

Do You Know?

Snow reflects about 75% of the sunlight falling upon it.

X-rays are used in treating successfully many skin disorders.

New radio *noise filters* eliminate static or buzzing in electrical equipment and make radio reception better.

The *Gila monster*, only poisonous lizard found in the United States, is especially fond of eggs.

Bottles with a plastic coating are being used to hold certain acids and other liquid chemicals; even if the glass bottle becomes cracked the flexible plastic will hold in the contents.

Mining in the Philippines in prewar days gave direct employment to about 250,000 persons; rehabilitation of the industry is slow because of Japanese theft or destruction of buildings, machinery, tools and supplies.



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Winter Fruits

► FRUITS, we are accustomed to think, are things belonging to autumn and late summer, not to winter. We are also used to thinking of fruits as something suitable for eating; peaches and plums, pears and quinces, apples and grapes. It hardly occurs to us to consider as real fruits such things as the seed-balls of sycamore trees, or the peppercorn-like "seeds" of lindens, suspended beneath their oddly-built but efficient gliders.

Yet these dry, unappetizing objects are true fruits, in the botanical sense of the term. The plant scientist, who tries to see things from the plant's point of view, defines a fruit as a seed or seeds, plus associated structures. Thus, acorns are fruit, and so are the winged "keys" of maple and ash, and even the scaly cones of pines and firs and spruces.

Fruits do two things for the seeds they enclose: they give them protection from the weather, and they provide means for dissemination into new territory. The fleshy pulp of edible fruits—the "real fruits" of everyday definition—gets mammals and birds to swallow them, and the seeds, in their digestion-resistant coats, thus get free rides, sometimes to considerable distances. But the glider-wings attached to maple and ash and linden seeds are good carriers, too, especially in a winter storm; and so is the little pinch of downy fluff attached to the small seed of the sycamore, released to serve as a parachute when the crust of the tight little ball is broken.

Some of the winter fruits we see stick to the tree as a matter of necessity. Many species of oaks take two seasons to mature their acorns; those that were fertilized last spring will not be ripe until next fall. The same is true of some kinds of pines and other conifers. And there

are some species of pine that keep their cone-scales tightly closed over the winged seeds beneath them until a fire sweeps through the woods. Then the released seeds find a desolated world to be repopulated.

Of course, not all winter fruits are dry and deadlooking and unappetizing. Plenty of them have a certain amount of pulp around their seeds: persistent-fruited crabapples and red-haws, buckbrush or coralberry, snowberry, several kinds of honeysuckle, false bittersweet, and the junipers that most people call cedars. Such fruits may not appeal strongly to human appetites, but birds find them very acceptable in winter, and in return for the slight amount of nourishment afforded by their pulp will carry the seeds at least as far as the next roosting-place.

Science News Letter, January 12, 1946

The *solenodon* of Haiti is a rat-like animal with an elongated nose like an anteater.

Deposits containing 1,000,000 tons of aluminous *laterite*, a mineral rich in aluminum and iron, have recently been discovered in northwest Oregon.



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