

NATURE NOW Corn 'Stars' in Many Vital Roles

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Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

The first killing frost of autumn signals the end of another growing season. In our range the average date for this event falls between Oct. 11 and 14.

"When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock" wrote the Hoosier poet, thereby describing autumn in his native countryside.

But modern machinery has changed this picturesque farm scene. Harvesting corn used to include cutting by hand, shocking to dry and ripen, then pulling down the shocks for laborious husking. The modern combine shocks the corn, then pulls the golden piles ear by ear, loading them into a horse-drawn wagon and finally shoveling them into the corn crib.

Mrs. Freshe

ber to snowfall, the second pulling down of the now dried corn shocks and their final hauling to the barn where they are used as stock food and bedding. Only then was the farmer ready for winter.

Now, on most farms, the entire process is performed with efficient dispatch by machines which do the work of many men in a single operation.

While this robs the countryside of some of its picturesque flavor, it is a result of our modern economy and as such we accept it.

CORN (ZEA) is a grain and its seeds are one of our most valuable cereal grains.

It has the usual fibrous roots.

items as starch, glucose and syrup. This grain is the most economical source of starch for alcohol manufacture in the United States, one ton making 90 gallons.

The embryo of the grain is rich in oil which is extracted for use in cooking and in the manufacture of soaps and paints.

ASIDE FROM its importance as a grain and forage crop, a great variety of products are made from the plant itself.

The stalk is shredded and manufactured into coarse paper while the pith is made into explosives. Corn cobs are used for pipes and in making charcoal and are also ground to make fertilizer and plant mulches.

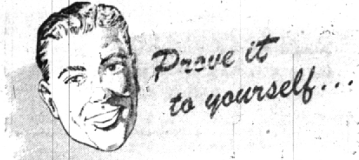
Although the corn husk "bedtick" of the pioneer is now a rarity, this part of the plant is still used in the manufacture of mats and in various novelty crafts.

The origin of corn is frequently linked to the American Indian whose dependence on this grain is well known. However, it is probable that its wild ancestor was a maize-like plant native to Peru or Mexico. Parched corn has been found in the ruins of the ancient Mayan cities whose history dates back to 800 A.D.

LIKE MANY another tropical plant, the range of corn has been greatly extended by cultivation. The important corn belt of the United States now lies in the mid-central states with Iowa leading in the production of hybrid seed corn.

Hot days and nights with early seasonal rains plus a well drained, medium loam soil are necessary for the heaviest yields.

ON LATE autumn afternoons it is pleasant to remember after-school excursions to the fields when the frost was on the pumpkin and the fodder in the shock and the horses stood patiently while the wagon box slowly filled. A tangle of late but lusty weeds made a carpet for us as we knelt beside the golden piles. It was like a game to see who would be first to finish a row while a flock of noisy crows circled the hickory grove.



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However, it differs from the average grass in that it is taller and stronger and its stems are filled with pith which contains the vascular bundles. These in turn are the conductive strands which bring nourishment to the plant from the earth.

(Corn has an extensive root system which reaches deep into the ground. Because it is a tall and heavy plant it is further supported by aerial or prop roots which spring from the stem just above the earth.)

Corn differs from the average grass in having two kinds of flowers. The tassel which tops the plant is the male or staminate flower. The ear represents the female or pistillate bloom. Like other grasses it is wind pollinated.

THE POLLEN from the tassel is caught by the thread-like silk of the ear which extends beyond the protecting husk. The pollen grain grows into a tube which follows the silk until it reaches the ovary and fertilizes each separate corn grain.

The common food uses of corn cover a wide range, from corn-on-the-cob, through hominy grits, to pancakes, corn cereal and pop corn. These are as familiar as they are important to each day's food needs.

Popcorn are made hundreds of other less familiar products. Included among these are such

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Engagement Announced

Mr. and Mrs. W. Whiting Raymond of Willet street announce the engagement of their daughter, Laura Lou, to Charles Leland Getz, Jr., son of Mrs. Margaret M. Getz of Scarsdale, N. Y., and Charles Leland Getz of New York City.

Miss Raymond is a graduate of William Woods college, Fulton Mo., and Michigan State college. She is a provisional member of the Junior League of Birmingham.

The prospective bridegroom is a graduate of Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., and a member of Beta Theta Pi.

Scouting Adventure Lasts Overnight

An overnight trip to Holiday House gave Girl Scouts of troop No. 363 a chance last weekend to earn some smoking badges, to learn the trick of making "situps," grass mats for sitting on damp ground, and to welcome three new tenderfeet. The girls, who go to Baldwin school, led the three newcomers on a forest trail about the woods and orchard.

First in 16 Years

Ronald Edmund Brown set a record at his birth October 2 to Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Brown, 1240 Webster. He was first boy in 16 years in the family; he has a brother, J.B., a sister, 11, and 11 girl cousins born in the 16-year period.

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Naturally, such an idea produced a wonderful and highly popular car—a car which millions of satisfied owners have driven with outstanding pride and pleasure.

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One thing, however, about the 1955 Pontiac remains unchanged—its basic idea—to offer the American public the very finest car that can possibly be built to sell at a price within easy reach of any new-car buyer.

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