

the pits

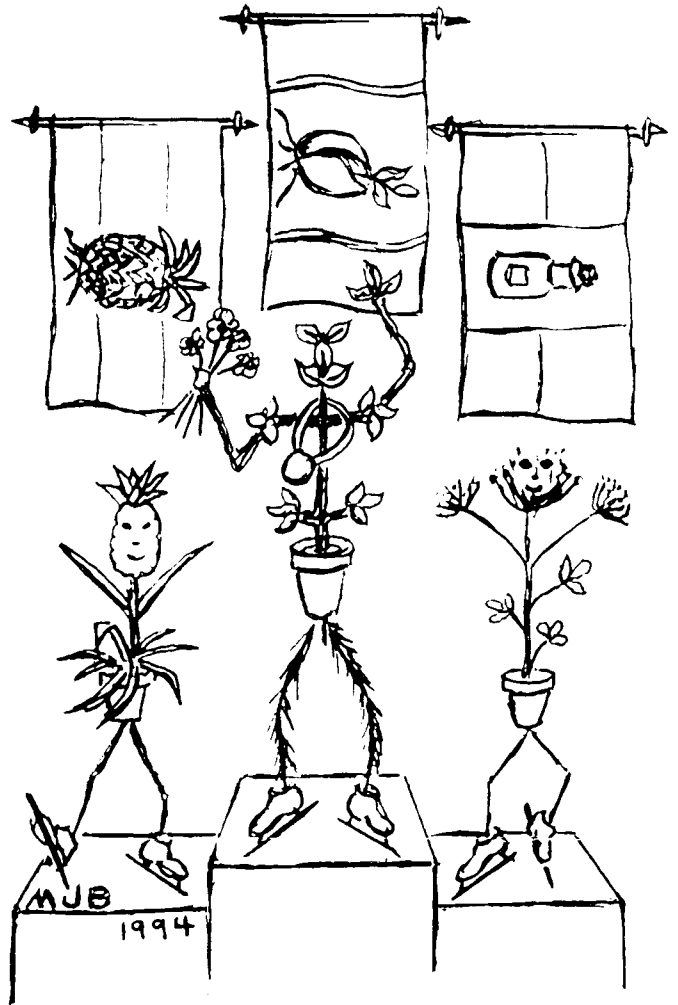
WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Arrowroot, Black olive, Black sapote, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Date, Feijoa, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Macadamia, Mango, Papaya, Passion fruit, Persimmon, Pomegranate, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Red dates, and Sugar cane.

SEEDS

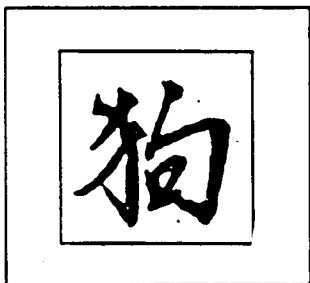
This month Bob Jurgens is offering, Cherimoya and a very limited supply of Ginberry seeds. The ginberry seeds have been harvested from Debbie's tree. Growing instructions are on Page 6.

If you are interested send, \$1.00 per packet and an SASE to: Bob Jurgens, 116-32 227th St., Cambria Heights, NY 11411. Checks should be made payable to the Rare Pit and Plant Council.



4692 - LUNAR YEAR OF THE DOG - GONG XI FA CAI!

Translation - Congratulations and make a lot of money!!



This popular greeting will be exchanged many times in February, during NSIEN NIEN (The Chinese New Year). In the ancient Chinese system of astrology, your life and character are shaped by the year when you were born, not by the time of the year when you were born. The Chinese Horoscope runs for 12 years, the length of time it takes the planet Jupiter to circle the sun. Each of the lunar years is dominated by a particular creature. The dog was the eleventh of twelve animals to arrive at a feast hosted by Buddha. As reward, people born under the sign of the Dog are able, very friendly, logical thinkers, a bit lazy in love affairs; compatible with horses and rats.

Should avoid Dragons.

Previous years of the Dog include 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, and 1982.

Couplets written during this period express happiness and good fortune. "Spring fills the Universe and Luck fills the home."

Marty B.

