



Anti-Christmas Greens

➤ CHRISTMAS wreaths and garlands, already appearing in the market, will probably find even readier sale than usual this year because of the sharply reduced numbers of Christmas trees available. This sets all the greater value on discrimination and judgment in purchasing, lest you unwittingly make yourself party to a violation of the very spirit of the season of good will.

Some kinds of Yuletide garlands and greeneries, gathered in the wild, can be marketed only at the expense of sound conservation principles. All too often, also, they represent outright and deliberate theft on the part of the gatherers. They are, in truth, black market operations of the worst kind, conducted brazenly and openly in the daylight, either because there is no specific statute prohibiting them or because general laws are not considered worth enforcing in their case.

Perhaps the most notable of these offenses is involved in the commercial exploitation of ground pine. This plant, sometimes loosely thought of as a kind of moss, is really more closely related to the ferns. It grows abundantly in

certain types of woodland, especially on the thin, loose-textured, acid soils common in second-growth pine forests, where it often affords the only ground cover protecting against soil erosion. Since the type of forest with which it is associated in itself generally represents an effort toward restoration after disaster or abuse, any action on our part that causes even a slight additional setback is simply piling injury upon injury.

Less grievous in direct consequences, though even more deplorable in terms of loss of beauty to the woods, is the large-scale marketing of native American holly. Like the ground pine, this is usually obtained without the knowledge and consent of the owners of the land, so that it is as a rule hacked from the trees in haste and with utter recklessness as to their subsequent fate. No patriotic American will buy American holly. He will buy English holly instead if he can find it; for this glossier, brighter-berried species is now raised for the market in this country, and its purchase puts American dollars into the pockets of honest growers instead of thieves.

Not all wild gathered holiday greens need be avoided, however. The "synthetic" holly-like decorations made by combining twigs of mountain laurel with the red berries of swamp ilex, most conservationists agree, are quite permissible because their wild sources are extremely abundant and because harvesting methods commonly used only cut off the ends of branches, leaving the plants essentially unharmed.

Science News Letter, December 4, 1943

NUTRITION

Malnutrition Death Rate Cut From Over 50% to 0

➤ THE DEATH RATE in persons gravely ill from deficiency diseases, the hidden hunger sicknesses that result from faulty diet, has been cut from over 50% to zero, Dr. Tom D. Spies, of the University of Cincinnati and Hillman Hospital, Birmingham, Ala., told members of the Southern Medical Association meeting in Cincinnati.

In the nutrition clinic, a cooperative of the hospital and the university, 95% of the vitamin B complex deficiencies are among the white persons, Dr. Spies reported, and 95% of the rickets cases are in Negroes.

"Throughout history," he declared, "war, famine and death have been associated. Now, more than ever before, it is important to apply what we know about nutrition in order to prevent ill-

ness and death from undernourishment."

Poverty alone is not the cause of poor diet and deficiency diseases, he stated. They affect both rich and poor if they have not eaten the proper food. Lack of knowledge as well as lack of money may lead to poor diet and resulting disease. Even with a good diet, deficiency diseases may occur if there is some other condition which prevents the body from properly using the food that is eaten.

Saving patients who were dying of pellagra, beriberi or scurvy would have satisfied physicians a few years ago, but today, Dr. Spies pointed out, interest centers in early diagnosis and treatment of mild states of vitamin hunger in order to get the patient back to health and work as quickly as possible.

Science News Letter, December 4, 1943

NUTRITION

Don't Be Wishful Thinker About Powers of Vitamins

➤ DON'T be a wishful thinker about vitamins, or about anything else, for that matter. A good many otherwise sensible grown men and women who know they cannot have a castle in Spain by merely dreaming about it seem nevertheless to believe they can gain eternal youth and strength, freedom from colds and every other ill, by simply taking vitamins.

The warning against this wishful thinking on the vitamin subject comes from Dr. A. J. Carlson, professor emeritus of physiology at the University of Chicago. At the wartime nutrition conference of the Institute of Medicine of Chicago, he stated that wishful thinking on the vitamin problem by scientists as well as laymen "may promote malnutrition by baseless faith and false hopes that the 1943 variety of synthetic vitamin pills will make up for every variety of food deficiencies there may be present or may threaten our people."

Vitamins, as almost everyone well knows, are remarkably potent chemicals. They are absolutely essential for that normal functioning of the body which we recognize as good health. Without enough of the vitamins, people get sick. Dr. Carlson's point, however, is that people also get sick when they are not getting enough of various other chemicals found in foods. Some of these chemicals are known; the amino acids, for example, which are building blocks for the protein in flesh and blood and various body organs.

Other chemicals are also found in

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