



The New Year

► NEW YEAR'S Day is not the same on all calendars. Many peoples reckoned the year as beginning in the spring—ancient Greeks and Romans, for example—and a few even in autumn.

But the marking of the new year has always been tied up with one of the four principal points of the sun's apparent path through the heavens: spring and autumn equinoxes, when days and nights are equal in length; summer solstice, when days are longest; and winter solstice, when they are shortest.

It is quite natural to begin the year in spring, when the days have grown long enough to provide warmth and light for germinating seeds and opening buds on vines and fruit trees. Calendars that put New Year's Day on or near the spring equinox are farmers' calendars.

It is not without significance that Mars, in whose month (March) the Romans celebrated the coming of their new year, was the god of agriculture as well as the god of war.

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It may seem strange, if you stop to think of it, that the calendar of the Christian year, which has come to be that of all Western civilization, should begin when nights are still long and dark, and when the coldest weeks of winter are still to come.

But the long nights are not quite so long as they were a short time before. The winter solstice has been passed; the sun's retreat southward has turned into an advance northward again.

It was this first token of new hope that was the occasion of the old pagan Yuletide feast, with its brave show of evergreen branches, holly, mistletoe and all the other trappings that have been taken over bodily by ourselves, including the immemorial, somewhat irrational, but thoroughly human, custom of showing how glad we are by eating (and perhaps drinking) too much.

There is no written record of the exact date of Jesus' birth, as there is in all the gospels of his crucifixion. We have a hint that it may well have been in winter, because of the anxious need for shelter that sent Joseph and Mary into a stable when there was no room for them in the caravanserai.

In selecting this particular time to celebrate the birth of Christ, and his ceremonial acceptance into the Jewish community a week later, the early Church simply took over the ancient pagan feast of hope and gave it a new significance.

Science News Letter, December 29, 1951

CHEMISTRY

Develop Single-Treatment Fungicide for Tomatoes

► A SINGLE treatment for tomato plants with a newly developed fungicide will prove effective against all major fungus enemies, to both fruit and foliage, it has been announced by the Du Pont Company, Wilmington, Del. The same fungicide is recommended for potatoes and may later, after extensive tests have been made, be recommended for many other crops.

Manzate fungicide is the name adopted for the new spraying material. Chemically it is based on derivatives of dithiocarbamic acid and its technical name is manganese ethylene bisdithiocarbamate. It has already undergone extensive field tests carried out in 32 states, Canada and Mexico, to evaluate the compound for disease control for many vegetables and also for apples, tobacco, melons and nuts.

A great advantage of the new fungicide in addition to its effectiveness is that it alone gives protection against all fungous diseases on tomatoes. Previously two or more chemicals have been required in alternate applications to control the various diseases. It is particularly recommended to control anthracnose, gray leaf spot and Septoria leaf spot on tomatoes, and early and late blights on both tomatoes and potatoes.

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