CURRY

Dr. John is the weekend chef at this establishment. Of late he's been into making his own curries. This new culinary passion has brought lots of 'Pits' into the house: allspice, *Pimenta dioica*; cardamon, *Elettaria cardamomum*; tumeric, *Curcuma domestica*; tamarind, *Tamarindus indica*; ginger, *Zingiber officinale*; and the seeds of coriander, *Coriandrum sativum*; cumin, *Cuminum cyminum*; fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare*; fenugreek, *Trigonella foenum-graecum*; and mustard, *Brassica hirta*. I've been inspired to set aside a windowsill as my curry farm.

Not all of these plants* can be grown from seed, but those that can't can be purchased from several sources. (see CATALOGS in this issue.)

Starting with the seeds: cumin, coriander and fennel are all in the *Umbellifera* family (Queen Anne's Lace). They are cool growing annuals with delicate ferny foliage. Their flowers are large flat umbels that resemble those of Queen Anne's Lace. Mustard is in the *Cruciferae* family and another cool growing annual. If any of you bought Chia Pets from us at last years NYC Flower Show, you can resow your pets with mustard seed. Soak the seeds in just enough water to cover them. When the water is absorbed and the seeds have developed a gluey substance (about 1 hour), spread them on the Chia pet with a spatula. Water and watch them grow. Fenugreek is in the *Leguminosae* family (beans) and will need a small trellis or string on which to climb. Within 4 months, tiny elf-shoe shaped pods will develop. Let these mature, and they will be full of plump fenugreek seeds and you can start all over again.

All of these seeds can be sown directly into pots or flats that are filled with a moist sterile potting medium. The seedlings should sprout in 2-3 weeks. You can either grow them on as single specimens or clip their foliage and use it to flavor soups and salads. A crowded pot of herbs as a centerpiece is fun to have at a dinner party; you can let everyone cut their own.

Fresh ginger root is a snap to grow. Buy a piece (hand) that is fresh and plump, with visible buds. (You don't have to use the whole hand.) Start it in a ziplock bag filled with barely moist sphagnum moss - pack the moss all around the rhizome. Give it gentle bottom heat. In a few weeks the buds will begin to swell and tiny roots will develop at the base of the buds. When the roots are 2-3 in long, transplant to a low, wide pot. It should be wide enough to accommodate the tuber horizontally. Keep a small portion of the rhizome just above the surface of the soil. Ginger can be grown in full sun or on a shady northern windowsill. Tall canes with

bamboo-like leaves will develop. These are very aromatic. If you can put the ginger in the garden for the summer (planted directly into the soil - not in the pot) the plant will become enormous and the rhizome that forms will keep you in ginger for another year.

Tamarind is sold in sticky bags of pulp that contain many viable 1/2" seeds or it is sold in brittle brown pods that are filled with the sticky pulp. Scrub the pulp off of the seeds and soak them in warm water. When the seed coat begins to shrivel and the seed has swollen (2-4 hours) the seeds are ready to sow. You



can start them in flats or individual 2" pots. Sow them in a moist sterile potting medium to a depth 2 x the size of the seed. Cover the container with plastic wrap to insure humidity and give them gentle bottom heat if possible. Germination takes 2-4 weeks. Tamarind seedlings are the cutest plants in the world. They poke their heads (cotyledons) up on 2" stout stems. The tiny leaves stay partially hidden by the cotyledon, looking like a wreath. DO NOT DISTURB! The leaves will unravel in their own good time.

Tamarind is a lovely, graceful pit. It has light green, mimosa-like foliage that opens with the sun and closes with the dark.

How we wish there was going to be a New York Flower Show this year! The curry farm would have been a dynamite exhibit! However, it would also make a good school project or you can be like us....just do it for fun.



*Turmeric, cardamom, and allspice can be purchased as plants. We have never found a source of cloves, *Eugenia aromatica*, but we are adding it to our wish list.

BOOK REVIEW

Moghul Microwave. Cooking Indian Food the Modern Way. Sahni, Julie. pp 520, Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc. New York. 1990. \$ 27.95.

Indian housewives, we understand, don't use curry powder but instead create seasonings for individual dishes, many of which can be considered curries or variants. The improvement in taste, when seasonings are done from scratch, is truly remarkable. It allows the cook to cater to the tender palates of Occidentals by modulating the hot and spicy herbs.

Julie Sahni's cook book focuses on a cuisine originating with the rulers of India from the 16th to the 19th century. They cooked many dishes in water and since microwaves work by heating water within and without the food, it was a natural. This is a wonderful cook book for someone with a microwave oven, who is a little bit bored with the standard recipes, and wants a whole volume of delicious options that he or she has never tried.

