

Inexpensive Summer Fun

Leaves Are Even Easier To Collect Than Flowers

(Third of a series of 12 articles. Next week—Collecting Shells)



LEAVES are much easier to press and preserve than flowers. Most people who make a hobby of collecting botanical specimens tend to neglect leaves and concentrate on flowers, presumably because they are brighter and generally more attractive than "just leaves." But making a collection of leaves of the trees and shrubs in your neighborhood has its advantages, too.

The same kind of plant press that is used for flowers, with newspaper folders and sheets of blotting paper, will serve excellently for pressing leaves. Indeed, for most leaves even the primitive book or thick magazine or mail-order catalog will do well enough.

For larger, juicier leaves, however, pressing between sheets of blotting paper is desirable. A recent improvement, for use with the leaves of water-lily and other water plants, is to warm the blotters in an oven before using, as you would dinner plates. This dries the leaves out more quickly and partly eliminates their tendency to blacken or become moldy.

Of course, you will limit your ambitions to the size of your folders and press. That means you can't press the

very largest leaves that grow in this part of the world, like those of burdock and rhubarb, or the highly complex leaves of the Kentucky coffee tree and Hercules' club. Fortunately, however, few plants outside the tropics have leaves larger than a half-page of a newspaper.

It is a good idea to collect several leaves—say, as many as will go into a folder—from each tree you select as a specimen-source. That will enable you to study the differences between leaves from the same tree. Pick leaves from

all sides, and from the top as well, if possible.

It is interesting, also, to collect leaves from trees of the same species standing side by side. Often there will be marked differences between such near neighbors; trees have individualities of their own, just like human beings.

When you are collecting specimens from trees or shrubs with very small leaves, it will usually be desirable to take whole twigs instead of individual leaves. This is particularly the case for evergreen trees like pines and larches. Some of these are difficult to handle, but the twigs of some evergreens, like the arborvitae or white cedar, are flat—they come "already pressed."

For pressed plant specimens of all kinds you should make systematic labels that give full information for future reference. First, there should be a space left for the name of the plant, when you have learned it. Then your own name, as collector, with date of collection. Then the locality, and finally a brief note about soil, moisture conditions, etc. Thus:

BUR OAK
Coll. by Will Smith, Jr.
July 5, 1938.
Jones' Grove, 3 mi. W.
of Homeville, Ohio.
Dry, gravelly hillside,
North slope; open woods.

Science News Letter, July 2, 1938

● Radio

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