



**Small Worlds Around Us**

By Lynn M. Watkins  
Sassafras 'Medicine' Was Good, and Was Free, Too

It was just about as staple as coffee in grandmother's cupboard, and youngsters of a few decades ago had it poured down their reluctant throats by the gallon—sassafras tea. Grandmother, and all the ladies she knew, said it was the best remedy for ague, a condition where fever alternated with chills. Sassafras tea was also used as a stimulant. There was one thing that could be said in favor of the "medicine," it tasted good.

The common sassafras is probably the best known of all American trees. It is also unusual. One of the identifying marks of different tree species are the leaves. By their shape and arrangement the investigator can invariably tell to what family the tree belongs, and the name of the tree itself.

Yet the so-called sassafras is not so common in this respect because it has leaves of widely different shapes on the same trees and even has various shapes on the same twig. Very few trees have this characteristic. Some leaves may be oval, others have one lobe, resembling for all the world the thumb on a mitten, while others are divided at the outer end into three distinct lobes.

**30 Foot Limit**  
The tree seldom exceeds 30 feet in height, with a trunk less than a foot in diameter. The tree, of the laurel family, is related to the camphor tree of Japan, as well as the avocado. The wood is weak and exceedingly brittle. The heartwood is often a dull orange brown color. The bark is deeply furrowed, and almost red, contrasting sharply with the bright green of the new twigs.

The sassafras is not known for the striking beauty of its flowers; they are a dirty yellow, and open with the first unfolding of the leaves. A long tap-root runs deeply into the ground, making it a difficult tree to move or transplant.

The fruit is a dark, lustrous berry growing in clusters, each berry containing a single seed. At the base of each berry is a small, orange-red cup, affixed at the end of a scarlet-colored stalk.

**Oil for Candy**  
The bark which covers the roots yields a spicy, aromatic oil which is largely used for flavoring candies and in the manufacture of beverages. The delicious flavor alone would make it a valuable addition to a bitter medicine, making an unpleasant drug as palatable as a confection.

Sassafras tea was administered for the aches and pains of our pioneer forefathers. Even those who questioned its curative qualities probably felt better for having imbibed the hot aromatic beverage which chased (or was supposed to) a cold from an ailing body.

One of the most pleasant memories of those who spent their early childhood in the country can easily be the remembrance of the peculiar but pleasing taste of sassafras bark. It had the deliciousness of gum and the added advantage of being available "for free."

**Cemetery Denies Chessman Burial**  
Glendale, Calif.—UPI—Caryl Chessman, denied the society of free men for the last 12 years of his life, Wednesday had his ashes barred from the cemetery where his mother is entombed.

**Judge Wonders if Reason is Good**  
Richmond, Va.—The defendant in a burglary case asked that his bond be reduced from \$3,000 to \$500. He couldn't raise the larger amount because he owed his bondsman (\$400) on some bad check.

The judge took the request under advisement.

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