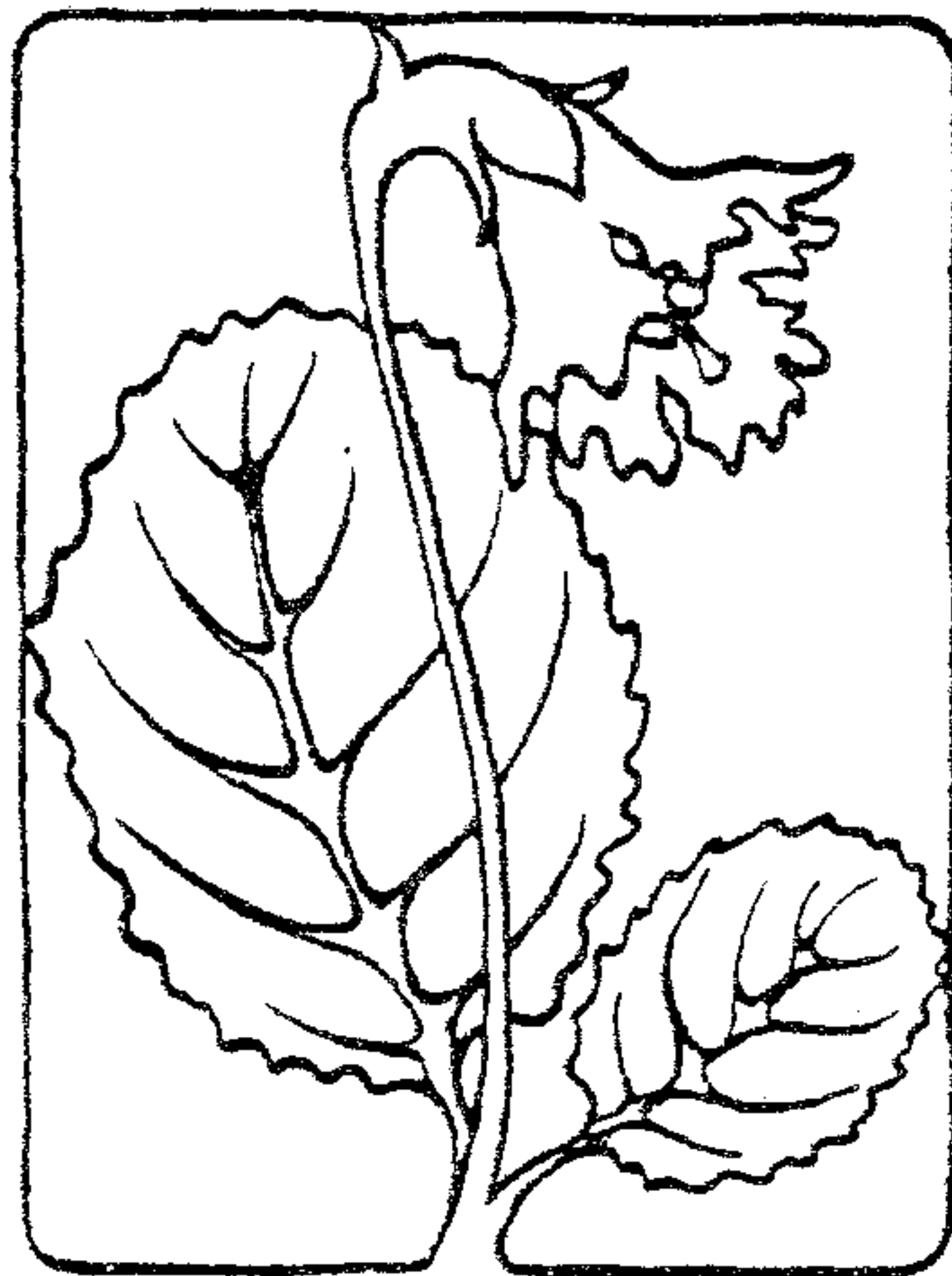


# SHORTIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
WESTERN CAROLINA BOTANICAL CLUB

WINTER 1982-83



HELEN TURNER, Editor

RAMBLINGS FROM A RETIRING PRESIDENT

"Things are always best in the beginning" --- Pascal

The fall season in the western Carolina mountains is truly a season to behold. Every hill is clothed with a garment of an uncountable myriad of colors against a background of azure blue sky. In the words of the poet, "then, if ever come perfect days." Even though the poet was speaking of June, perhaps he would have changed his poem to mean October had he seen our mountains in the fall.

But just suppose that fall were to be our only season! How long would we continue to be overcome by the glories of the season? It would not be long before we would cease to see the finer things, and we would become depressed by the lesser joys of fall -- thousands of leaves stopping up the downspouts, or increased heating bills, or roadways made dangerous with wet, slippery things on the surface, or just plain boredom of nothing new. My brother could not wait to get home from Hawaii when he was stationed there in the services. He so badly missed the change of seasons that he ceased to feel the warm sunshine day in and day out, or to enjoy all the other things that make it an island paradise.

In like manner, it is good to have a new order of things in our organization. Such changes are invigorating. As retiring president, I wish to thank each member for making the Western Carolina Botanical Club such a fine organization. I extend best wishes to the incoming officers.

*Augie Kehr*

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

On August 6 at Carolina Village, President Augie Kehr appointed a nominating committee of Bessie Sinish, Tom Hallowell and John Kuhn.

Believing the selection of qualified people to be vital to the continued success of this Club, the committee labored long to come up with the following slate: Historian - Louise Foresman; Secretary - Margaret Canfield; Treasurer - Margaret Kuhn; Vice President - Sam Childs. These people plus Augie Kehr have guided the Club through 1982, a very successful season. As our current President, Augie Kehr, did not wish to continue as President, we have selected a very capable person of wide knowledge in the botanical field -- a quiet, pleasant personality who knows where the flowers are and the trails to travel to find them.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO A VERY SUCCESSFUL SEASON WITH -- DICK SMITH!  
John F. Kuhn

