



Spring Flowers Now

➤ THIS is the time of year when one is apt to take a pessimistic view of the poet's rhetorical query, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" It seems, indeed, very far behind as we approach the middle of winter's last half.

Yet you can have spring flowers now. They will brighten up your home, conjure you out of your late-February blues and convince you that perhaps the poet was right after all.

All you have to do is to go out and cut a few sprigs from one of the spring-flowering trees or shrubs. Lilac, cherry, apple, or perhaps, best of all, forsythia or golden bells will usually give good results. Select a branch that has rather large buds, for these are most likely to conceal the coming flowers.

Put your sprigs in a vessel of water in a warm place and be sure to see that the water does not dry out or become foul or sour. In not too long a time, about a week or two, you should see the twigs respond to the artificial spring temperature you have created with an offering of foliage and bloom.

Actually, this is what the florists have done in essence when they force the woody branches now offered in the early spring market. There are other tricks, too, that the ambitious layman can do if he wishes to get his spring flowers ahead of time. The

simplest is merely to pre-immersion the twigs in a pan of rather warm water for a few minutes. For best results, the temperature should be just above that which is comfortable to your hand. This extra stimulus will speed up blossoming by several days.

Some florists get good results from hardy, woody branches by pounding the bottom of the stem to a pulp. This maceration opens up the vessels carrying water to the buds, speeding up the blossoming process. It will not work with soft, pulpy sprigs.

Another of the tricks involves a little more in the way of materials and labor. This is to expose the sprigs in a closely covered vessel to the fumes of ammonia, chloroform or several other chemicals. If this is tried, the twigs should be left in the fumes for at least half an hour.

These treatments will work with almost any free-flowering, woody plant that blossoms in the spring. Earlier in the winter they would not have worked because many buds have to go through a somewhat obscure physiological process to which we have given the convenient but not wholly clarifying name of "ripening."

This process goes on slowly during the winter and by the time the corner of the season is turned and spring, though still distant is approaching, the buds are ready to respond to the proper stimuli of water and warmth, even if they are applied a little prematurely.

Science News Letter, February 24, 1951

METEOROLOGY

Better Weather Ahead Is Long-Range Forecast

➤ A DEFINITE break in the weather pattern over the nation will occur between mid-February and mid-March. Most of the country east of the Rockies can expect temperatures to shift from the colder than normal which people have been experiencing to warmer than normal.

The greatest and "perhaps most welcome moderation" from the 30 days ending in mid-January, says the Extended Forecast Section of the Weather Bureau, will take place in the Midwest, where it has been persistently cold. There, temperatures will average 10 to 15 degrees above the mid-January, mid-February period—a shift larger than can usually be expected at this time of year.

Only Texas, east of the Rockies, will not participate in the good fortune. It will be slightly colder than normal up to mid-March, according to the forecasters. The same condition will exist west of the continental divide.

On Feb. 2, the Extended Forecast Section predicted that the whole of February would be colder than normal for most of the country. This mid-February prediction is not in contradiction to the earlier forecast, according to Jerome Namias, chief of the long range forecasters. Temperatures during the first two weeks were cold enough

On This Week's Cover

➤ WHAT is believed to be the first all aluminum highway bridge in the world was recently completed at the aluminum city of Arvida, Quebec. The bridge spans the Saguenay River at tidewater and saves a five-mile trip from Arvida to the huge power plant at Shipshaw. The river at this point is 300 feet wide.

The scenic view on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER shows the 504-foot-long bridge, which never needs to be painted.

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to drag all of February below normal, he said.

Most of the nation will have more rain or snow than normal through to the middle of March, according to the prediction. However, New England and the Southeast will have less than the usual amounts, while the Rocky Mountain and Middle Atlantic states will stick pretty close to normal.

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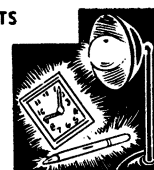
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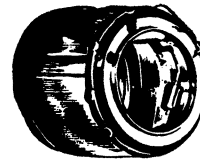
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