

*Complete set*

THE ZEPHYR

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Shall we have Christmas without holly? No!  
 Where there is space, and earth, and sun, and rain,  
 There will the crimson-berried holly grow  
 And lend its gracious charm each year again.  
 No torn branch, no sere and withered spray  
 Shall mar the friendly welcome of your door  
 If you will plant a tree this Christmas day --  
 A living, growing gift, forevermore.

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One of our nationally known cartoonists has immortalized the phrase, "Somebody is always taking the joy out of life". Few of us wax enthusiastic about the "joy-killers", and in discussing the problem of preserving our Christmas greens there is no need of such a viewpoint. We are, nevertheless, confronted by a situation that has progressed far beyond the realm of theory. We are faced by the fact that annually there is a destruction of plants, shrubs and small trees so extensive and so shortsighted in character as to rob coming generations of these joys because of our own prodigality.

The American holly is in the most serious danger of any of our native woody plants. It is found mostly along the coast from Massachusetts to Florida and west to Texas. In its northern range it is already becoming scarce. In the winter of 1924 the small state of Delaware shipped 13,979 cases of holly by one railroad alone, each case containing two hundred wreaths. As large a quantity was shipped by water, and very much larger quantities were undoubtedly shipped from the eastern parts of the other coastal states, particularly New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and Texas. As the red berries are borne on female trees, these have been largely cut in the past, the whole tree being often sacrificed or else losing nearly all of its branches, so that it soon dies. During the past two winters, complaints have been very general that few of the berries were found, the blame being laid on seasonal conditions. On the contrary, this destructive cutting of female trees is largely responsible. The trees left are mainly male and non-berry bearing, and at the present rate of cutting the days of the male trees are numbered.

The above paragraphs are quoted from an article on "Preserving Our Christmas Greens", in Nature Magazine, by Dr. P. L. Ricker, President of the National Wild Flower Preservation Society, and an authority on the native plants of America. Dr. Ricker states that the disappearance of our ornamental evergreens makes necessary the use of hothouse plants, imitation holly, and manufactured substitutes in holiday decorations, and that the general use of these substitutes by thinking people now may save what is left of our beautiful wild plants, for the beautification of our scenery and the benefit of posterity.

There is probably no section of the country where the preservation of ornamental wild growth is of more vital importance than here in Houston. If we are to have attractive and interesting scenery, we must save the trees and wild flowers, for we have no hills, valleys, picturesque gorges, or waterfalls.

Several paragraphs from an Associated Press dispatch dated Dallas, Texas, November 10th, 1926, are quoted below, because of their unusual interest to lovers of the outdoors:

"Roadside billboards and hip pocket artillery were swatted and the mockingbird was honored as the state bird by the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs in the second day's session of its twenty-ninth annual convention on Wednesday.

Florida's beauty slogan of "Swat signs and save scenery", was referred to with approval, and the convention, in its consideration of billboards and outdoor beauty, adopted the following as its slogan for Texas:

"Let no one leave the world less  
beautiful than he found it."

Mrs. L. A. Wells, of Amarillo, chairman of the conservation department, urged the federation to approve a bill to be proposed in the next legislature to restrict billboards on Texas highways. She said that advertising boards, especially at highway corners and curves, were a menace to safety, and that these and other alleged unsightly advertising mediums should be removed. Mrs. Wells referred to the voluntary removal of signboards on Western highways by many large companies. One hundred organizations of the country are co-operating to make highways more beautiful, she said.

The anti-gun toting resolution states that 'an appalling number of irresponsible people, including minors, possess and carry fire-arms', and that, 'The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs does formally petition the state legislature, when it shall assemble in the next regular session, that such legislation be enacted as will further effectively control and regulate the sale, ownership and possession of fire-arms'.

The mockingbird resolution asks the Fortieth Legislature to confirm by legislation the federation's choice of this songster as the state bird. The resolution, introduced by Mrs. Howard Hicks, of Sulphur Springs, and Mrs. L. A. Wells, of Amarillo, states that 'ornithologists, musicians, educators and Texans in all walks of life unite in proclaiming the mockingbird the most appropriate species for the state bird of Texas, as it is found in all parts of the state in winter and in summer, in the city and in the country, on the prairie and in the woods and hills, and is a singer of distinctive type, a fighter for the protection of his home, falling, if need be, in its defense, like any true Texan'."

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More good news from our local newspapers:

"Efforts are being made by the Amateur Garden Club of Houston to protect local ornamental wild growth, such as the holly, dogwood, magnolias, and to foster plans for civic beautification by educating the public as to the value of these things, Mrs. Herbert Roberts, president of the club, announced last week."

This announcement was followed by a convincing appeal for public cooperation in saving the native ornamental trees and shrubs that are such important features of our scenery.