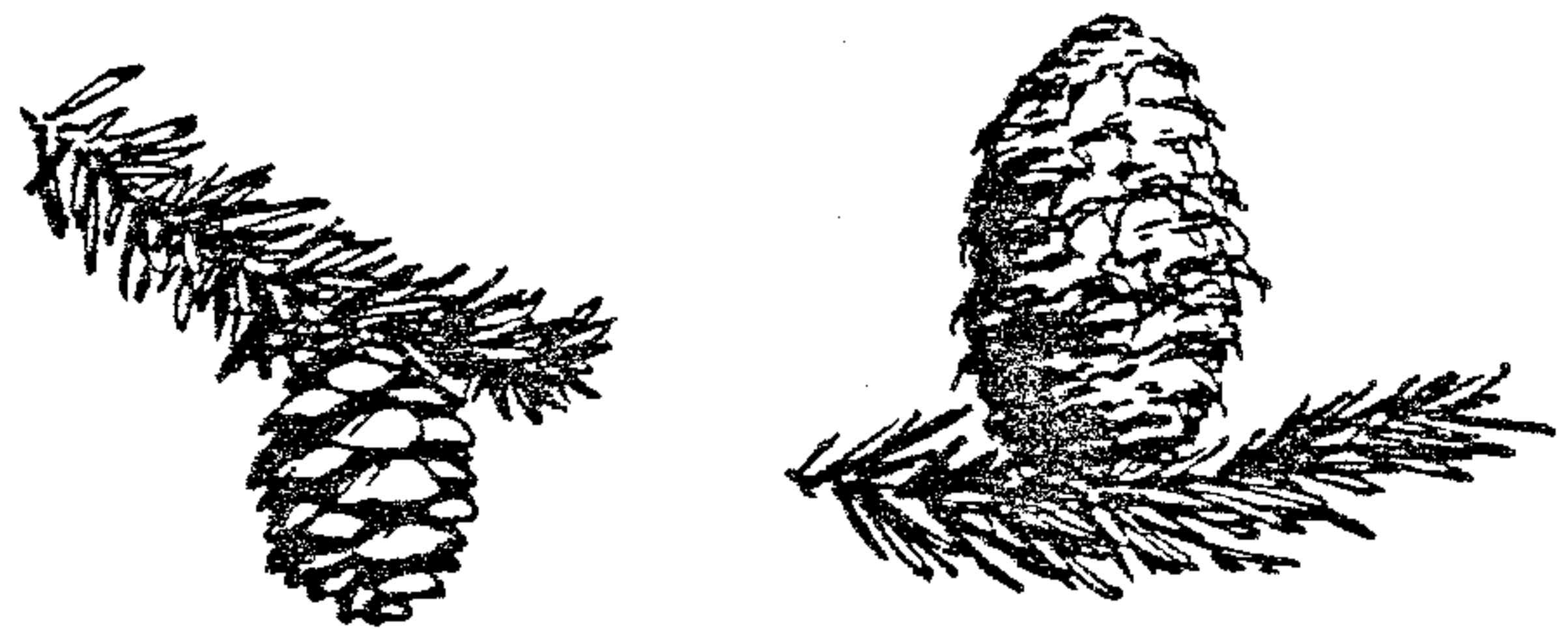


# LOOK AGAIN!

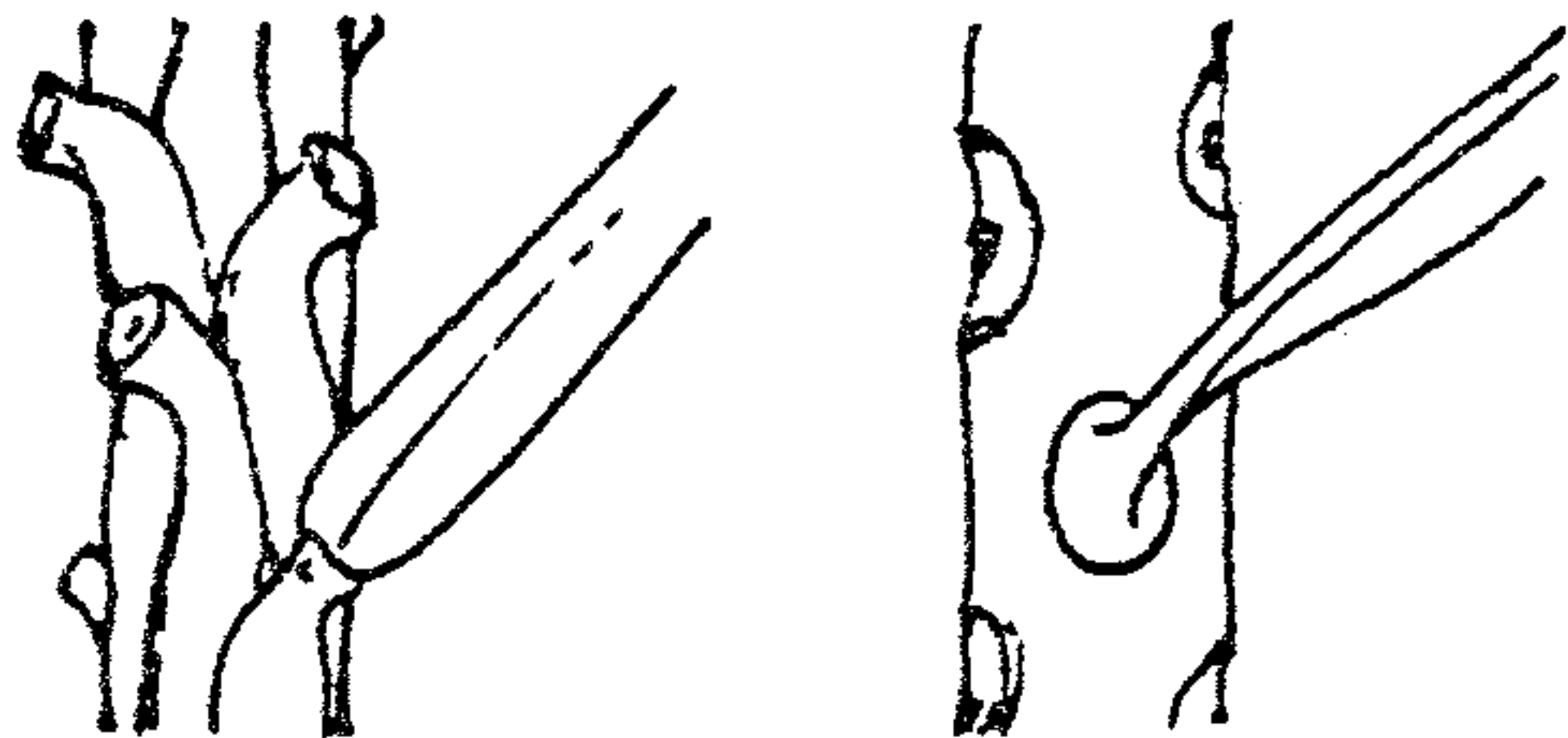
"He Balsam" and "She Balsam" - the names would seem to indicate a dioecious species, or at least very similar plants, but such is not the case at all. They differ from each other in many ways, and the wonder is that we can so easily be confused even when we see the two side by side.

First of all, the name "He Balsam" is simply a local one given to a Red Spruce (Picea rubens) that happens to be growing in the southern highlands instead of, say, the Adirondacks or Ontario. "She Balsam" probably has a little more legitimacy, since the tree it applies to is found only in the Southern Appalachians; technically it is a Fraser Fir (Abies fraseri).

Both trees are conifers, and that alerts us to a basic difference: On spruces the cones are pendulous and on firs they are upright. Also, the cones of spruces fall from the tree intact, but those of firs usually disintegrate, dropping their scales one by one.



So far so good, but often the cones are high on the trees and out of view. So let's look at the needles. Spruce needles are square in cross-section and can be twirled between the thumb and forefinger, while fir needles are distinctly flat. Just remember: "S" = Square = Spruce, "F" = Flat = Fir. Also look at their attachment to the twigs.



Spruce needles are mounted on short stubby projections which remain after the needles are removed. Fir needles, on the other hand, are attached directly to the twigs and leave only smooth, flat, circular scars.

The name "balsam" does not belong to any genus, but it has been freely used in vernacular names not only for firs and spruces but for Balsam Poplar, the old-fashioned garden Impatiens, and other plants. The word also refers to resinous secretions of certain trees and shrubs, notably "Canada balsam", which is obtained from Balsam Fir and is used in preparing microscope slides. Such a substance is produced copiously by Fraser Fir and collects in blisters beneath the thin outer bark. It is this characteristic, with its suggestion of "a tree that gives milk", that is thought to provide an explanation for the colloquial term "She Balsam".

*Dick Smith*



## RAMBLINGS -- PEOPLE, PLANTS AND PLACES

From the last hike in July through the second one in November, 1982, we had an average of 24 persons per hike -- the greatest number, 56, came to Holmes State Forest for the covered dish treat and celebration of Helen Turner's birthday -- the smallest number, 8, made the trip to Camp Alice.

FRYING PAN GAP -- a hike on a cloudy, cool day, Sam Childs as leader, showed us so many flowers (66) along the Parkway and entrance road that the group did not get far into the Gap. HOLMES STATE FOREST, short and long trails led by John Kuhn and Dick Smith, showed a good many flowers blooming. On the trip to TRESTLE GAP, the group divided into two sections: Peg Camenzind led one and Nan Morrow led the other. Hold on to your hats! Those who went with Nan over Black Balsam Mt. were nearly blown off the trail and over the edge. But all were rewarded with some 50 flowers in bloom and a long ramble in the meadows to pick blueberries.

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY TRIP was led by Miles Peelle on a sunny day despite threatening rain clouds. Botanizing stops were made at Cold Mt. View, Cherry Cove Point, Long Hollow, Wolf Mt. Overlook, Courthouse Valley Overlook. The CAMP ALICE (Mt. Mitchell) hike led by John Kuhn was the smallest turnout -- a special loss to those who didn't make it for fear of rain. It cleared to a lovely, sunny day and an interesting hike with an exceptionally good showing of Grass of Parnassus. LAUREL RIVER GORGE, John Robinson leader, was a "botanist's paradise" with some 33 flowers in bloom and a great variety of ferns, trees, and mosses of note.

Another absolutely perfect fall day found us at GRAVEYARD FIELDS, John Peavey leader, and blueberries still in the meadows. Lunch on the big rocks by the Falls. The return trip had some of us bush whacking through the thick undergrowth seeking a trail on the other side of the stream -- no luck! A new area, WHITESIDE MT., was a most spectacular hike led by Phil Babcock with great views of the mountains over toward South Carolina, many flowers identified as well as ferns, mosses, fungi and trees -- a prolific area well worth a return trip. Ivan Kuster led us on a hike in the COVE CREEK RESERVE, a heavily forested area, in which we braved rain to be rewarded by a clearing, beautiful day. Many flowers seen, as well as quite a variety of trees we don't often see which Harry Logan helped us identify.

Only 9 persons with Harry Logan as leader made the long trip to the LINVILLE WILDERNESS AREA where there are spectacular views on a beautiful sunny day -- some 14 flowers blooming including the rare Hudsonia montana -- lunch on top of Shortoff Mt. A close-by area, FRUITLAND, was visited on another beautiful fall day -- but with the Foresmans lost and wandering the side roads with new members, Rob and Marge Laughrey. They were delayed at the meeting place, missed the group at Fruitland crossroads and never found them -- so since the Laughreys had never been to Holmes State Forest we drove there and enjoyed hiking the long trail. We do regret having caused Tom and Barbara Hallowell, the leaders, and the group to worry over our disappearance, and we missed being with you all.

One of the most enjoyable hikes of the entire season was the trek to OGLE MEADOWS atop Coxcomb Mt., led by Ben Tullar. Absolutely spectacular 360 degree views from the top -- all the mountain ranges in full view. Snowball fight, anyone? Yes, we found snow enough to pelt a few! On some slopes were tree farms with perfect and healthy-looking Fraser fir trees. Scattered in the meadow on top were a number of lovely, very old trees spaced randomly which emphasized their gnarly, special shapes. It was as still and warm as a summer day on top as we ate our lunches looking at the mountains and valleys around us. A really great trip -- hopefully to be repeated. On another day we followed Marge and Julian Little to CHIMNEY ROCK -- we started out in 30 degree weather with a windchill factor down to 20 but the sun warmed things up as we hiked along and, in the woods, there was little wind. Along the trail, many long icicles on the mountainside caught our eyes in addition to some flowers, two species of Woodsia ferns and well as other ferns and 14 trees were noted, including the wafer ash. The views from the top overlooking Lake Lure were beautiful.

