand. He found a pound at Yale, at the University of Vermont half a pound and in Boston a pound or more.

He has therefore issued a general appeal to chemists who have quinine to write him, so that he can forward their letters to the proper medical authorities. He does not want to have the quinine sent to him directly, but only information as to its whereabouts, and the willingness of present owners to sell at current prices.

Dr. Holmes' address is Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

Science News Letter, October 31, 1942

GENERAL SCIENCE

Five Science Libraries En Route to War Prisoners

➤ FIVE LIBRARIES each totaling over 125 scientific books and pamphlets were placed aboard the exchange ship *Grips-holm* and should soon be in the hands of the United Nations prisoners of war held by the Japanese in the Far East.

Collected by the War Prisoners' Aid Service of the Y.M.C.A. and dis-

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