

BOTANY

More Cork Trees

Four thousand cork trees were planted by science enthusiasts during the past year. Seven more mature cork oaks have been located.

► MORE THAN 4,000 cork-oak trees were planted by science enthusiasts in the southern states during the past year, it has been reported by the Crown Cork and Seal Company. Leaders in the national effort to help make this country independent in cork, an essential raw material, the company states that seven mature cork oaks, heretofore unrecorded, have been located.

The widespread planting of cork-oak seedlings and search for mature cork oaks resulted from kits containing pieces of natural cork block and cork leaves to help identify the trees, being sent to all of the 4,700 Science Clubs of America located in the southern states and to the more than 5,000 subscribers to THINGS of Science.

Science enthusiasts, interested in raising cork trees and living in states where the trees will grow, may receive cork-oak seedlings or acorns for planting by sending a postcard request, stating the number desired, to the Crown Cork and Seal Company in Baltimore, Md. The seedlings will be sent this fall and winter, at the same time they are furnished those whose requests were received too late last year to be filled.

Thirteen cork oak trees in five states were reported by boys and girls belonging to Science Clubs of America and subscribers to THINGS of Science. Although a few of these trees were already known and one or two had recently been stripped, seven mature cork oaks were located—one in Florida and six in California. The number of mature cork trees growing in the United States is so small that old records are being combed and scouting parties going out in an effort to locate them all.

Cork oaks, from acorns brought to this country long ago, are most likely to be found in states south of the Mason-Dixon line in the eastern half of the country, and west of the Mississippi in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. Cork is the outer bark of an oak closely related to the native live-oak of the South and Southwest.

Those interested in helping search for the oaks should look carefully among

old colonial estates and among some of the well-planted expensive homes. Some may well be located in the half-wild stands of trees left around the ruins of old plantation houses and abandoned ranches. Since the cork is not a native tree, it is not likely to be found in the woods.

A cork-oak looks like a live-oak, except that its leaves always have toothed margins, and its acorns are usually much longer and less bluntly pointed. The really critical test, however, is to dig out a small block of the bark. If it is thick and made of pure cork, the tree is undoubtedly a cork-oak and should be reported to the Crown Cork and Seal Company, giving exact location, name of owner, size of tree, and abundance of acorns, if any.

Cork-oaks that are now being planted will yield their first crop of cork bark in from 15 to 20 years. After first strip-

ping, which usually yields low-grade bark, thick shells of cork can be removed from the trunk about every 10 years for a century or more.

Bottle corks are by no means the most important use for cork. Cork blocks are needed for life-belts and fishing-net floats; corkboard for insulation in refrigerators and house walls; cork gaskets for many uses; composition cork for crown cap liners; and finely ground cork for heavy-duty linoleum.

Science News Letter, July 29, 1944

INVENTION

Coffee Oil Used in Soap As an Aid in Cleansing

► THE OIL in coffee beans is utilized in making toilet soap, in a process on which patent 2,353,686 was issued to Robert Brown of New York City. The beans, either green or roasted, are simply ground to an extreme fineness in a matrix of some other good soap-making oil or fat, preferably cocoa butter. Spent coffee grounds, collected from restaurants, can be used as well, the inventor states. The solid fibrous part of the coffee bean, in its finely ground condition, serves as a mechanical aid in cleansing, without being too scratchy.

Science News Letter, July 29, 1944



SAVES HUMAN LIVES—Rabbits, seen in this National Research Corporation of Boston photograph, are being injected with penicillin in tests for its efficiency. Their temperature is observed for four hours after the injection, and if the rise is abnormal, the lot of penicillin is rejected.