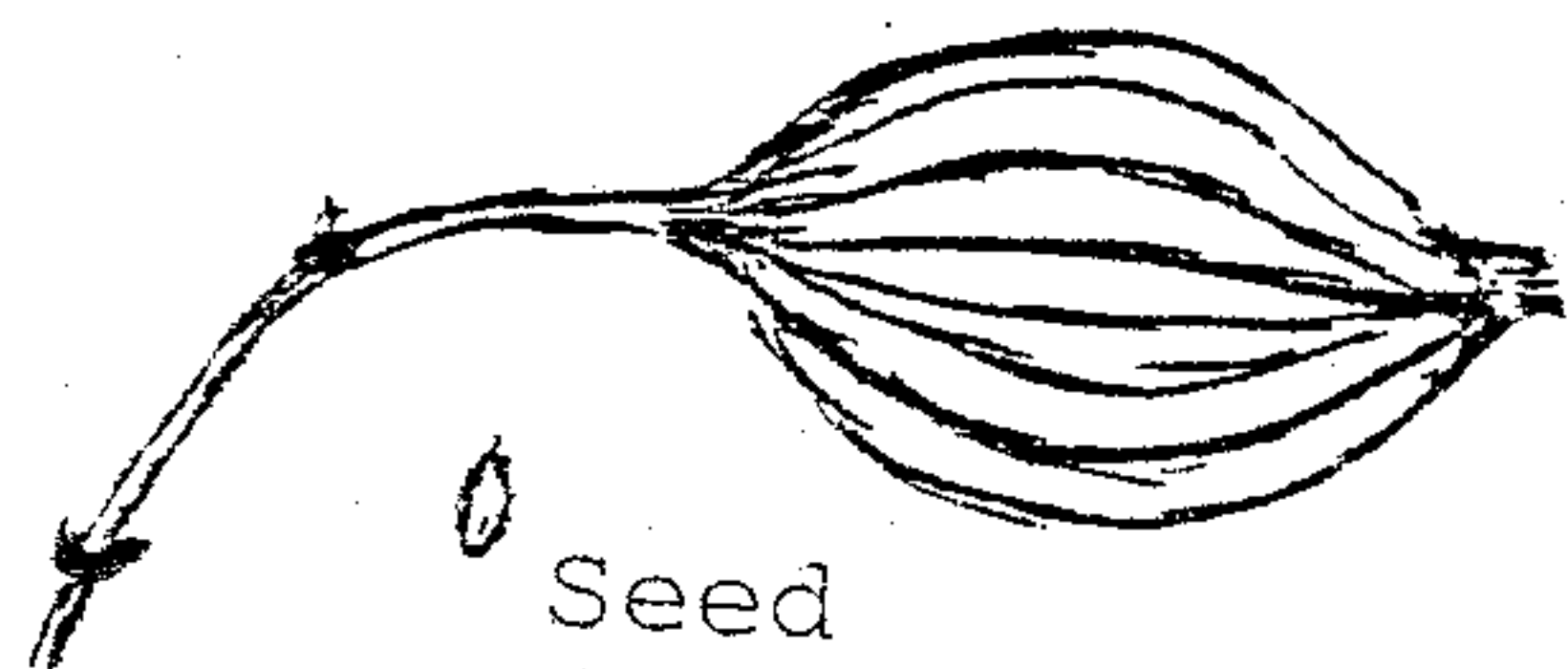
Some of our members are busy this fall teaching classes at Blue Ridge Tech:

TREES OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA -- Barbara Hallowell  
ABOUT BIRDS -- Tom Hallowell  
KNOWING THE INSECTS -- Elton Hansens  
TREES AND SHRUBS FOR THE GARDEN -- Harry Logan

So, as you can see, these past months have been busy, interesting ones for our members.

Louise Foresman, Historian

Calycanthus floridus -- SWEET SHRUB

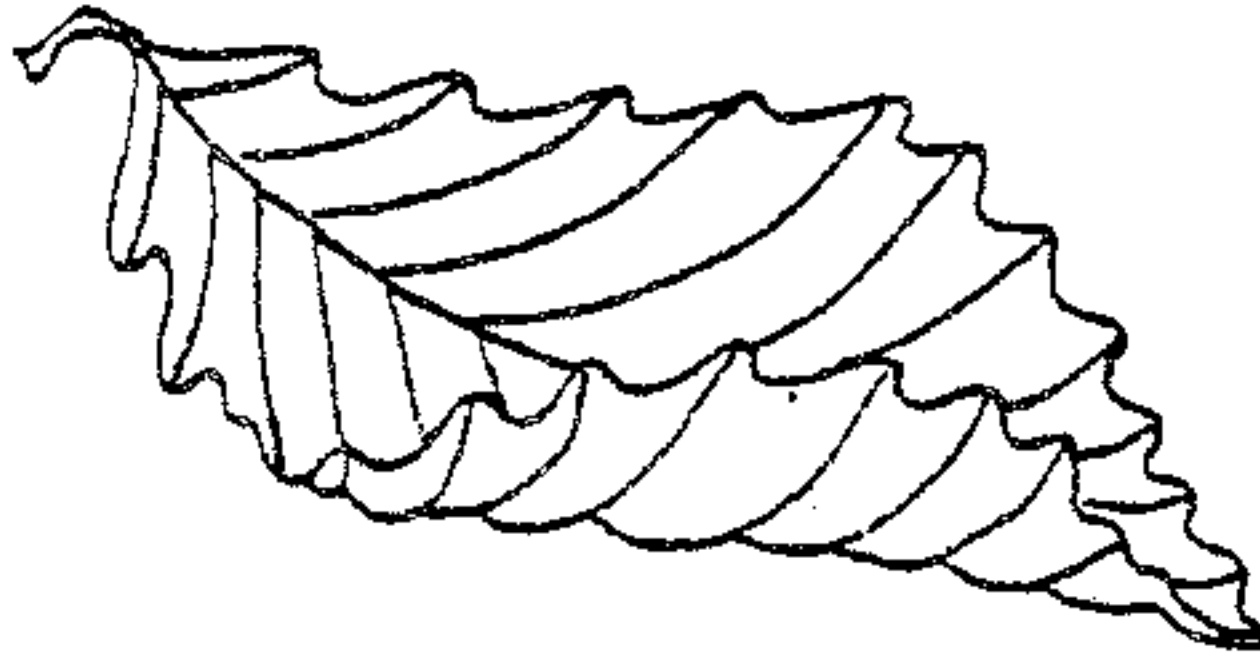


When seen in the fall the mahogany colored flower is gone and the bulbous seed pods hang conspicuously from leafless branches. The capsule contains fifteen or more poisonous seeds.

This native shrub is found, here, on hills and stream banks at the margin of deciduous woodlands, chiefly in the upper piedmont and mountains.

Bess Sinish



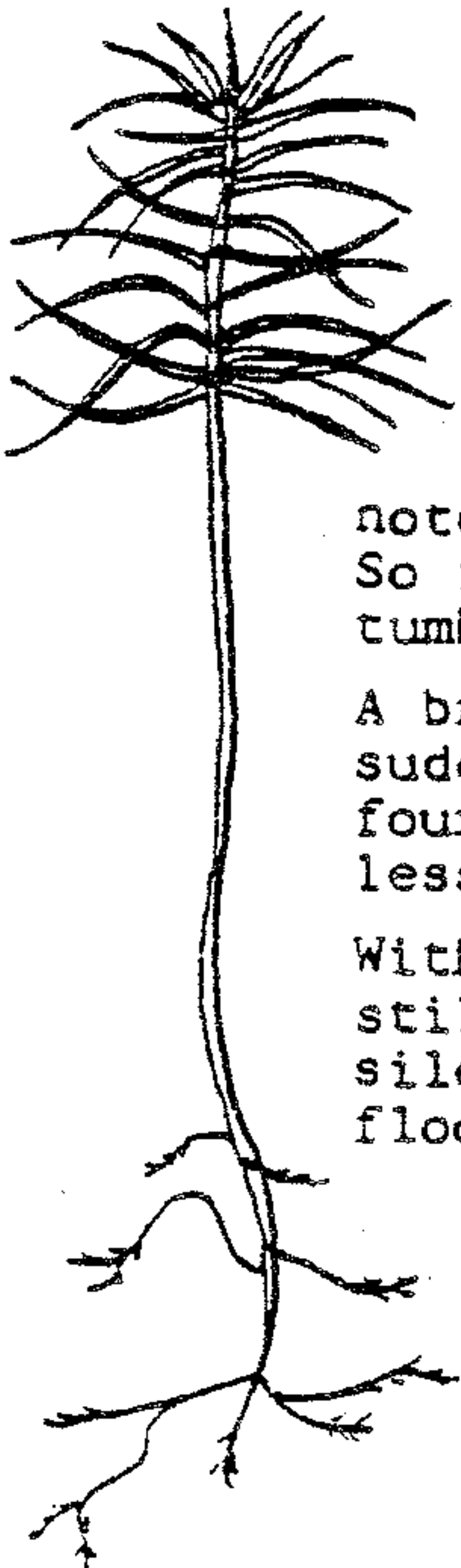


### Sitting on the Floor



There's a best time--when the sun beats down extra-bright and warms the floor of a secluded niche. One can sit there in leisurely comfort, experiencing close surroundings. What a long list of things can be seen on the floor--oh! this floor is in the winter forest, by the way, a place often avoided "because there's not much to see there then."

Only inches away and several inches high, a seedling white pine pokes up between lobes of an oak leaf, contributing a dainty touch of green in the colorless leaf cover. Colorless? Rich browns and rusts, soft beiges and tans, and a full scale of grays persist after fall's brighter hues.



Life size

Tiny hairs, backlit by sun and glittering like frost spicules, line the underside veins of a beech leaf. A wee spider appears suddenly on the leaf, waits motionless a moment, alert and interested, then vanishes. Obviously, sun's heat activated him, but what might have been his hasty mission? Curiosity? The hunt?

Curling gracefully, the round-toothed edges of a chestnut oak leaf criss-cross the vein lines in a beautifully wavy pattern.

Surprise! A tiny inch worm--no, a 3/4 inch worm--climbs onto a notebook of jottings, humping three humps per line on the white page. So intent is he that at the page's edge, he hurries on into space, tumbling to the floor, quite lost. Doesn't he know this is winter?

A breath of air rustles leaves persisting on a young white oak. One suddenly lets go and topsy-turves downward, falling directly onto a four-inch hemlock which seems to support this unexpected burden effortlessly.

