



Christmas Trees

➤ THIS IS the season when 28,000,000 little trees are brought into 28,000,000 unseasonably warm front parlors and loaded down with enough tinsel, twinkling balls and colored lights to build a glittering highway from earth to the moon.

The little evergreens never flowered when they grew out of doors. Suddenly they sprout bright candles or complete electric systems for blossoms. Apples, oranges and candy canes appear in their boughs in a burst of fruit. It takes real magic for such things to occur. But this is a time of benign magic.

Christmas trees, like many other things which decorate homes at Yuletide, are older than Christmas itself. They were first used in lands far from Bethlehem. They belong to the North, to dark and savage

lands beyond the Rhine and the Danube. The favorite Christmas tree in America is the spruce. There are several types of spruce, but they all can be spotted by their short, sharp, prickly needles, each one standing on a miniature pedestal by itself. Their small cones hang downward.

Then there is the fir, close cousin of the spruce. Firs have softer needles, usually curved, and their cones stand straight up. Pine trees, often used at Christmas, can be told from spruce or fir by the fact that their needles come in bunches or pairs instead of singly. White pines always have five needles in a bunch. The various yellow pines have less than five—usually two.

Red cedar has very fine, feathery branches of small pointed leaves. Arbor vitae, a relative of the red cedar, has leaves flattened into tiny scales which completely cover the twigs on which they grow.

Gigantic is the merchandising machine which brings millions of these trees from mountain forests to city street corners, all within the brief month between Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve.

Yet only in rare instances does this mighty splurge of woodland cutting hurt the forest. If the Christmas tree marketer cuts selectively, his thinning helps the remaining trees to grow, trees which might otherwise have died from crowding.

Many families do not buy a cut tree at all, but have instead a small spruce or fir planted in a tub. They use it as a perennial Christmas tree, bringing it indoors each December, sinking the tub in the garden during the remainder of the year.

Children and tree grow together, until one day the parlor ceiling is suddenly too low. The magic still lives, but the tub is outgrown.

Science News Letter, December 18, 1954

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Cattle Disease End Seen

➤ ANAPLASMOSIS, WHICH costs American cattlemen an estimated \$10,000,000 annually, may soon be brought under control and eradicated by means of large-scale testing never before possible.

A way to produce in quantity the material needed for the "complement fixation

test" that detects the disease in cattle has been announced. It was found after ten years of research by federal and state animal pathologists.

Anaplasmosis, like Texas fever that was eradicated some years ago, is caused by a protozoan parasite that destroys red blood corpuscles. The test uses antigen, an extract of the disease parasites from the red blood cells of infected cattle, to detect the disease in other cattle. It is described by U. S. Department of Agriculture scientists in *Agricultural Research* (Dec.) as being similar to the Wasserman test for human disease.

The disease is harmless to man either through contact with infected animals or by eating infected meat, the Department reported. Cattle, however, suffer from high fever, anemia, a loss in weight and a termination of milk flow. It is now hoped that the disease can be checked through planned large-scale tests and the finding of control measures.

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