Curry Powder (John Hart's recipe, not from J. Sahni's)

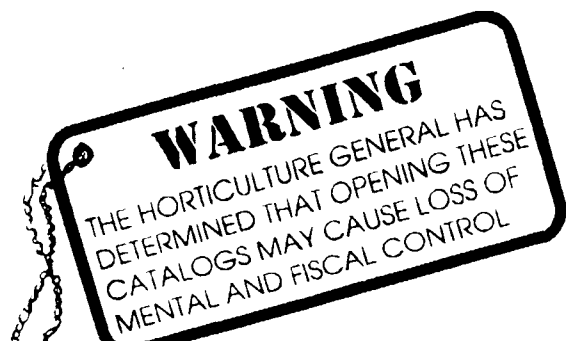
Roast 2 tbsp black or yellow mustard seeds, 3 tsp cumin seeds and 1/2 tsp coriander seeds in microwave until they discolor and become aromatic. (this is one of the best ways to tell if microwaved items are done). Grind in mortar and pestle or spice grinder. Add to 1/2 tsp ground cardamom, 1/2 tsp turmeric, 1/4 tsp ground cloves and 1/4-3/4 tsp cayenne depending on desired heat. When added to sauted ginger, garlic and onion you have a wonderful addition to a strong flavored leafy vegetable like kale or collard greens.

HANDY HINTS FROM GAIL EGOL

Cleaning Clay Pots: Have you ever noticed those messy white bands that form around the sides of used clay pots? They are salts that have leached out of the soil that was in the pot. (These are not table salt - there are harmless salts in all types of drinking water.) To get rid of them soak your pots in **undiluted white wine vinegar** for as little as 15 minutes. This may sound like an expensive "solution" but: 1. You can reuse the vinegar to clean pots, but **NOT** in salad dressings. 2. You can buy vinegar by the gallon very cheaply in any of the superstores such as Mr. Sams, or BJ's Warehouse.

CATALOGS

Catalogs, with their promise of spring and lovely green things, have been pouring in these days. Four that are new to us and have given us especial pleasure are: Kathy Crowley, Rare Fruit Trees, Plant it Hawaii, Inc., Richters Herb Catalog and Plant Delights Nursery. We have not ordered from any of these nurseries, but we have talked to Hawaii and Kathy and we have all the catalogs.



Plant it Hawaii has an extensive xeroxed list of rare and unusual fruits. They are the first (to us) to list mangosteen, *Garcinia mangostana*. It is considered by many to be the best tropical fruit in the world. "Fresh fruits, cut open, inspected, sealed with tape, and quick frozen, are exported from Malaysia to Japan where they sell for \$4.00 each" Our USDA prohibits the sale of this fruit NOT the plant? The prices listed are a bit high, around \$25.00 and

there is no indication of the size of the plants offered. Guess who's ordering a mangosteen, sight unseen. If you are interested send an SASE to: Plant it Hawaii, PO Box 388, Kurstown, HI 96706.

We received the following letter and a list of plants from Kathy Crowley:

Kathy Crowley, Rare Fruit Trees
3304 Florida Blvd.
Bradenton, FL 34207
813-755-8398 94 751-1015
Fax 813-751-1015

Windsong Country Store
Rt. 2, 48 North Road
PO Box 292
Southold, NY 11971
516-675-2812 (Mid-May)

Dear RPPC:

I am a Rare Fruit Nursery in Bradenton, FL. Enclosed is a list of fruit trees that members maybe interested in. Some may not be listed.

I do not know how close Southold is to you or how far members care to travel, however, Pat Miloski of Windsong Country Store is willing to haul up to his place of business rare fruit trees or tropicals.

If you could contact Pat or myself (Kathy Crowley) we will do our best to give you the best priced, information and quality of plants in your favorite size.

Thank you for your consideration

Kathy Crowley, Pat Miloski

Plants will be available in NY in Mid-May. Let us hear from you.

Kathy's list is extensive and she guarantees the plants will be larger, and better than the plants we order through the conventional rare fruit catalogs. If she does not list the plant, she thinks she can get almost anything you ask for. Yours truly is going to ask for clove, *Eugenia aromatica*; and order jaboticaba, *Myrciaria cauliflora*; miracle fruit, *Synsepalum dulcificum*; and allspice, *Pimenta dioca*. Since Kathy offers plants in varying sizes, she has not listed prices. Send an SASE to the above address, make your selections and give her a call.

