



### A Tree-Planting President

**F**RANKLIN Roosevelt, tree-planter on his own land and encourager of forestry on the lands that belong to all of us, follows early and eminent precedent. For America's first chief magistrate was also, in his time, an indefatigable planter of trees.

Washington loved trees. When he took command of his army at Cambridge, he chose to stand under a mighty elm, which died of sheer old age only a few years ago. At a number of places where he wanted to leave mementoes, he planted trees. It is recorded that on his estate at Mount Vernon he was always impressing upon his overseers and servants that trees are living things, and as much entitled to decent treatment as human beings.

The plantings at Mount Vernon are justly famous, and some of the trees there go back to his time—several even to his own hand. Erle Kauffman, recorder of the Washington trees, states that at Mount Vernon there are still standing, of his own plantings, seven ash trees, two tulip trees, four buckeyes, four elms, three pecans, thirteen holly trees, three coffee trees, two lin-

dens, two beeches, three box trees, one hemlock and one mulberry. He planted trees literally in thousands, both on his own land and elsewhere.

Trees for shade and ornament were not Washington's only care. The list of fruit tree plantings recorded in his systematically kept diary is impressive. And as if in atonement for the legend of his one childhood fit of destructiveness, he seems to have made special favorites of cherry trees. His journal records varieties no longer known, or recognizable conjecturally by some similarity in name: Summer Boon, Winter Boon, Bullock Heart, May Duke, Black May, May Heart, Carnation. Pears also were favorites, and apples and plums, too. Nut trees he mentions frequently, and smaller trees prized mainly for their flowers, such as service-tree and redbud.

Washington was withal a careful farmer, and took every advantage of the best agricultural science of his day. He knew the value of crop diversification, of fertilization, of erosion control. Neatly bound volumes of farm journals still stand in rows on the library shelves in his old home: he read them as diligently as the modern farmer reads the publications of Wallace or Capper.

During the Revolutionary War, the elegant British officers (who were always boasting how they were going to capture him—tomorrow) used to mock at him as "Farmer George." If they had remembered a scrap of the Greek that as young gentlemen they were supposed to have learned at Cambridge and Oxford, they would have recognized the redundancy: "George" in the classic tongue means farmer—literally, "earth-worker"; and George rejoiced in the title.

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The larva of the Goliath beetle of Africa sometimes grows to be six inches long.

### FORESTRY

## Fire in the Forest Not Always a Devil

**F**IRE in the forest is not always and everywhere a red devil of destruction. Facts and viewpoints presented at the annual meeting of the Society of American Foresters in Washington make it appear that Southerners, in following the old Indian custom of burning off the dead grass and underbrush in the woods early in the spring, have been carrying on at least a rough approximation of good silviculture.

In acknowledging this, the foresters have done a handsome thing; for until quite recently it has been the fashion in professional forestry circles to denounce and wring the hands whenever Southern woods-fires were mentioned.

The Southern countrymen had no particular notion of burning the woods for the benefit of the trees. They were after a quicker crop of fresh grass for their cattle, just as the Indians before them were interested in grass for the deer they hunted.

But scientific observations, mostly under control conditions where comparison with like unburned areas is possible, have shown that within reason fire is a good thing for longleaf pine, most prized of Southern trees. This species is fire-resistant in all except its first few months of life, because of its thick bark and its trick of protecting its all-important "leader" bud with a close bundle of leaves. Fire kills less valued competing pines and hardwood species, and lets the young longleaf trees grow.

Fire, it has also been found, helps the longleaf seedlings against one of the most serious of pine diseases, the brown spot of their leaves. In one experimental area, young pines kept wholly protected from fire showed twice as much of this infection as did trees of sim-



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