

## Chapter 1 : The school book of forestry (eBook, ) [calendrierdelascience.com]

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*From the book: Our forests, with their billions of trees, are the backbone of agriculture, the skeleton of lumbering, and the heart of industry. Even now, in spite of their depletion, they are the cream of our natural resources.*

When you help to preserve our forests or plant new ones you are acting the part of good citizens. They furnish wood for the nation, pasture for thousands of cattle and sheep, and water supply for countless cities and farms. They are the dominions of wild life. The forest is one of the most faithful friends of man. It aids agriculture by preventing floods and storing the surplus rainfall in the soil for the use of farm crops. It gives employment to millions of workmen. It is a resource which bountifully repays kind treatment. It is the best organized feature of the plant world. The forest is not merely a collection of different kinds of trees. It is a permanent asset which will yield large returns over long periods when properly managed. This list has been re-ordered to match the order the illustrations appeared in the book. These roots are the supports of the tree. They hold it rigidly in position. They also supply the tree with food. Through delicate hairs on the roots, they absorb soil moisture and plant food from the earth and pass them along to the tree. The body of the tree acts as a passage way through which the food and drink are conveyed to the top or crown. The crown is the place where the food is digested and the regeneration of trees effected. Chlorophyll gives the leaves their green color. The cells of the plant that are rich in chlorophyll have the power to convert carbonic-acid gas into carbon and oxygen. It is either used immediately or stored away for future emergency. Trees breathe somewhat like human beings. They take in oxygen and give off carbonic-acid gas. The air enters the tree through the leaves and small openings in the bark, which are easily seen in such trees as the cherry and birch. Trees breathe constantly, but they digest and assimilate food only during the day and in the presence of light. Otherwise they would become waterlogged during periods when the water is rising rapidly from the roots. Increase in height and density of crown cover is due to the development of the younger twigs. New growth on the tree is spread evenly between the wood and bark over the entire body of the plant. The inner side of the middle layer produces new wood while the outer side grows bark. The third layer is responsible for the production of the tough, outer bark. Year after year new layers of wood are formed around the first layers. This first layer finally develops into heartwood, which, so far as growth is concerned, is dead material. Its cells are blocked up and prevent the flow of sap. It aids in supporting the tree. Each year one ring of this sapwood develops. This process of growth may continue until the annual layers amount to 50 or , or more, according to the life of the tree. Sometimes, because of the interruption of normal growth, two false rings may be produced instead of a single true ring. Heartwood does not occur in all varieties of trees. In some cases, where both heartwood and sapwood appear, it is difficult to distinguish between them as their colors are so nearly alike. Because it takes up so much moisture and plant food, sapwood rots much more quickly than heartwood. The sapwood really acts as a pipe line to carry water from the roots to the top of the tree. Strange though it may seem, trees fight with each other for a place in the sunlight. Sprightly trees that shoot skyward at a swift pace are the ones that develop into the monarchs of the forest. They excel their mates in growth because at all times they are exposed to plenty of light. The less fortunate trees, that are more stocky and sturdy, and less speedy in their climb toward the sky, are killed out in large numbers each year. The weaker, spindly trees of the forest, which are slow growers, often are smothered out by the more vigorous trees. Some trees are able to grow in the shade. In many cases they grow almost as large and high as the huge trees that they replace. In our eastern forests the hemlock often follows the white pine in this way. Spruce trees may live for many years in dense shade. Then finally, when they have access to plenty of light they may develop into sturdy trees. A tree that is a pigmy in one locality may rank as a giant in another region due to different conditions of growth and climate. For example, the canoe birch at its northern limit is a runt. In sheltered regions the seeds of trees may fall, sprout and take root close to their parent trees. As a rule, the wind plays a prominent part in distributing seed in every section of the country. Pine and fir seeds are equipped with wings like those of a bird or an airplane. Cottonwood seeds have downy wings which aid their flight, while basswood seeds are distributed over the country by means of parachute-like wings. The pods of the locust tree fall on the frozen ground or snow crust and are blown long

distances from their source. Squirrels are the most industrious foresters in the animal world. Many seeds are carried by the ocean currents to distant foreign shores. This leafy part of the seed finally forms the stem of the tree. This results because much of the seed is unsound. Millions of little seedlings, however, start to grow in the forest each year, but only a small number survive and become large trees. This is because so many of the seedlings are destroyed by forest fires, cattle and sheep grazing, unfavorable soil and weather conditions, and many other causes. Beech and chestnut trees and others of the broad-leaved type reproduce by means of sprouts as well as by seed. Among the cone-bearing trees reproduction by sprouts is rare. When trees are grown in nurseries, the practice is to sow the seed in special beds filled with rich soil. Lath screens are used as shade. They protect the young seedlings from the sun just as the parent trees would do in the forest. The seedbeds are kept well cultivated and free of weeds so that the seedlings may have the best opportunities for rapid growth. Such seeds as the elms and soft maples, which ripen in the early summer, are sown as soon as possible after they are gathered. Practical tests have shown that thick sowings of tree seeds give the best results. There is little danger of weeds smothering out the seedlings under such conditions. After the seed has germinated the beds may be thinned so that the seedlings will have more room to develop. When the trees finally are robust and vigorous and have reached the age of two to five years, they are dug up carefully and set out permanently. Practical experience is the best guide in such matters. The popular practice is to sow the seed in drills about 2 to 3 feet apart so that horses may be used for cultivation. The seeds are sown to a depth of 2 to 3 times their thickness. In order to hasten the sprouting of the seeds, some planters soak them in cold water for several days before sowing. In the case of such hard-coated seed as the black locust or honey locust, it is best to soak them in hot water before planting. Some trees do best in the icy northland. They become weak and die when brought to warm climates. Others that are accustomed to tropical weather fail to make further growth when exposed to extreme cold. The appearance of Jack Frost means death to most of the trees that come from near the equator. Those that prosper on south exposures are equipped to resist late and early frosts as well as very hot sunshine. Some trees attain large size in a swampy country. Trees of the same kind will become stunted in sections where dry weather persists. In some parts of the United States forestry experts can tell where they are by the local tree growth. As one travels farther south these give way to little Jack pine and aspen trees. They will include oak, maple, beech, chestnut, hickory, and sycamore. In Kentucky, which is a centre of the broad-leaved belt, there are several hundred different varieties of trees. Farther south, the cone-bearing species prevail. As a result, these Western forests do not shade the ground as well as those in the east. This causes the soils of these forests to be much drier, and also increases the danger from fire. The trees are gigantic. They tower to feet above the ground. Their trunks often are 6 feet or larger in diameter. They make the trees of the eastern forests look stunted. They are excelled in size only by the mammoth redwood trees of northern California and the giant Sequoias of the southern Sierras. For a time one species will redominate.

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*Our forests, with their billions of trees, are the backbone of agriculture, the skeleton of lumbering, and the heart of industry. Even now, in spite of their depletion, they are the cream of our natural resources.*

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