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TREE PLANTING TIME IN THE NATIONAL FORESTS

A discussion by Wallace Kadderly, Chief of the Radio Service, and Elizabeth Pitt, Forest Service, broadcast Friday, March 24, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Hour Program by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 100 Associated radio stations.

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KADDERLY:

And now we'll hear from Elizabeth Pitt of the Forest Service . . . She's going to tell us something about the vast tree-planting job that her bureau is in the midst of at this time of the year. Betsy, I suppose a lot of this planting work is made necessary by just such forest fires as Ranger Post and his men fought-their-way-through last summer?

PITT:

Yes, it is, Wallace. In fact about 95 percent of all the planting on National Forests is done on land that has been burned over by fire.

KADDERLY:

Ninety-five percent on burned over lands . . .

PITT:

Yes . . . actually it was a series of appalling forest fires in the West that started the first planting work the Forest Service did . . . back in 1910.

KADDERLY:

Altogether, Betsy, how many trees will the Forest Service plant this year?

PITT:

About 150,000,000.

KADDERLY:

One hundred and fifty million trees! Well, they ought to reforest quite a sizable piece of territory.

PITT:

About 150,000 acres . . . nowadays you figure about a thousand trees to an acre.

KADDERLY:

Nowadays? Didn't you always figure a thousand trees to the acre?

PITT:

No . . . it used to be about 6 or 7 hundred trees to an acre. All in all, the Forest Service has planted about eight hundred million trees since the work started in 1910 . . . and about 75 percent of them came through all right.

(over)

KADDERLY:

Well, when you think of all the things that like to nibble at nice tender little trees, that 75 percent survival is excellent.

PITT:

Yes, it is. . . Speaking of the things that like to nibble at tender little trees makes me think of some of the problems connected with tree-planting that the foresters have to face . . . the Texas Town ant, for example.

KADDERLY:

The Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine helped in the control of that insect, as I recall.

PITT:

Right . . . say, you keep up with things don't you . . . last week you knew all about the beavers and Arrow Rock Dam . . . and now you know all about the Texas Town ants . . .

KADDERLY:

Well . . . not all about them . . . but I did get interested in that.

PITT:

They are interesting all right . . . the Texas Town ant . . . as you might guess from the name . . . lives in social groups . . . like the bees . . . and the colonies are very large. When they settle down among young green crops, they often cause a lot of trouble. The Forest Service has planted thousands and thousands of pine seedlings on devastated forest lands in Texas and Louisiana in the last four or five years, and to the Texas Town ants this was like striking oil. They started right in logging the pine needles in 2-inch sections and stacking them up in their burrows . . . Some of these burrows are 12 to 18 feet deep. The ants don't eat the needles, but they love the fungus which grows on them after they are stacked down in the burrows.

KADDERLY:

And that's where the entomologists came into the picture.

PITT:

Yes . . . the entomologists helped to work out a control method to keep the ants from ruining our reforestation work. . . and they were quite up-to-date about this little ant war . . . they used gas . . . carbon disulphide gas . . . and saved the day for the young trees. Why, a colony of Texas Town ants could destroy two or three acres of trees in no time at all.

KADDERLY:

Yes . . . logging moves pretty fast in level or gently rolling country like Texas. . . I suppose that would apply to the logging operations of ants as well as anything else. . . Say, while we are in that part of the country, what's the latest news on the farm tree-belts in the Prairie States. . . I suppose they are planting there right now.

PITT:

Yes, they are . . . and the planting this spring is a sort of anniversary. It's five years since they did the first planting.

KADDERLY:

That's time enough to find out a lot of things about that program . . . I understand that about 70 percent of the trees planted have survived.

PITT:

That's right . . . 70 percent . . . and 83 million trees have been planted on about 13,500 farms . . . in six states. Some of those trees are 30 feet high now.

KADDERLY:

Well, thank you, Betsy Pitt, for those facts about the tree-planting activities of the Forest Service. With your permission I should like to add a brief overview of the tree-planting program of the Forest Service.

The Forest Service operates 26 tree nurseries. These nurseries distributed the approximately 150 million seedlings this year that Mrs. Pitt mentioned. This tree planting started a vast crop of timber to growing-- a crop that will improve watersheds, help prevent erosion, contribute to recreational values, and provide a home for wildlife. Its a far-reaching program that is vital to good land-use practices in America.

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