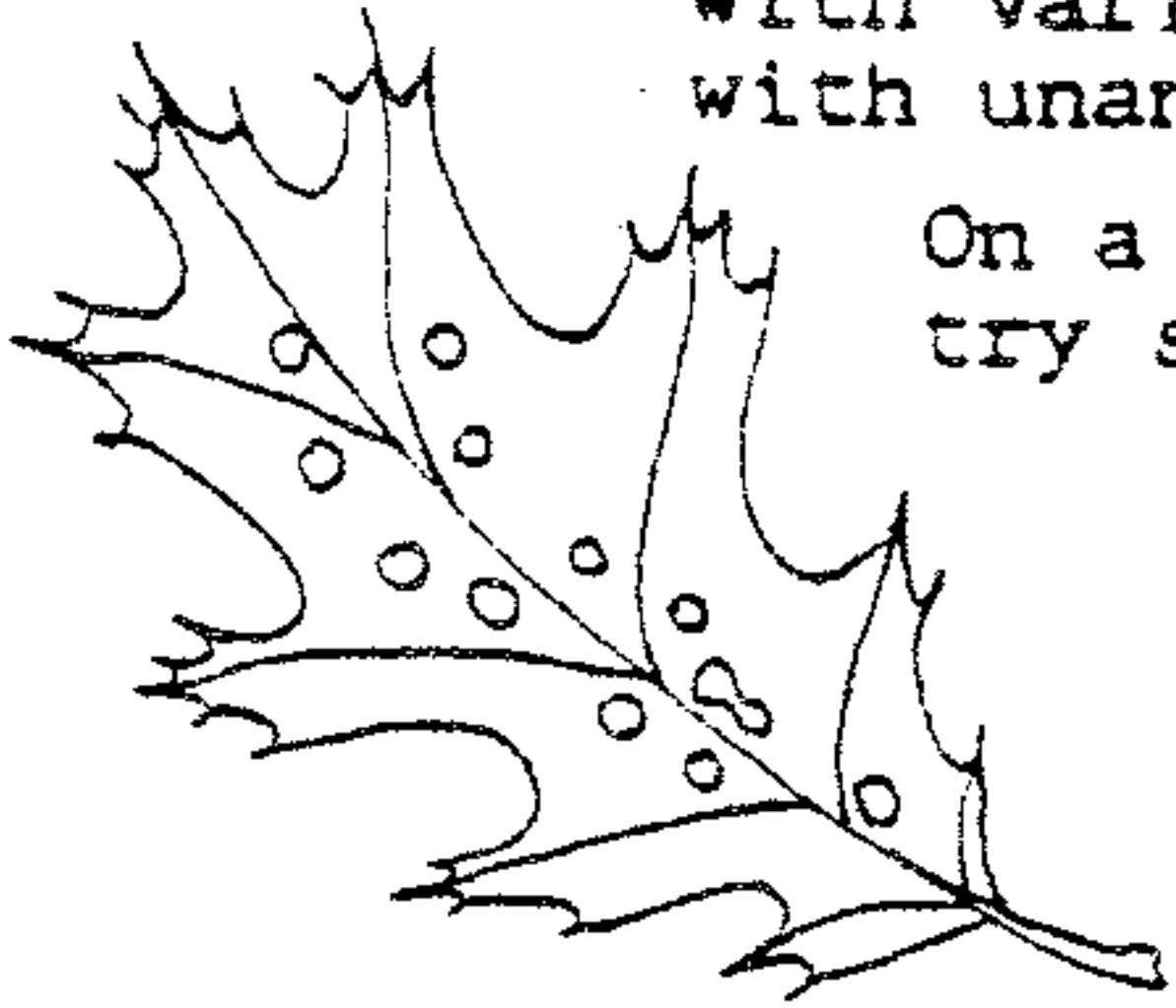
Within the soggy decay of last year's leaves, tiny soil creatures still busily pursue their lowly business, scurrying or creeping in silence, unwittingly serving man and nature as they break down forest floor debris to prepare it for recycling.

Lines of holes in oak leaves present a mystery. What creature caused them, all so neatly arranged? And here's a mitten leaf! Sassafras grows nearby.

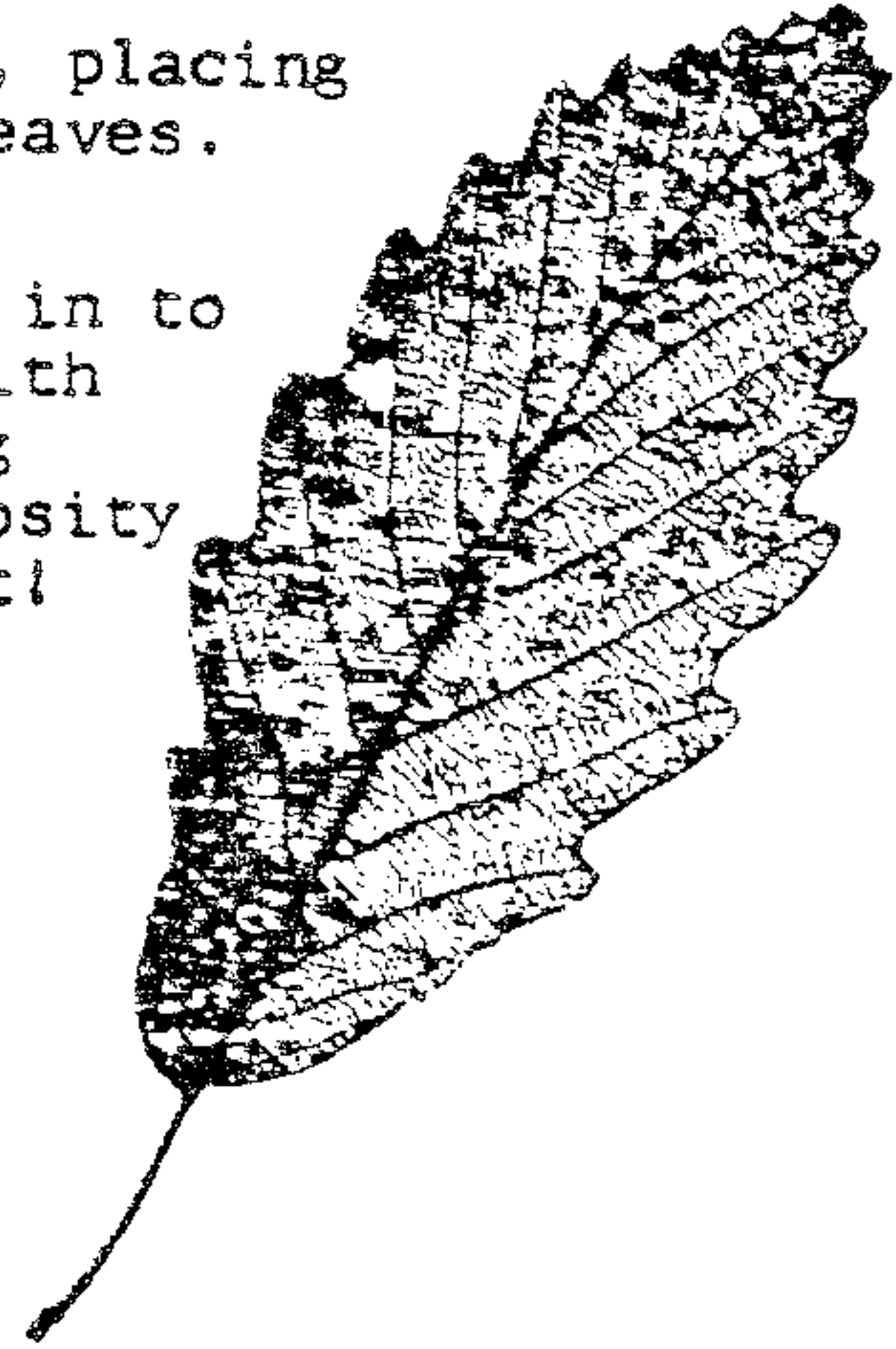
Insects and decay organisms have cooperated to create lacy finery, a framework left behind after a leaf's green tissue has been used. Leaf lace held to the sky displays the marvelous, delicate tracery of tiny veins which carried nutrients and fluids to and from the leaf.

A hand lens magnifies the fuzzy interior of an acorn cup, placing it among the red or black oaks with the bristle-tipped leaves. Cups of round-lobed oaks are smooth within.

From all around, messages from winter's forest floor pour in to the observant eye and appreciative heart, entertaining with miniature drama, satisfying with bits of beauty, pleasing with variety and familiarity, and exciting curiosity with unanswered questions. The messages delight!



On a sunny, quiet day this winter, try sitting on the floor!



