

farthest of which was 620 miles away at Gorizia, Italy, Dr. Cox was able to calculate the temperatures at various altitudes. Sound at that distance had too low a frequency to be heard audibly.

The atmosphere 20 to 40 miles aloft is hotter than the air below because it has a larger amount of ozone, which absorbs the ultraviolet rays of the sun and heats the layer to a maximum of about 100 degrees Fahrenheit, depending upon the time of day, season and part of the earth. This ozone layer shields us from severe cases of sunburn.

A thin atmosphere layer 50 miles above the earth is colder than the ozone-sphere but still higher the temperature rises again. V-2 rocket flights made during the past year confirm the upper air temperature records.

*Science News Letter, February 7, 1948*

#### BOTANY

### Seed of Metasequoias Will Be Planted in U. S.

► TREES from earth's earlier ages, supposed to have become extinct with the last of the dinosaurs, will soon be growing in American botanic gardens. Seed collected from survivors found in a hidden valley of central China have been brought to the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, and will be planted there and in nine other tree collections in this country, as well as two in England.

The tree, which is a fairly close relative of the redwoods or sequoias of California, has long been known from its fossil remains, for it had world-wide distribution millions of years ago. Metasequoia was the name given to it by botanists on the basis of these fossils. Now living metasequoias have been found.

The discovery was first announced about two years ago, by Chinese botanists who at first thought the tree was a peculiar kind of fir. As soon as identification of their specimens showed what a rare botanic treasure they had found, Prof. E. D. Merrill, long director of the Arnold Arboretum, arranged for an expedition to collect seed for planting in as many places as possible, to insure continued survival of the species.

According to the Chinese descriptions, metasequoia trees grow over 100 feet high and have trunks seven and one-half feet in diameter. Unlike the American sequoias, but like the American larch or tamarack and the swamp cypress, they shed their foliage in winter.

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#### MEDICINE

## Drug Relieves Allergies

"Decapryn," new antihistaminic agent, has completely relieved 80% of hay fever patients and over 85% of patients with hives. Unpredictable in bronchial asthma.

► A NEW histamine antagonist called "Decapryn" has been developed which is a valuable addition to the antihistaminic or antiallergic agents now available for the management of allergic conditions. Dr. Fred W. Wittich, secretary-treasurer of the American College of Allergists, announced.

The new histamine antagonist was developed in the research laboratories of the Wm. S. Merrell Company, and its advantages and uses were reported by Dr. Ethan Allan Brown of Boston, Mass., and his colleagues (*Annals of Allergy*).

Approximately 80% of all allergic symptoms were relieved by Decapryn. Analysis of results showed that 80% of patients with typical hay fever and over 85% of patients with urticaria or angioneurotic edema were completely relieved. In bronchial asthma, the effects, as with other antihistaminic drugs, are quite unpredictable. Of 54 patients, 30% were

markedly relieved, 40% were moderately relieved. In the remainder there was no noticeable relief, although in the group with associated nasal symptoms, a good number were relieved of these latter.

Drowsiness was the most common side action encountered. It was observed in about one patient out of six. Of the total number of 23 patients who reported disturbing side actions, 15 were in the asthma group, who received comparatively excessive dosage. Reactions in the remaining eight patients were moderate in five and severe in three. On the basis of a dose of 12.5 to 25 milligrams, used in treating patients other than the asthmatics, reactions occur much less frequently, probably in fewer than 10%.

Further studies on the effects of Decapryn on cutaneous whealing response and other clinical evaluations are in progress and will be reported upon separately in the near future.

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**RADIATION DWARFS COTTON**—Hereditary changes are evident in the squat, compact plant on the left which grew from a seed which had been exposed to gamma radiation on the deck of a ship on "Able" day at Bikini. The plant on the right, grown from the same strain but from an unexposed seed, is less dense and taller. Plants from most treated seeds grown at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station by Dr. Meta S. Brown, that sprouted at all, were nearly normal in appearance, but radical changes in the chromosomes in their cells were rather general.