

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

Now is the time that the spark of life within the seed is dormant—sleeping. And have you ever thought that if this commonplace miracle did not happen each year, man could have no stored crops such as corn, wheat or rice? And without such stored crops, where would civilized man be? Perhaps still in the caves.

Originally, of course, there was another purpose in this sleeping and stillness—it provides for the plant's own self-preservation. Should the seeds from

introduced from North America, Chile and the Mediterranean lands. And before that?

As for one of our worst pests, the Russian thistle, it came from Europe into this country in some flaxseed which had been sown in South Dakota in 1888. Thanks to the wind carrying the whole plant when its seeds are ripe and tumbling them over many miles, the thistle spread over 16

states within a year. Today the Russian thistle is a pest in most of western America. The seeds are also carried in hay, feeds, and sacks of crop seeds.

Disseminates Seeds

One evening primrose disseminates its seeds by self-propulsion. (Disseminate, incidentally, comes from two words "dis" which means in all directions, and "semen," which means seed. Therefore to scatter seed.)

When dry, this evening primrose keeps its seed capsules

closed. But when wet, they open quickly and take on a cup shape. Then when a drop of water hits the cup-shape quite hard, the seeds are scattered quite far. Far enough, at any rate, to amount to hundreds of miles in the course of tens of thousands of years.

The "foresighted" cocklebur of lowly ancestry contains two seeds in the bur. One half is soft so that that seed can sprout easily the following spring. The other half is tougher and the seed within is protected for an added year or more. Thus the clinging

cocklebur, which has to gamble on passersby for a hitch-hike, has increased its chances of surviving. Not dumb.

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such tender plants sprout in the fall upon ripening the winter cold might well kill all the plants. And so.

Ready now to consider some other seed wonders, commonplace as they are?

The pollen of the forget-me-not, the life-giving spark from which the seed results, is so small that 6,000 grains measure only one inch. And yet this tiny fleck contains the plant's age-old history! And determines its future.

Pollen from pine trees sometimes carries to other pines 400 miles away.

Count on it, the most brightly colored and fragrant flowers are usually pollinated by insects such as bees, butterflies and wasps which can see in color and have an acute sense of smell.

Nature often goes to great lengths to make sure that her plants are cross-pollinated. For example, in the geranium the tips of the petals ripen before the stamens so the pollen will not fertilize pistils of the same flower but must be carried to other and older blossoms with pistils at the right stage to receive them. In the figwort the process is reversed—the stamens are ready before the pistils. The primrose has yet another method: it has flowers of two types—in one, the petals are long and the stamens short; in the other the stamens are long and the pistils short. That makes it harder for the pollen to reach the pistil of the same flower.

Pollen From Other Apples
Some apple trees to get fruit, such as the Spitzenburg, must have the pollen from other apples, such as Baldwin or Jonathan.

To hold their own in this fiercely competitive plant life, some plants produce a million seeds a year. Others, more assured, like the coconuts, seldom have more than a hundred.

Sheep can be great spreaders of weeds, good and bad. For example, in England, farmers couldn't understand where the strange two-dozen and more different kinds of weeds were coming from in a neighbor's field. Upon questioning, they found he had experimented with a waste-wool fertilizer from Yorkshire mills. The wool had come from Australia and had to be cleaned before spun into cloth.

In the raw wool were tiny hairs and weed seeds that had got tangled. And these were in the waste the farmer had put on his field. Anyone would say this halfway round the world trip was a long journey—but it was just beginning. Most of those seeds came from plants which in turn had been brought to Australia by other sheep who were

Portland-Ellensburg Bus Service Restored

Portland—U.P. — Northwest Greyhound line Tuesday issued a statement which said service between Portland and Ellensburg, Wash., on the line had been restored. The firm declined to elaborate.

A report yesterday said drivers of that division had pleaded illness and failed to show up for work. Service between Portland and Salt Lake City is still disrupted due to a walkout of drivers.

The total area of Minnesota is 54,943,579 acres of which 3,602,210 are of water, mostly in more than 11,000 lakes.

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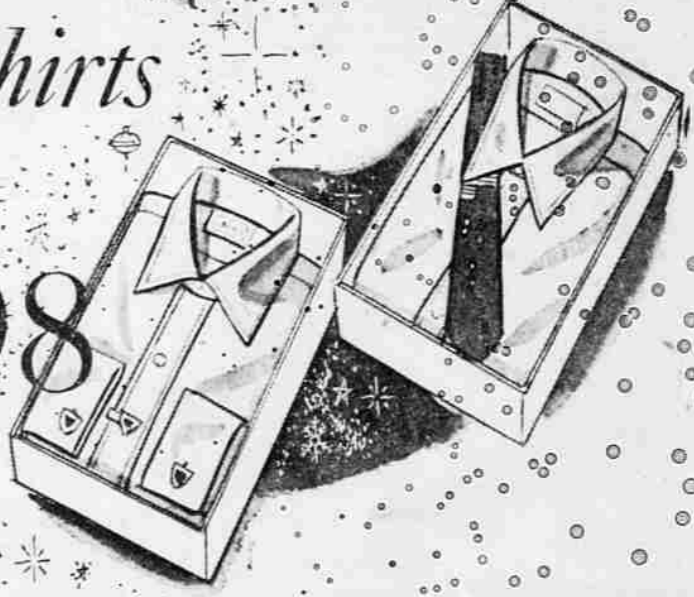
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