

Do You Know?

Furfural, known for over a century but used commercially only in the past two decades or so, promises to become a very important raw material in chemical synthesis; it is now extensively used in making nylon.

Some gardeners recommend the application of a complete *fertilizer* to a level lawn while snow is still on the ground; spring thaws will carry the plant food down to the roots to be available when growth starts.

A new *insecticide*, Thiophos 3422 for short, but diethyl nitrophenyl thiophosphate chemically, is claimed to kill a wider range of insects than any chemical now in use including DDT.

Water should not be used to put out a *fire* around electrical equipment until the current has been cut off at the switch.

A giant plant will soon be constructed in Pennsylvania to use coal in making liquid fuels. Pilot plants of the U. S. Bureau of Mines are pointing the way. The coal is first converted into water gas by a process long used to supply manufactured gas for homes in many American cities. From there on, the conversion of this product into liquid hydrocarbonates is similar to that used with natural gas.

The gases are first converted into carbon monoxide and hydrogen by an incomplete combustion or other process.

These, with the help of an iron catalyst in a fluidized state, become the synthetic hydrocarbonates and water.

There is enough oil shale in America to yield over 95,000,000,000 barrels of gasoline if all could be extracted. When this rock is crushed and heated it gives off hydrocarbon vapors and gases much like those of petroleum which then, of course, have to be refined. The process is still costly, but a government pilot plant at Rifle, Colo., promises cheaper products as better methods are developed.

Science News Letter, February 21, 1948



SCA NEWS

National SCA Meeting

All members of Science Clubs of America are invited to attend by tuning in to CBS radio program on Saturday, Feb. 28, for future of science discussion.

► THE first national meeting of Science Clubs of America, with 15,000 clubs in the nation's secondary schools, will be held on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 28, when Science Service's "Adventures in Science" radio program over the nationwide network of the Columbia Broadcasting System will be devoted to this important event.

Originating from the Seventh Annual Science Talent Institute at Washington, being attended by the 40 winners competing for the Westinghouse science scholarships, eminent scientists will discuss "Great Future Problems of Science."

Several hundred thousand SCA members are expected to join the regular radio audience listening to this program directed by Watson Davis and heard over most CBS stations at 3:15 p. m. EST, 2:15 p. m. CST, 1:15 p. m. MST, and 12:15 p. m. PST.

Sponsors and members reading this notice are asked to announce this national SCA meeting to all clubs by circulating notices or posting this article on school bulletin boards.

The meeting will be reported in the SCIENCE NEWS LETTER so that the subject discussed can be considered at individual club meetings later.

SCA Affiliation Without Cost

Any teacher or other adult who is the leader or sponsor of a science club, who has not already done so, should arrange to affiliate with Science Clubs of America. There is no fee for affiliation. As sponsors already affiliated know, the 100-

page SCA Sponsor Handbook, sent free to sponsors, is an essential aid and guide to organizing and conducting a science club. Others may obtain a copy of this book postpaid by sending \$1 to Science Service.

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ECOLOGY

Forest Remnant Reveals Character of Former Woods

► AN idea of what the great American woods were like in pioneer days is offered in a survey of a forest remnant made by Miss Millicent M. Sawyer, 16-year-old student at Wiley High School in Terre Haute, Ind. Although the tract she studied is only about 20 acres in extent, it gives foothold to no less than 37 species of native trees and shrubs.

The forest remnant is a triangular piece of land containing two creek valleys, a ravine and a central ridge, giving a considerable variety of habitat conditions. Although lumbering was carried on there in earlier times, there has been practically no cutting for almost 60 years, so that the forest has had a chance to re-grow.

Apparently the area was never completely cleared, for Miss Sawyer notes the presence of some century-old beeches with trunks 30 inches in diameter. Presence of numbers of sugar maples suggests that the original stand may have been the old Eastern beech-maple climax forest; dominant at present, however,

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