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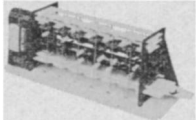
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CONSERVATION

Committee Asks Study On Plant Enemies

► A DETAILED STUDY of the effect of civilization's dirty air and water on plants has been called for by a newly formed Plant Science and Entomology Research Advisory Committee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Accelerated research is needed for studying effects of diseases and insects on plants, as well as of pesticidal chemicals, the committee said.

It also recommended increased use of infrared aerial photographs to detect disease infestation and decline of trees and crops because of abnormal soil conditions and devastation by insects that destroy all or part of the plants.

• Science News Letter, 87:238 April 10, 1965

Nature Note

Paper Wasp

► Across the melting spring fields, around the roofs of houses, and up the limbs of apple trees drones the young queen paper wasp, sole survivor through the winter of her colony.

Warm spring days have brought her from her winter home beneath the bark of a dead tree or from inside a barn, and now she is searching for a place literally to hang her home.

The Polistes wasp is a social wasp, about one inch long, with reddish black or brown bodies and smokey colored wings. Sometimes two or three queen wasps will work together in the spring to build their paper home, but usually each overwintering wasp is the founder of her own insect city.

With powerful gouging jaws, the queen chisels out bits of weathered wood from dead stumps or old fences and chews them into a soft pulp, mixing them with her saliva. This combination forms the raw material of the world's first pulp-wood paper.

Starting with a stem, which she builds downward from a tree limb, the queen constructs the first room of her paper palace, a six-sided cup in which she lays her first egg, and supplies it with a tiny drop of honey as food. She then builds another cell by the same process, building downward from the original cup. By the time she has built a nest as big as a golf ball, the first eggs have hatched into white grublike creatures, each occupying one of the six-sided cells. These pass their pupal stage, then break out of the cell as winged workers.

The first generation of wasps is reared by the queen, but all later generations during the summer are cared for by workers. From then on the queen's only function is to lay eggs, and by the season's end she will have been the mother of many thousands of worker wasps, as well as a number of new queens and drones.

• Science News Letter, 87:238 April 10, 1. 65