

HORTICULTURE

New Varieties of Wheat Brought to U. S. From Russia

NEW varieties of grain from the oldest wheatlands of the world have been brought to the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington by Dr. J. D. Dickinson, who has just returned from a half-year's botanical exploration of the Caucasus region and other parts of Russia. On these great plateau grasslands, where wheat has been grown for many centuries, Dr. Dickinson found species of wild wheat growing side by side with cultivated varieties.

In his search for grain varieties which may be useful in America, Dr. Dickinson had the assistance of leading Russian economic botanists. One of the Russian scientists has identified seven distinct forms of wild wheat in the Caucasus region, which he regards as separate species. He has also found three species of wild barley.

One wheat variety grown on the

Caucasian highlands appears to hold great promise. It is known in Russia as Persian wheat. It is a short-stemmed, heavy-headed variety, maturing in a remarkably short season and being able to grow successfully in cold soil. The peasants follow the receding snow fields in spring, sowing this wheat along their margins as they melt. The yield is reported to be as much as fifty bushels per acre.

Dr. Dickinson also collected a considerable quantity of the native fruits, especially apples, pears and cherries. These grow as wild forest trees in the Caucasus, sometimes reaching great size. He reports that he saw pure stands of wild apples several hundred acres in extent. The fruit of these wild trees varies considerably in quality. Some of it is very disagreeable to the taste, but much of it is really very good.

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Liquidambar

ANYBODY who is planning on putting in a group of shade or ornamental trees, whether in a park planting, around a country house or even on a fair-sized city place, will do well to remember the liquidambar, or sweet-gum. This splendid tree of the American southeast is at least moderately hardy, and will thrive in cultivation many hundreds of miles north and west of its natural range.

It may have to be nursed a bit while it is little, and there will always remain the danger that a 'too-stiff windstorm will wrench off a limb, for its wood is none too strong; but even so, it will, in many future autumns, repay a thousand times over the care it gets.

For there is scarcely a tree that can show such splendid leaves in the fall. Pointed like stars, they change from their strong summer green to a deep wine-purple that is the very blood of the sun. An autumn-colored liquidambar against a sunset sky, with the light shining through its sanguine leaves, is a sight not soon to be forgotten.

The fruits of the liquidambar tree also are worth growing to look at, though they are not good for even birds or squirrels to eat. They are such curious-looking things, bristling toward all the stars with their hundred sharp little points, like maces for the wars of fairy cavalry.

And the twigs of the tree intrigue one's interest as well, for they have caught the trick, known to a few widely scattered woody plants, of developing their cork in long, narrow streaks, so that they come to be ridged with "Wings" of bark. All round, the sweet-gum is a tree of great interest as well as great beauty.

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