

TRUE STORIES

PLANTS ABOUT US



LEAVES AND THEIR USES

(Continued from last month)

Last month you learned the uses of leaves to men. This time let us know the benefits that animals and the plants themselves get from leaves.

Like men, animals use leaves for food. These of course are the grass-eating kind like the carabao, the cow, the pig, the horse, the deer. Now, leaves to protect themselves from these animals have ways of making themselves undesirable so that they will not thus be consumed. Some leaves have a bad odor, some leaves are thin and reduced to needle-points while others are covered with prickly hairs like the squash, while others of course have a disagreeable taste. What leaves that you know have these characteristics?

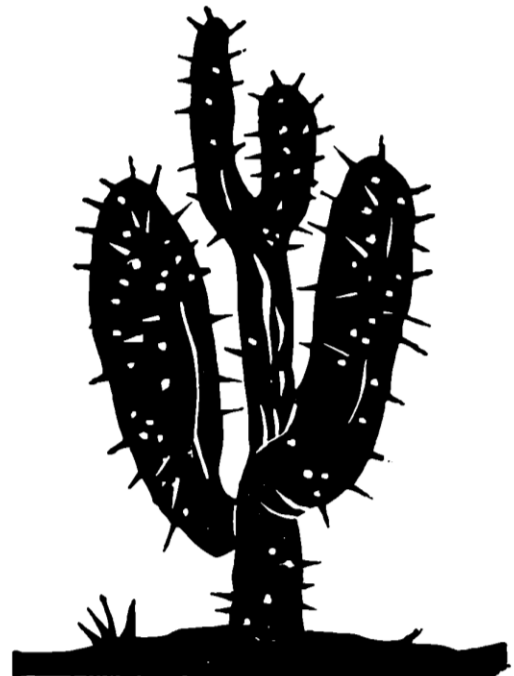
Why do trees have leaves? They look as a decoration to them, don't they, and when a tree is bare of them, it seems that it is naked and cold. Leaves are very important to trees.

The green color that they have are little bodies that, with the help of sunlight, manufacture food for the plants. They are like the red corpuscles that give color to our blood. The tree sends up water and other food elements it gets from the soil to the leaves and it is only in the presence of sunlight that leaves can change these different elements into the food needed by plants. Sunlight is seen to be very important. In order to get the most of sunlight, leaves assume different positions in the tree, thus giving the tree its shape. The banana tree spreads out its large leaves; the pine tree of cold regions assume a cone shape, while others are vertical and tall to rise above neighboring trees.

Leaves in their process of food manufacture give out moisture as persons perspire. Now in deserts where all the water is needed by the plants, leaves are reduced to tiny spines or ear-like things. In cold countries when snow comes, the leaves fall. In these ways the water is kept in the plants' bodies.

Of course, you all know that we breathe in oxygen and give out carbon dioxide. Plants, too, like us breathe but instead they take in carbon dioxide and give out oxygen. This is, of course, for the benefit of animals and human beings because there is a balance in nature. That

(Please turn to page 102)



is why to make the water of the little aquarium you have at home clear, your mother or father places with the fish some plants that can live in the water. These plants use the carbon dioxide given out by the fish and they give out the oxygen needed by the fish. Leaves have their important places in the world, even as this boy or that girl has in his mother's heart.