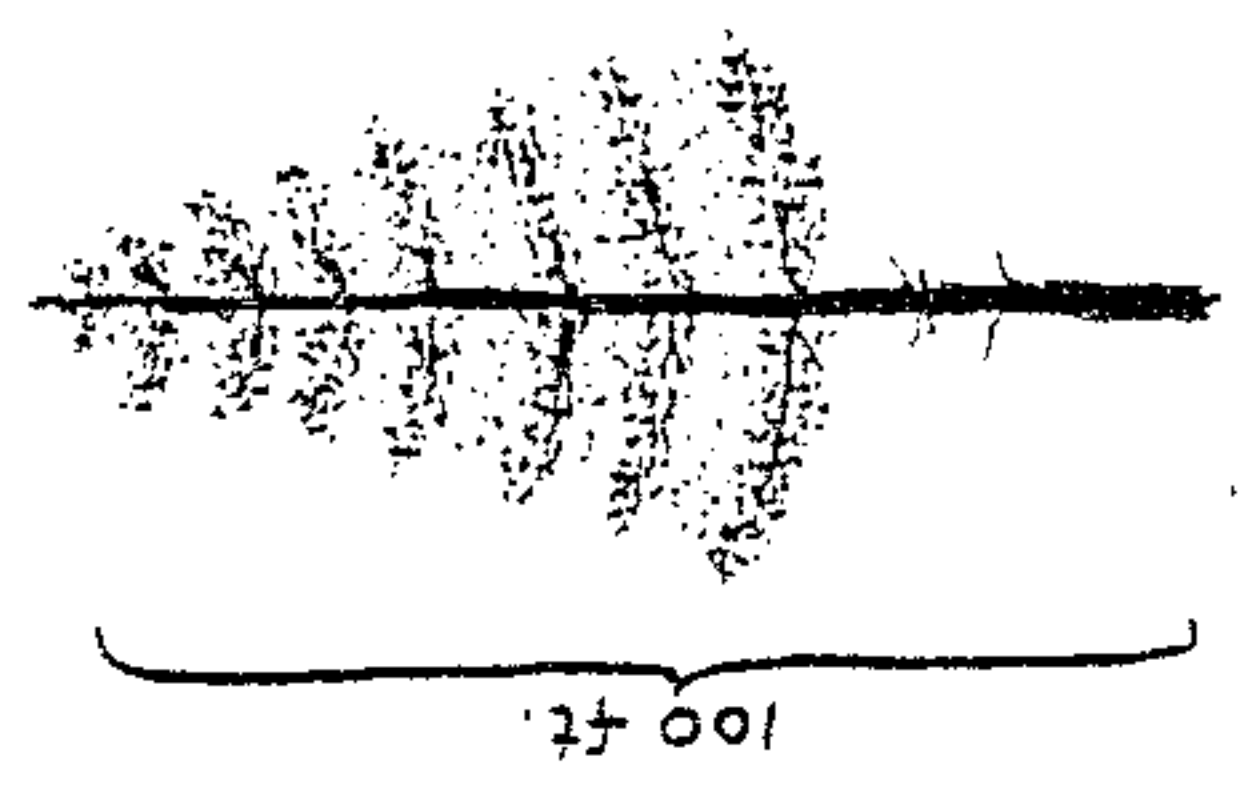
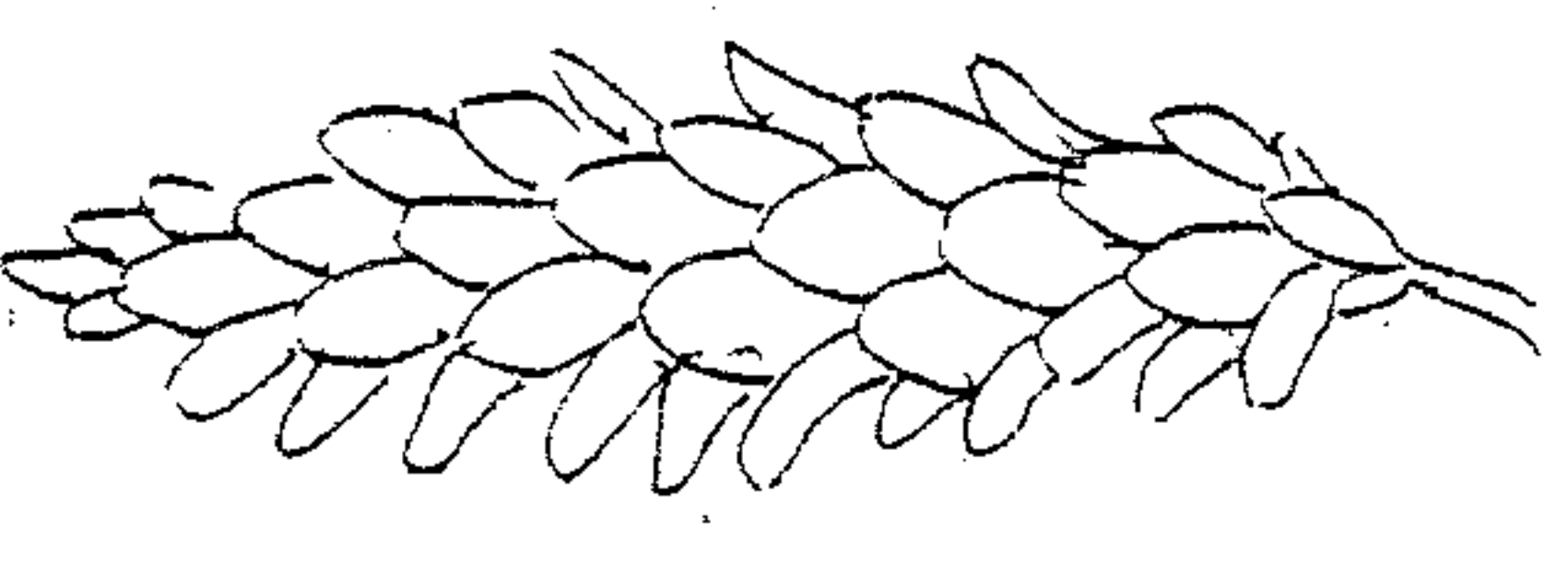
BGH.

2 needles

P. strobus  
White pine

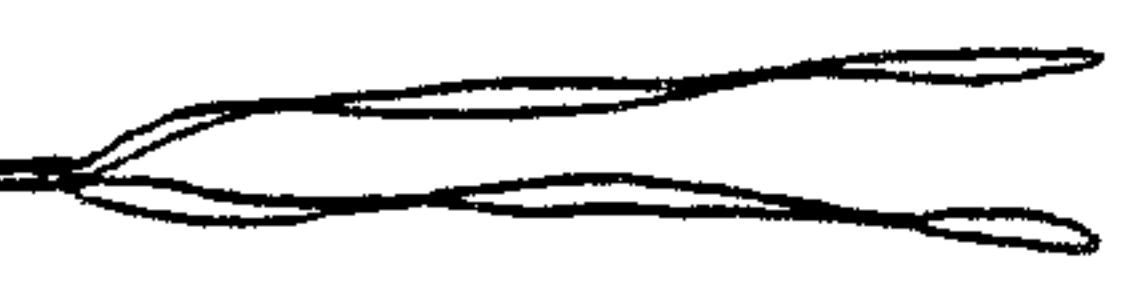


3-5 inches



100 ft.

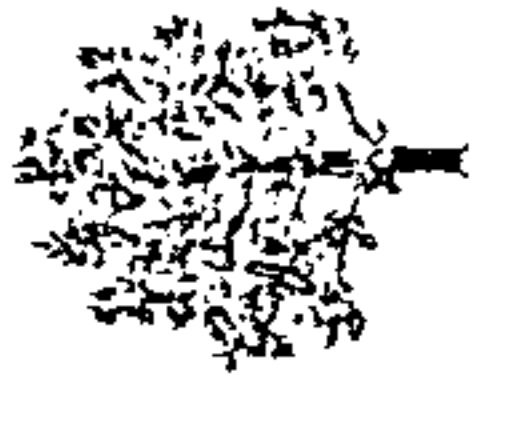
P. virginiana  
Virginia pine



1 1/2 - 3 inches



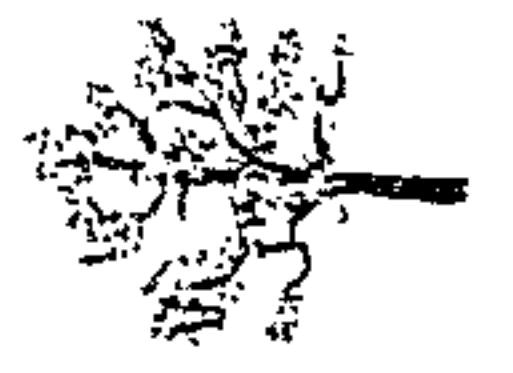
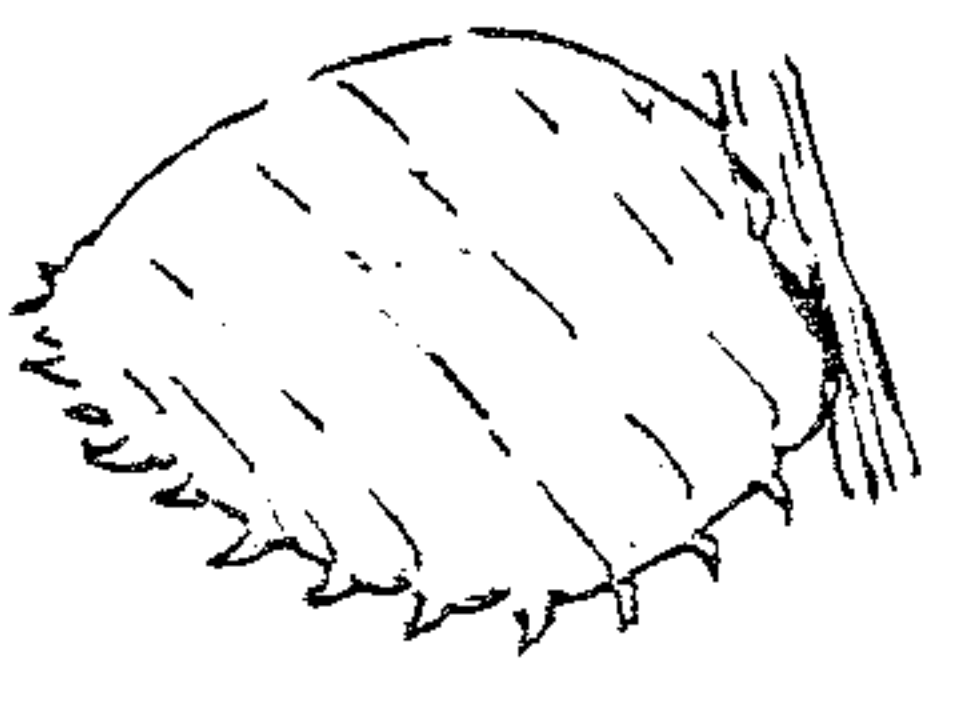
Persistent prickles



