

NATURE NOW

By LYDIA KING FRESHE



All summer long leaves have made a canopy over our heads. Birds have nested in them, fruits and nuts have ripened there. Nature has woven them into a carpet of grass where men and children have played and many creatures of earth have been nourished by their succulent goodness. With them the farmer has filled his barns and the greener has refurnished his shelves. What has not been eaten or garnered will now

fall and die or will be trampled underfoot and frozen. Leaves were long in the making. The first land plants similar to our lichens and liverworts, had only a shapeless body sprawled over the bare rock. As the slow ages wore on, Nature tried many experiments with roots, stems and leaves.

Soil had first to be made by a long process of living and dying, of eroding, and shaping. Then roots grew slowly to anchor the plant before it could support an upward growing stem, which gradually became differentiated into rudimentary leaves. Our horsetails and club mosses are typical of this flora which flourished some two hundred million years ago in the Coal Age, when leaves were still an experiment. Thus far plants had developed in a world of half-light.

NOW THE ATMOSPHERE cleared; its overload of moisture finally condensed in the ancient seas. When full light shone upon the earth, plant stems reached higher, leaves gradually developed and finally spread a canopy to catch the life-giving rays of the sun. By Tertiary times, some sixty million years ago, leaves already made a diverse ground cover and hung trembling overhead on sycamore, poplar, willow and aspen.

Nature has made leaves the center of the whole process of food



LEONARD FALCONE (right), director of the Michigan State College Marching band, examines the "new look" in Spartan band attire on four Birmingham students. The MSC band made its debut in green and white at the opening game with the University of Michigan. Formerly they wore olive drab military style uniforms. Band members, from left to right, are Bill Berndt, 2539 Maple, Ron Nightingale, 2483 Comfort, Ron Phillips, 998 Hazel, and Glenn Emery, 311 Southlawn.

It is only the leaf that can take water from the earth, combine it with air, expose it to the sun on millions of acres of variously shaped surfaces and thereby create the basic starches and sugars which feed all life. This is the only food there is, not only for plants but for men and animals as well, and its production in the growing leaf as a mystery to which chlorophyll alone holds the key.

No man knows of a certainty the chemistry involved in this food-making process. We do know, however, that the two life giving fluids, blood and chlorophyll, are so alike that they are divided only by a nucleus of iron in the former and one of magnesium in the latter. So near are we akin to the plants that feed us.

NOW THE WORK of the leaf is finished and the tree hastens to prepare for its long rest. The first step in this process is taken when Nature dries out a layer of cells at the point at which each leaf is attached to its branch. She then seals the scar by covering it with a layer of corky tissue. With its food supply thus cut off, the leaf soon dies and drops to the ground. The remaining green chlorophyll now isolated in the leaf, is destroyed by the sun's rays and

the colors which have been masked by it. Chemistry can explain many of the hues of autumn. Carotin colors the oranges and yellows. Anthocyanin, which makes a sugar solution, is responsible for the red and purplish tones. It acts like litmus paper, taking its cue from the soil. A red leaf is produced by acidity, a purplish one by alkalinity. A brown tone offers a faded orange on yellow. At other times, as occurs in the beech, the brown is produced by tannin found in the wood cells, the same substance used in the tanning of hides.

Although the leaves do not turn color because of frost, the intensity of sunlight and other climatic variations mutes or makes brilliant the autumn spectrum.

TREES DO NOT drop their leaves by chance nor yet to die. Their falling is a device to protect the life of the tree through the cold of winter. When frost limits the supply of water the leaves are then shut off so that no more vital sap can be dissipated, at a time when it cannot be replaced by the sun. So the leaves fall, the scar is covered by the corky cells and the sap system is plugged up until springtime.

No man knows what signal Nature receives to shut off the chlorophyll from her leaf factories. October holds the key and the perfect timing with which she unlocks her paint-box is one of the engaging mysteries of plant life. And so another season ends while leaves etch a final pattern on porch and sidewalk, clutter up lawn and garden, and fill October nights with the acid smoke of their burning. But on the bare twigs which look so empty against an autumn sky next year's buds are already formed, their patterns set and sealed against a winter's cold.

Army Variety Show Produced By Miller

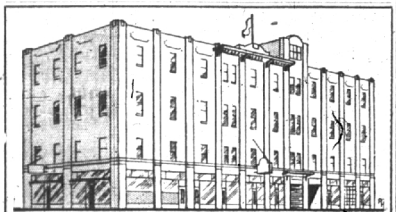
Pvt. Bob Miller, son of Mr. and Mrs. Garner Miller, 2401 Wattles, Troy township, is busy producing an All-Service variety show at Fort Bliss, Texas, where he is stationed.

Miller will call on many professional performers at the Army base to help in the show that will consist mostly of musical comedy. He has been in service for one year.

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been appointed director of public relations of Cranbrook Institutions by the trustees of the Cranbrook Foundation.

White held the same position during the last 16 years of his residence at 652 Brookside since 1919.

News, and has been a member of one or more boards at Cranbrook for 26 years.

A former member of the Birmingham City Commission, he has resided at 652 Brookside since 1919.

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