

Across the Editor's Desk

THE other day, at a meeting of the men's garden club of which I am a member, I heard a word that was brand new to me—one of those fourteen-dollar words, you know. It is "paleobotany." It comes from a Greek word meaning "ancient" and the more familiar word which means the study of plants.

Our host and speaker had a wonderful collection of fossil plants he had discovered while digging around old coal mines. They were at least two hundred million years old, he said. Many of them are plainly recognized as identical with modern plants. One especially interesting group was a fossil leaf from the ginkgo tree, an old pressed ginkgo leaf from China, and a fresh leaf from the same variety of tree, recently picked in his own garden. All three were the same in form, structure, and size. I can't tell just what thoughts were stimulated by the three leaves—the scope is so breath-taking. Each person in such a situation probably lets his imagination run off into different far realms.

At any rate we know that the garden, in its broad sense, is an incredibly old institution. Life is fragile and passing, we say, but, after all, life is stupendously durable and persistent. Stones crumble and mountains are sometimes demolished and hurled into the clouds in the twinkling of an eye. But it takes life to build and rebuild. The life of plants and living creatures clings to earth, reproduces itself, goes marching down the ages in a procession that conquers death and is truly awe-inspiring. "I love life!" is the exuberant shout of a song. No wonder the writer said that. Life is not a trifling thing or a futile gesture. It is the greatest fact of the universe, and that beautiful impression of a leaf engraved in rock, coming to us after a dark silence of many millions of years, is eloquent testimony.

THE story of a leaf two hundred million years old is just one more reminder of the drama of "Our Home World of Wonders," which is being staged in *Better Homes & Gardens* quite regularly. One month it may be fire, another soil, and another it may be the queer antics of an insect. We do not realize, until we begin really to see, that there are marvelous stories in the most prosaic things about us. Last month was told the dramatic story of water. Perhaps such a story helps us to realize the value of such a commonplace and sometimes disagreeable thing.

And that reminds me of Oliver Brown, of Winchester, Massachusetts, who says that "Gardening in the Rain," in the May issue, is one of the best stories he has ever read. Doubtless it is because of the very fact that this story proved that there is

much utility, and finally beauty, in the drizzle and mud of a rainy period. One has to look twice to see the beauty of a wet, gray day when he has been in the habit of thinking that natural beauty is chiefly related to blue sky and bright sunshine. Again we are reminded that in "Our Home World of Wonders" one must look a second time and a third time to see the drama and the magic that lives all about those who care. If reading *Better Homes & Gardens* gives one "new life and new thoughts," as we are told in a letter from R. H. Hennig, of New Haven, Indiana, perhaps it is because this magazine has for one of its fundamental objects the revelation and glorification of the familiar things of home.

THE best assets we have brought thru the depression are our home loans," says the president of one of our largest life-insurance companies, as quoted by "Nation's Business."

This is a profoundly significant statement. It is a special recognition of the fact that homes, after all, are the best economic assets we have. They are the units around which the people gather in crises.

There may be another meaning in this fact, also. Everything points to a new era of decentralization in which urban congested life will give way to suburban and semi-rural life, which is related more closely to the soil and to the elemental things of life. Thoughtful men are predicting a new economic era based upon such decentralization.

THEY used to say that you couldn't eat fish and milk together—that you got hives from eating certain things—that when discredit was cast on many of these ideas, on the ground that they were mere superstitions.

Far be it from me to say which theory was correct and which was not. Probably there was nonsense in some of those opinions. But the medical profession has taken a new look at things and has found that various kinds of dusts, pollens, invisible particles of food really do have an important relation to our health. Hay fever isn't the only ailment caused by these protein particles, either.

Other diseases, having nothing to do with the lungs, nose, or throat, are traceable to these particles. New things are being discovered constantly. A broad new field of research has been opened.

For nearly twenty years these "Mischief-Makers" of "allergy" have been known, but only recently has their importance been recognized. You will want to read about them on page 16 of this issue and consider their doings.