P. pungens  
Table mountain

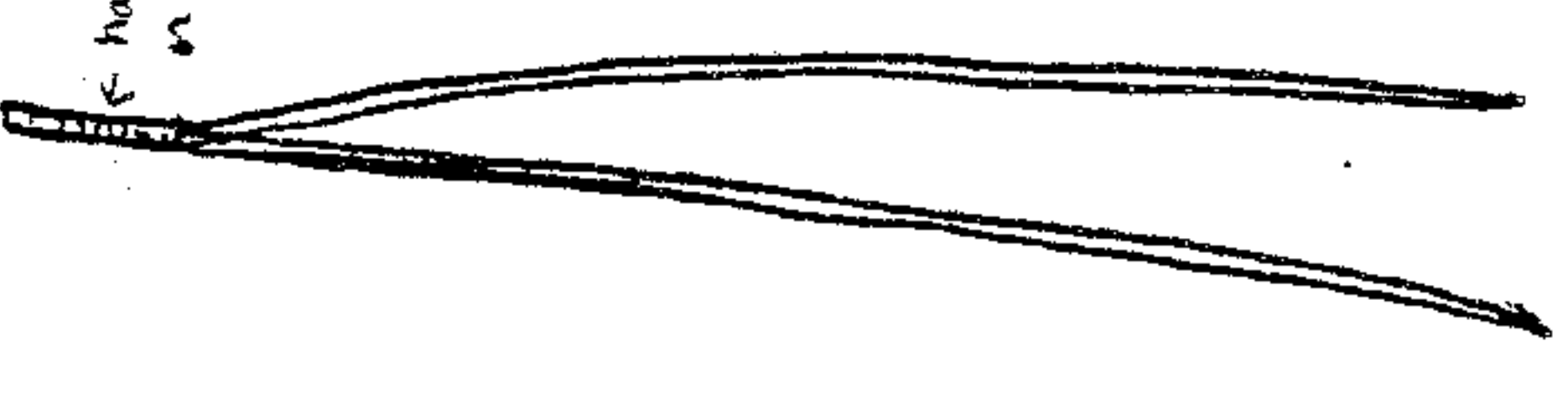


1 1/2 - 3 1/2 inches

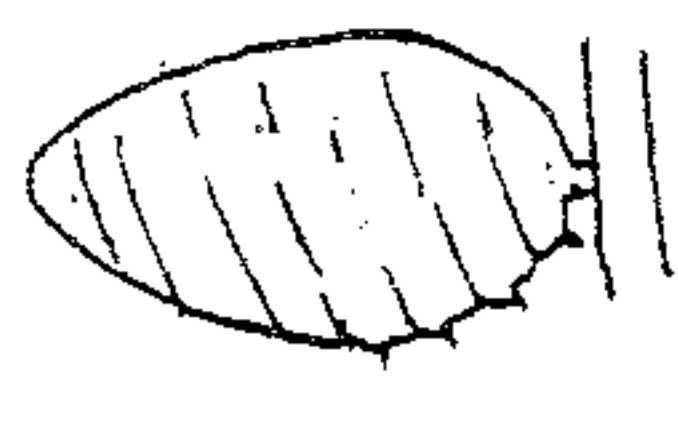


Average

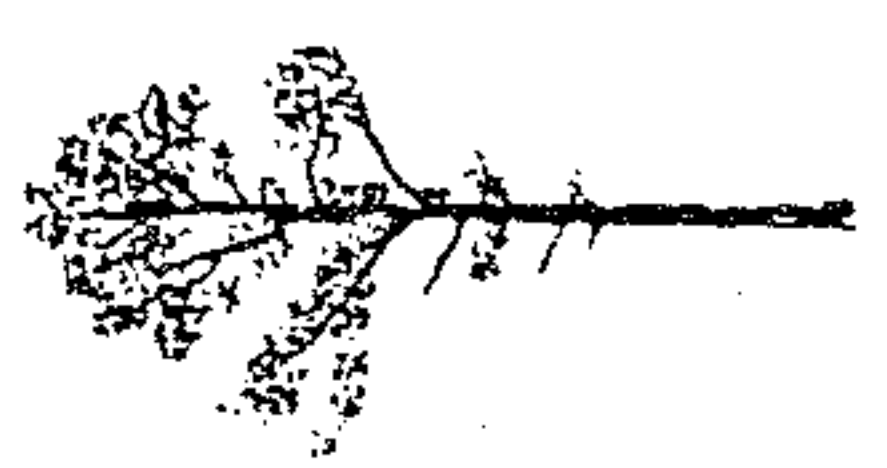
P. echinata  
Short leaf pine



2-5 inches

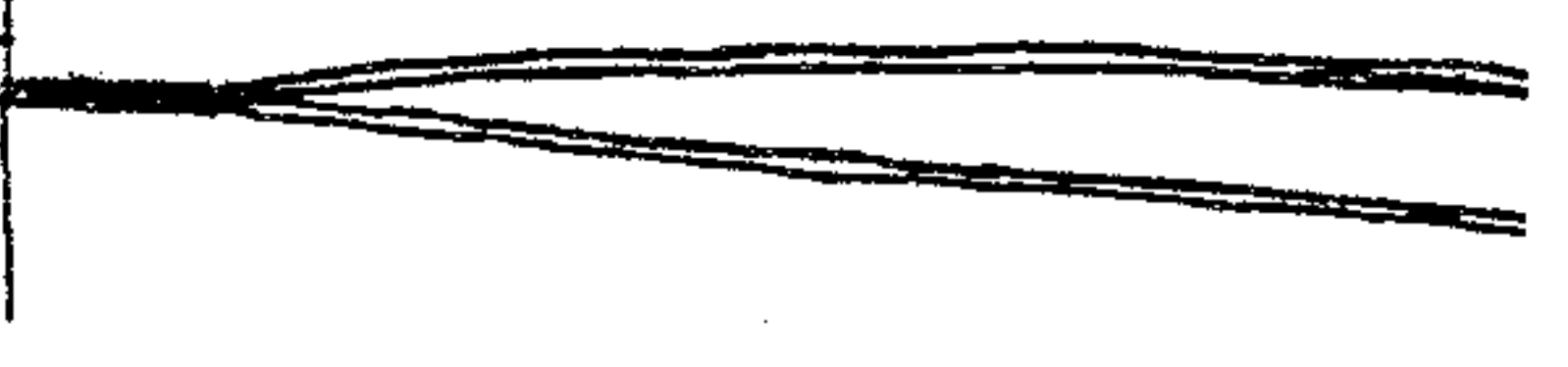


Deciduous prickles



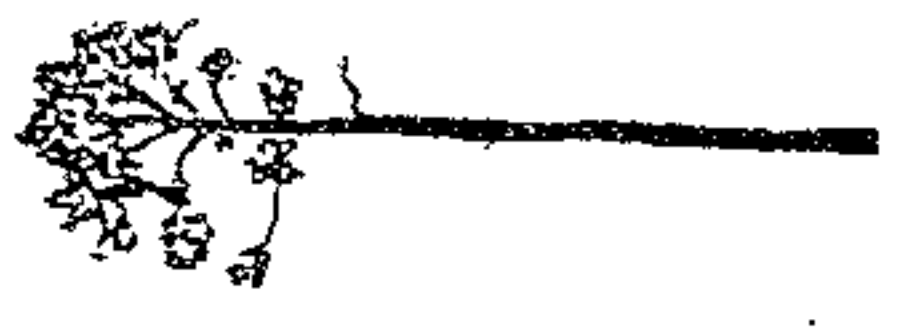
2 or 3

P. elliottii  
