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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Wednesday, December 23, 1942

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SUBJECT: "WILD NUTS." Information from foresters of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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"The stockings were hung by the chimney with care

In the hope that St. Nicholas soon would be there."

When children all over the land follow the traditional American custom of hanging up their stockings tomorrow evening, they will be imagining what the stockings will look like next morning. In many homes it's a foregone conclusion that a few nuts along with small toys and trinkets, will help produce those delightful bulges from top to toe. What better swells out the toe of a little sock, or what better fills in the cracks between those odd-shaped parcels than a few round nuts?

And in a great many families, especially farm families, it's home grown nuts that get the place of honor in the Christmas stocking as well as in the nut bowl on the dinner table. One-fifth of our domestic nut production is wild nuts, harvested from forest trees. In wartime, home-grown nuts are a boon in planning meals, as housewives know. Nuts are good combined with meat, vegetables, desserts or eaten out of hand for a snack. Nuts also serve as a nutritious food when you're packing a lunch box.

Almost everyone likes nuts. Even the lowly peanut, which is not a nut at all, is right at home on your tea table, handsomely appointed with fine linen, shining silver, and the best china. In planning a party you naturally think of setting out a dish of salted nuts.

There are at least 10 commonly-known kinds of edible nuts that grow wild in America. Although some of them have been domesticated and improved



by means of grafting, they are still native Americans in which we may take much pride.

Nuts have been important since colonial days when beechnuts in New England probably helped as food for the Pilgrims. And before the time of the Pilgrims, nuts were one of the principal foods of the Indians. We know the pecan is of American origin because early explorers left accounts of how the Indians gathered the nut every year. In fact, the word "pecan" is of Indian derivation and means any hard-shelled nut.

A considerable part of our annual pecan crop comes from wild trees growing in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and other States south of the Ohio River, according to the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Next to walnuts, pecans come second with regard to the volume of nuts consumed in the United States every year.

Chances are the many visitors to Washington's home at Mount Vernon on the Potomac pay little, if any, attention to the two pecan trees near the portico. But those trees have a history, too. Thomas Jefferson gave George Washington some nuts to plant and that's where Washington planted them.

It's too bad black walnuts are so hard to crack. That's their greatest handicap from the commercial point of view. Yet in spite of this handicap, the flavor of the black walnut and its nutritive value have made it exceedingly popular.

If you have any black walnut trees on your property, you know of course, that the time to harvest the nuts is right after they fall from the trees, and you know that the hulls should be removed soon after, so the nuts can dry easily. Otherwise, the kernels become discolored and the flavor rank.

A close relative of the black walnut is the butternut. Horticulturists have neglected this tree in the past. In addition to producing an excellent quality of nut, the butternut is the hardiest member of the walnut family.





It is well worth developing wherever it grows well, especially in the North. Many prefer butternuts to black walnuts because of the greater ease in taking out the meat.

Farm boys sometimes have happy memories of going nutting for hickory nuts. It takes far from gentle tactics with a hammer to crack one of these, and sales of hickory nuts are local for the most part. But hickory nuts have a delicate flavor, and a hickory nut cake is in a class by itself. Incidentally, hickory wood is known all over the world as it excels for making the American type of ax handle.

Among the smaller edible wild nuts on the market is the pinyon or "pine nut." It's rather strange that pinyon nuts, a staple food of Indians in the Southwest, have become commercially important only in recent years. In contrast to the growth of the pinyon market is the case of the small beechnut, which is gathered only for home use and seldom sold. Beechnuts are sweet and oily.

Those who prefer chestnut dressing for stuffing fowl may once more be able to use native chestnuts for this purpose some time in the future instead of the imported variety that appeared on the market after the chestnut blight had destroyed most of our chestnut trees. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is at present looking to the development of a blight-resistant American chestnut tree.

In the northern Lake States, where the climate is too cool for other nut trees to thrive, children enjoy gathering hazelnuts, although it's something of a chore to remove the prickly outside covering. Horticulturists rate our native hazelnuts as not so good for eating yet they are a relative of filberts. In fact, hazelnuts have been used in breeding filberts.

Commercially grown nuts were a Victory Food Special last month, but farmers who have wild nut trees in their farm woodlands can always count on generous supplies of nuts. If your family larder includes wild nuts, they'll come in especially handy when planning wartime meals.

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