Editor

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>A Number of Things for the Family</i>	
Across the Editor's Desk	4
It's News to Me!	6
The Inventin'est Man (Frontispiece)	7
Among Ourselves	8
They Can Be Attractive Too	10
Dad, May I Have the Car Tonight?	13
Mischief-Makers in Foods and Air	16
The Mealy Bugs Visit Insectoria	26
The Home Service Bureau	46

<i>That Gardens May Flourish</i>	
Those Funny Faces	19
The Diary of a Plain Dirt Gardener	22
We All Make Mistakes	23
August in the Southern Garden	27
A Famous Artist Speaks His Mind	34
Along the Garden Path	50

<i>Remodeling and Building Ideas</i>	
A Model for Any Community	14
Let It Blow!	20
<i>How to Manage the Home</i>	
A Skeleton in Your Home	28
Come Into the Kitchen	30

<i>Home Cooking and Oh, SO Good!</i>	
Chicken?—The Ayes Have It!	18
Cooks' Round Table	32
Frosted Drinks	40
Senator Byrd's Favorite Recipe	43
\$50 for a Pound of Tea	47

<i>Especially for Boys and Girls</i>	
What's in a Name?	25

<i>Furnishings for Your Home</i>	
Four Screws and It's Installed!	24

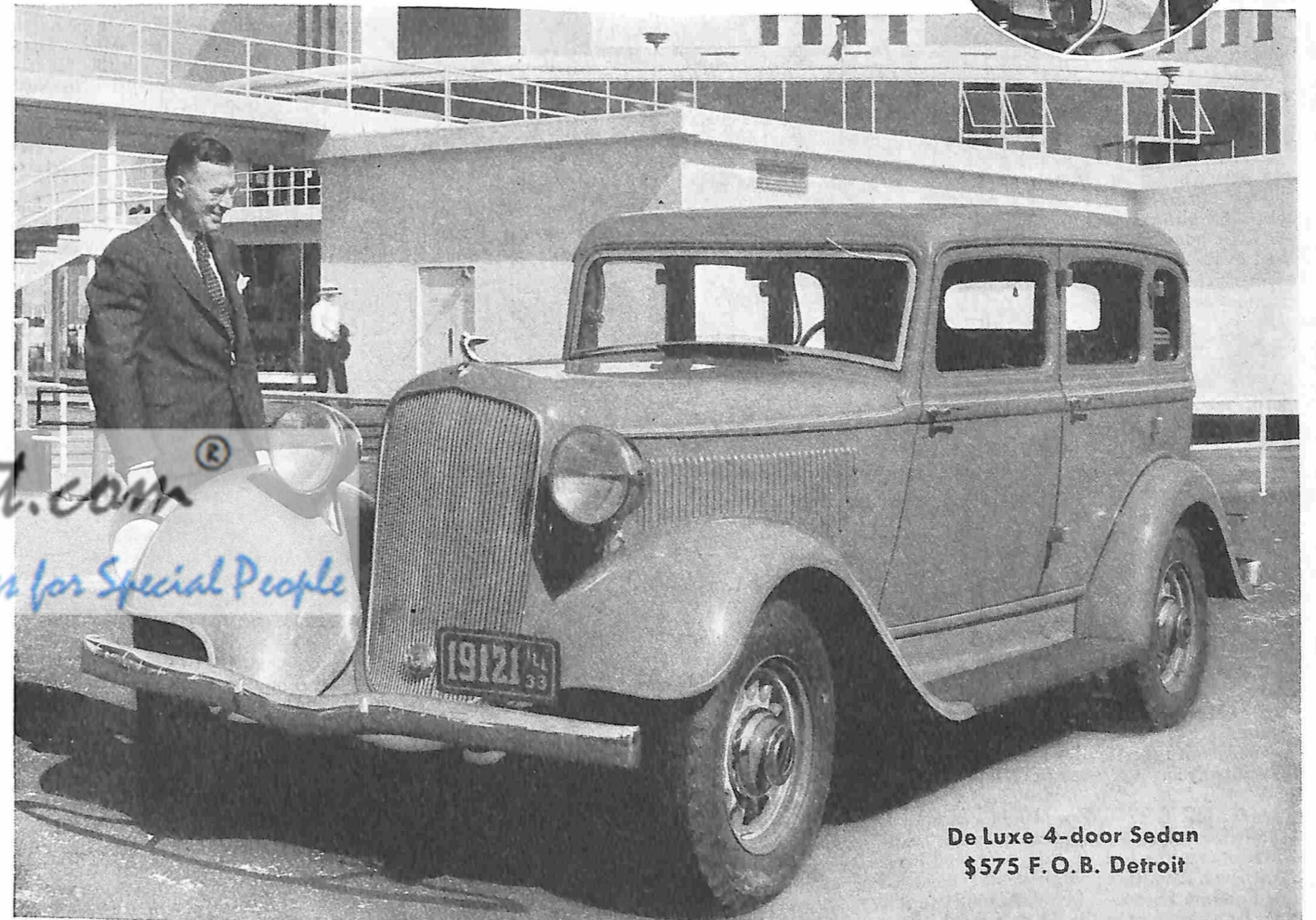
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