Slash pine



7-11 inches

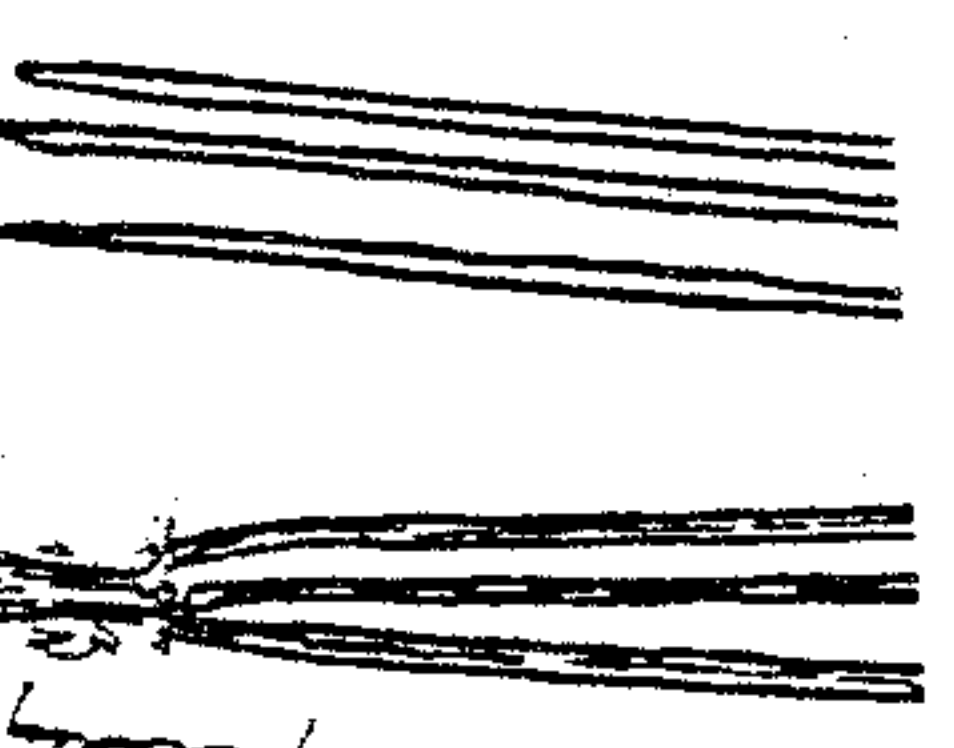
Minute recurved or incurved bristles



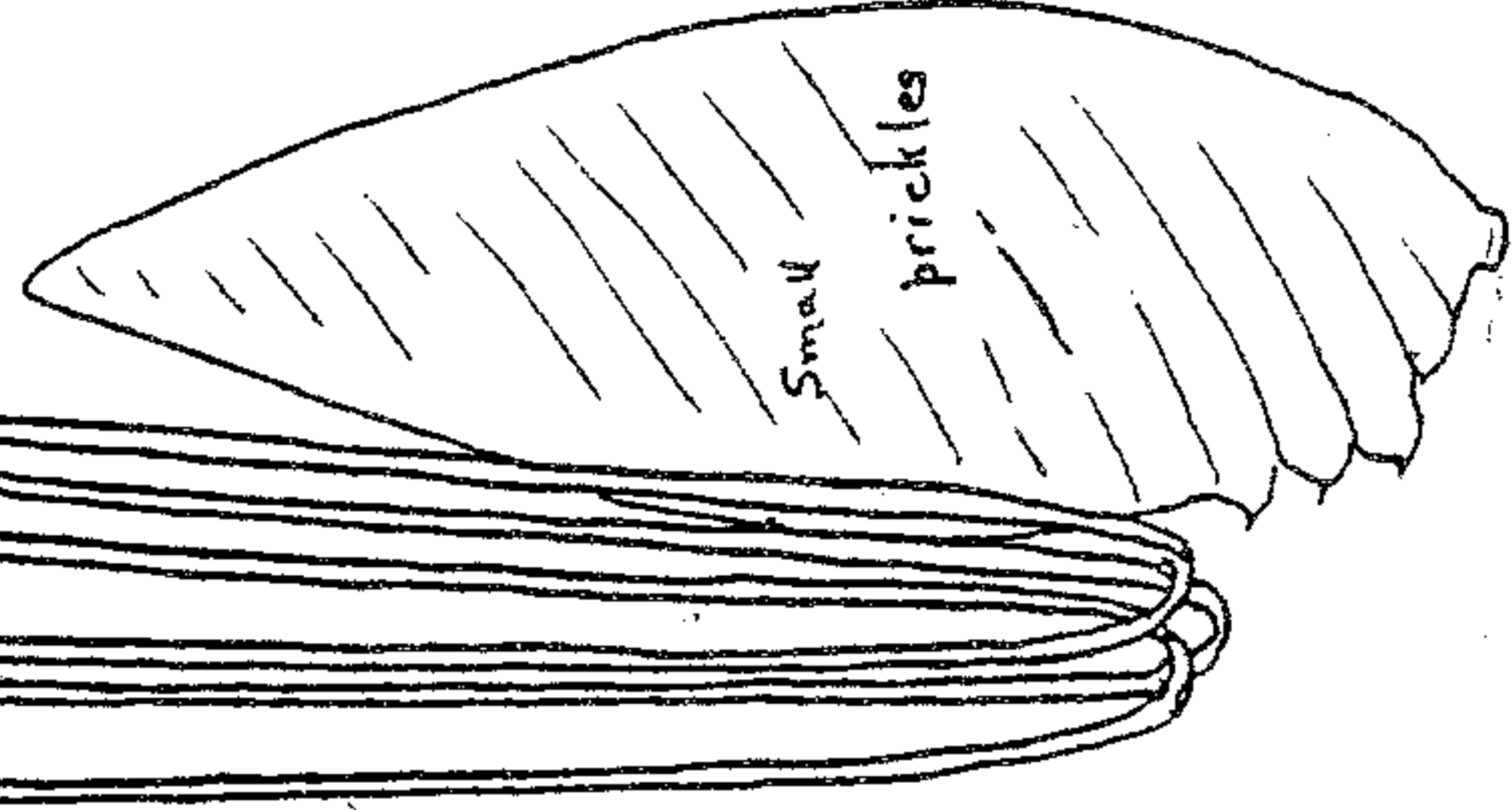
100 ft.

Needles in threes

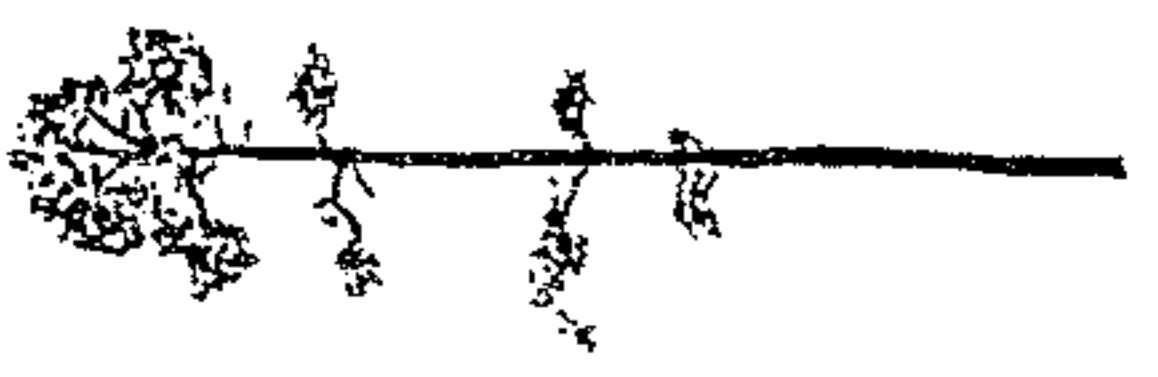
P. palustris  
Long leaf pine



8-16 inches



Small prickles

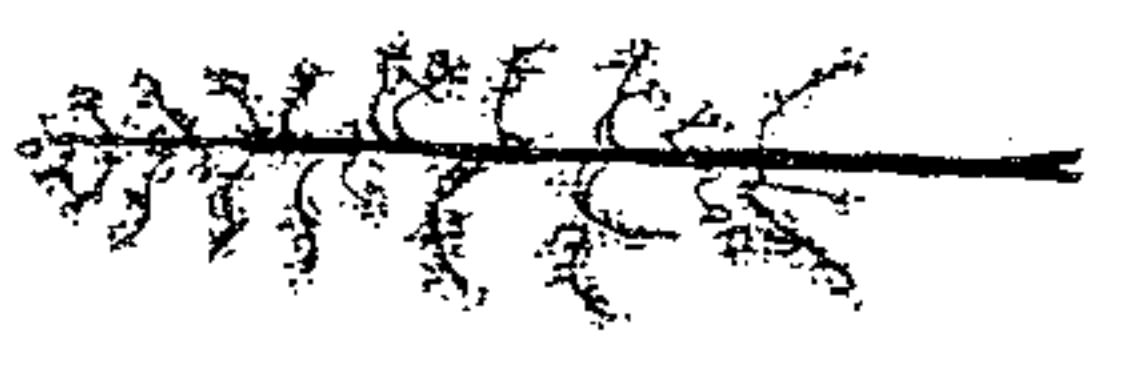
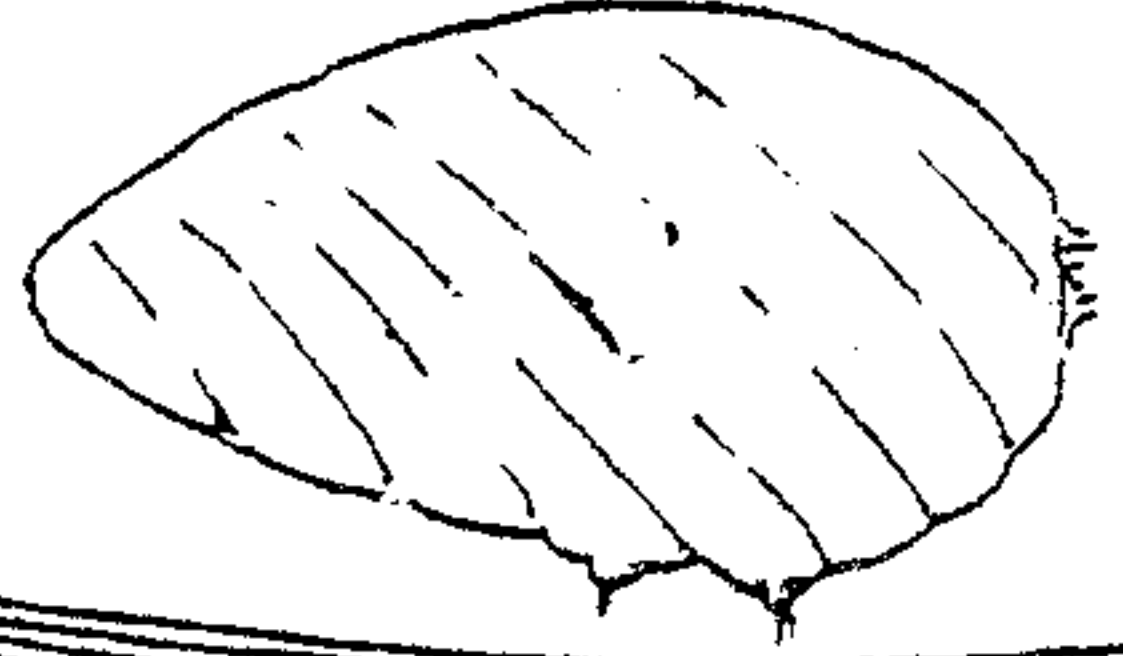


100 ft.

