

Forestry News

CONKERS IN KERRY

The Turks brought horse chestnut seed with them on their invasion of Europe. They had discovered that extracts from leaves, bark and seed helped alleviate the pain of rheumatism.

Today this tree gives employment in Co. Kerry. Seven to nine tons of seed are processed for their extract each week by the pharmaceutical firm of Klinge and Company of Killorglin, Co. Kerry. The seed is brought by container truck from Poland and Hungary.

The active ingredient of the seed is 'Escin' a mixture of at least 36 similar chemical compounds. These chemicals have the effect of reducing swellings. Escin is therefore effective in treating all sorts of sprains. It is commonly used in the treatment of swellings which result from sports injuries. 'Sports gel' is produced with Escin as one of the ingredients.

Escin is found in the leaves, bark and the seed of horse chestnut. However, it is in the seed that the greatest concentration occurs. The bitter taste of Escin makes the seed unpalatable to grazing animals. Sunlight during flowering and seed pod formation is largely responsible for the amount of Escin produced. At best Irish grown horse chestnut seed produces about 5% Escin. Polish grown seed produce over 20% of the chemical. There seems therefore little prospect that Irish plantations of this species could compete with east European trees for such a market.

The Polish seed is dried and crushed before transportation to Kerry. In Killorglin extraction is carried out in large 'Tumblers' using an ethanol/water mixture. The solution is filtered and concentrated to a fine brown powder called 'horse chestnut extract'. This can be treated further to isolate the active ingredient 'Escin' - which is a fine white powder.

Both of these products are sold by Klinge and Co. as bulk chemicals. The principle customer is the parent company in Munich. After extraction the resultant residue can be used as a cattle feed: it is quite palatable with the Escin removed.

(Details kindly supplied by Klinge and Co., Killorglin. My thanks also to Mr. D. Walsh for making the initial contact. Ed.)

MUSEUM ITEM

The query in the last issue of the journal regarding an item obtained for the forest museum brought two replies from readers. Both replies, furnished with documentation, suggest that the correct name of the implement is a 'planting bar'. A planting bar

was commonly used for 'compression planting' on sandy soil or for planting hard or rocky sites. My thanks to those two readers. Ed.

FORESTRY 88

A national forestry show entitled 'Forestry 88', organised jointly by the Irish Timbermen's Association and the Society of Irish Foresters will be held at Garryhinch Property, Emo Forest, on September 9 and 10th, 1988.

The show, which will cater for specialist and general interest groups, will include trade display areas for forest machinery, nurseries, sawmills and chemical supply companies. The finals of the National Chainsaw Competition will also form part of the show, as will demonstrations in establishing, maintaining and harvesting plantations. There will be a full programme of events over the two days including guided tours of the forest, illustrated talks on forestry, a dendrology display and wood-working/woodcraft displays.

A show catalogue, which is currently being prepared, will not only be informative and educational in content but will also be the first important directory for the forestry industry in the country. Forestry 88 will be the most extensive exhibition of forestry technology and expertise ever assembled in Ireland. As such it will attract a very large audience and command very considerable media coverage. Members interested in renting stand/display space or catalogue advertising are invited to contact Forestry 88, Mountrath 0502-32576. We look forward to the participation of all members in Forestry 88.

SIGN OF THE TIMES?

Seen outside O'Brien's Pub in Dunshaughlin.



AIDS

The seed of an Australian chestnut tree yields a drug called 'Castanospermine'. There appears to be possibilities that this drug may interrupt the AIDS virus's ability to reproduce itself.

THE MONEY TREE

On the side of the main road between Portlaoise and Mountrath is an unimposing sycamore tree, unimposing until you draw close to it. The first two metres of this tree are studded with densely packed coins. This is the money tree.

The tree is on the site of a famous monastery and school of the sixth century known as the Gallician School. It was founded by St. Fintan in 548.



In the 1940s it was common to hang rags of cloth on the tree at which time it was called a 'rag tree'. The hanging of rags was to seek favours or cures from St. Fintan. On occasions old people still leave rags. (One rag was there when the photo was taken — May 1988). Now, however, it is more common to leave coins.