P. taeda  
Loblolly pine

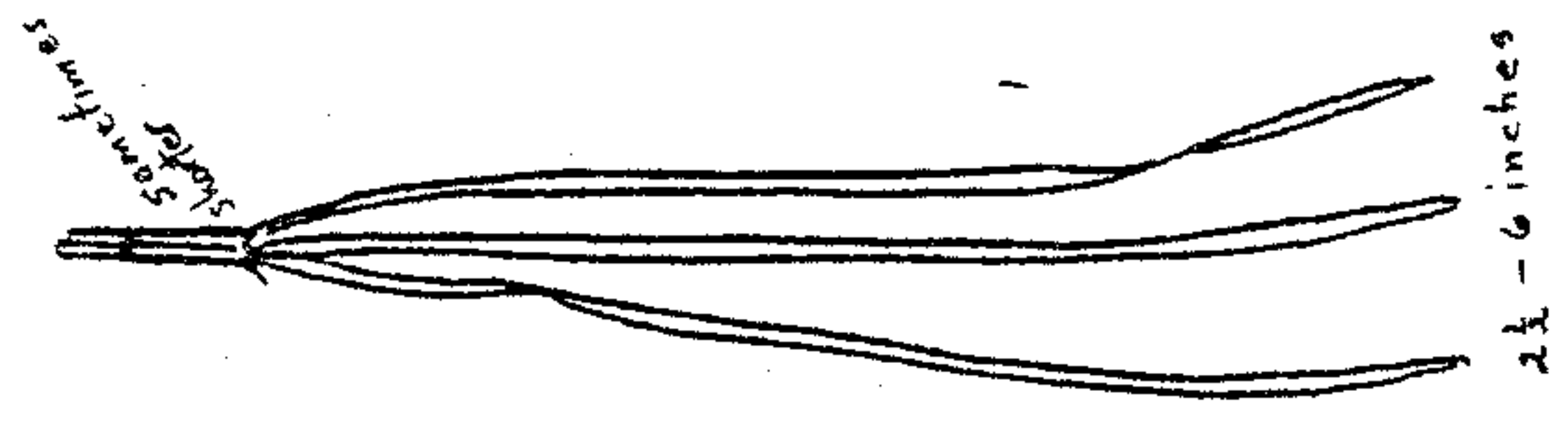


5-9 inches

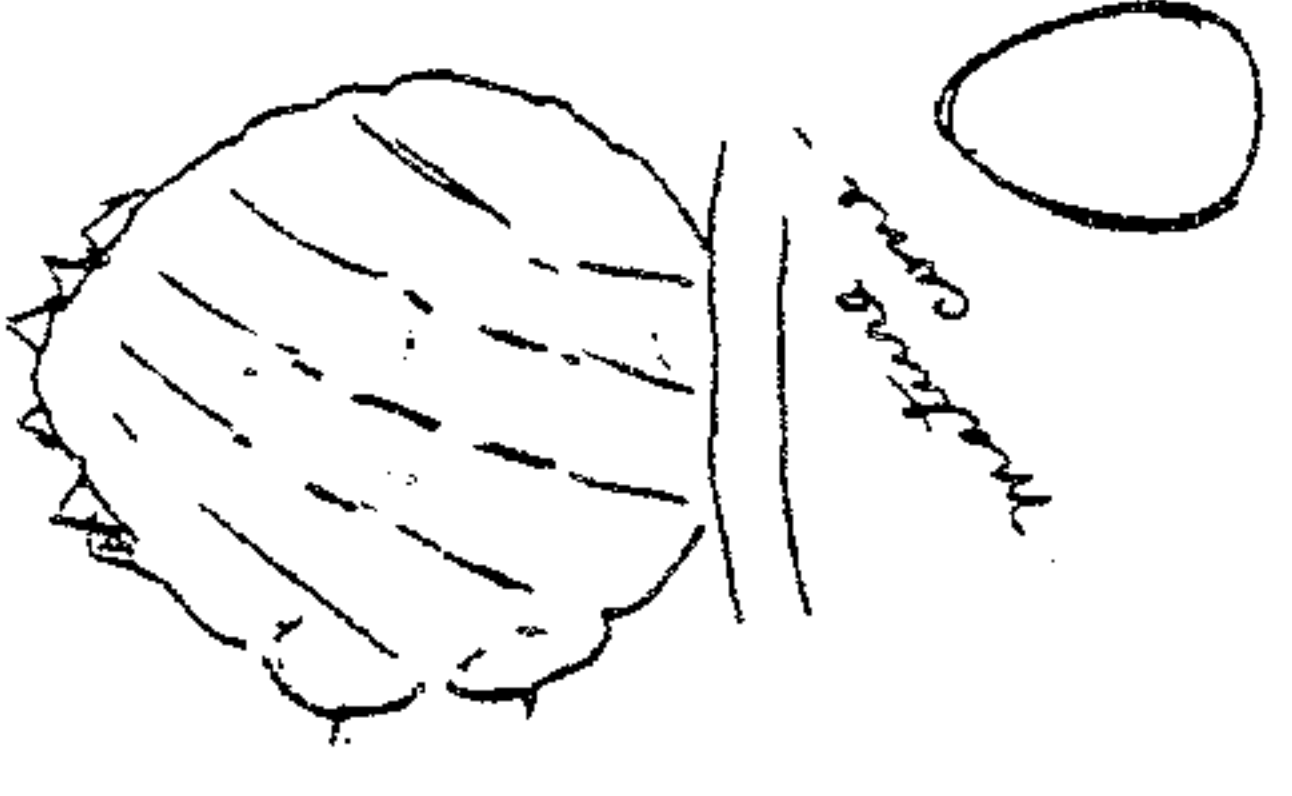


Average height

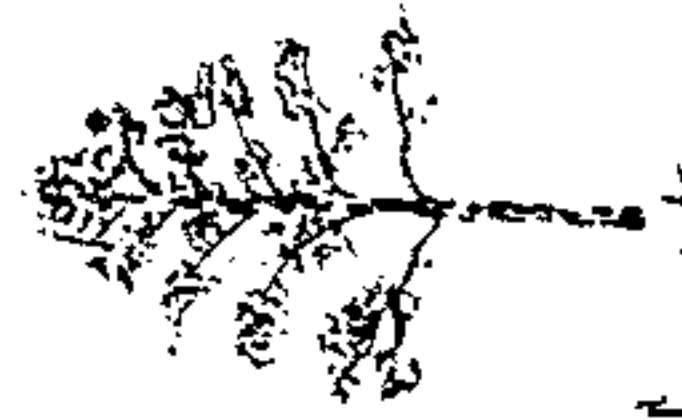
Sometimes 2  
P. rigida  
Pitch pine



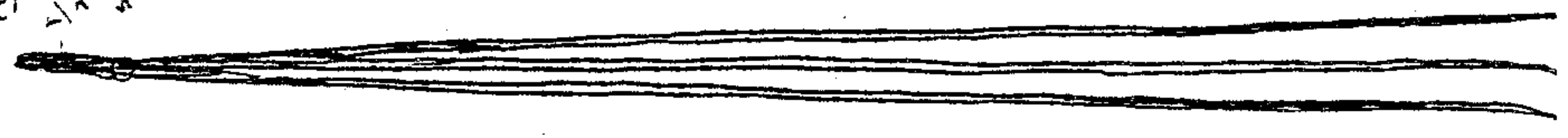
2 1/2 - 6 inches



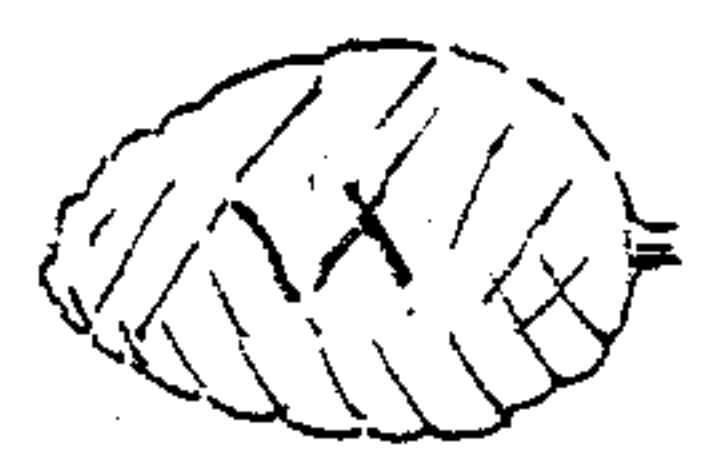
Markings



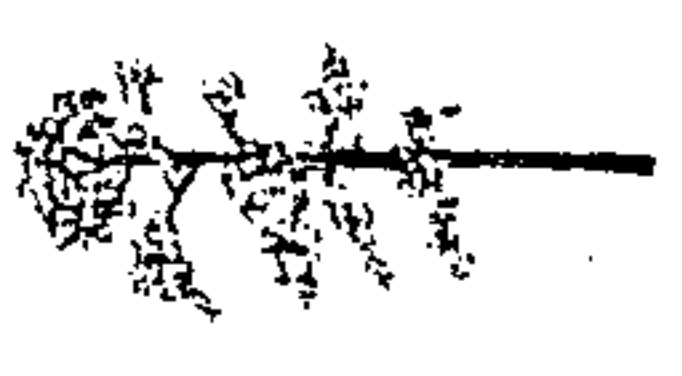
Sometimes 4  
P. serotina  
Pond pine



6-8 inches



Slender mostly deciduous prickles



The sketches of cones are about 1/3 natural size

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Please submit contributions for next issue by Feb. 15.

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