Richters Herb Catalog is a 100 page booklet offering both seeds and plants of great diversity; everything from basil and rare rauwolfia seeds to plants from roses to cardamon to tumeric. We are

ordering tumeric and cardamon for the curry farm. Richters is also a wonderful read. Did you know, "Chastetree, *Vitex agnus-castus*, so named because the seeds reputedly subdue the sexual urge and have long been used by monks to produce this effect," or "Rauwolfia, famous tranquilizer plant of India, where for 3000 years it has been used to treat mental illness ... now its active constituent, reserpine, is prescribed for its powerful hypnotic and sedative properties"

The catalog was sent to me free and unsolicited. Write to them at: Richters, Goodwood, Ontario, L0C 1A0, Canada or call; 1-905-640-6677.

Plant Delights Nursery is also a 100 page booklet, cum manual and costs \$2.00. It has very few pits, but they have an extraordinary list of unusual perennials and shrubs; zone 7 voodoo lilies, *Sauromatum guttatum*; zone 6 voodoo lily, *Amorphophallus rivieri* v. *Konjac* (I'll believe it when I grow it); zone 5, hardy artichoke, *Cynara scolymus* (not to be confused with the less hardy cardoon, *Cynara cardunculus*). Beside each plant selection they have two boxes "the far left column of boxes are to be checked for plants that you plan to order as you make your first trip thru the catalog. Once you get to the end and realize that you have blown your budget, then go back and use the right column for those items you absolutely must have." We've added another step, turn down the corner of the page before you mark the boxes. This prolongs the awesome agony of choosing. The catalog is a delight and a must for anyone with a perennial border or a sense of humor. Send \$2.00 to: Plant Delights Nursery, 9241 Sauls Rd, Raleigh, NC 27603 or call (919) 772-4794.

¹ Wall Street Journal, April 7, 1987

WINTER WOES

The Northeast has been buried in ice, snow, and sub-zero temperatures for six weeks. Here in New York City, the temperature seldom drops below 15° - making us a solid Zone 7. This winter, we've seldom gotten above 15° - making us a solid Zone 6. One of my students asked, "Does this mean the USDA will have to redo the zone hardiness map?"

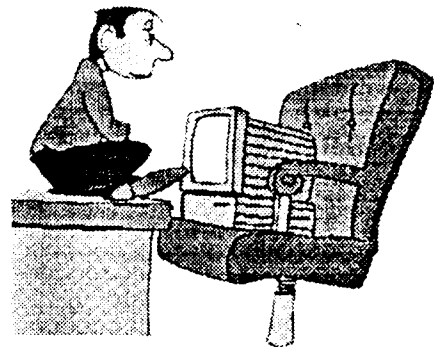
No. In any given period of 10 - 25 years, there will be a year when temperatures are abnormally low. There may also be another year when temperatures are abnormally high. The zone hardiness map is based on averages.

Unfortunately, plant survival is not based on averages and during these periods of exceptional conditions, some may not survive. We are personally concerned about several of our less hardy plants in the gardens of St. Luke in the Field in New York. Particularly, the Morton citrange, 2 pomegranates, a passion flower vine, a rosemary edging and our 15' x 15' fig. It is for sure the buds on all of the camellias have bit the dust, but the shrubs look fine.

Will we replace these somewhat fragile plants? Yes. Statistically it is very unlikely we will have another winter this cold in the near future. And while it is sad to lose the plants, they did give us 5-10 years of pleasure and it is worth the risk to try again. (Those shrubs that are planted on the north side of the buildings have a better chance than those planted on the warmer south and east facing walls. Being frozen and staying frozen is a lot better than the freeze thaw, freeze thaw conditions that prevail in warmer locations.

If you are going to grow a zone 7 plant in zone 6, plant on the north side.

Pamela Berdan



HAVE YOU NOTICED OUR NEW LOOK?
Chris Carrdus has been doing our lay-out; kerning our letters, leading our spaces and shading our text.

TIZZY LIZZY'S MUSHROOM SOUP WITH MADEIRA

1 /2 cup of onions - finely chopped
4 tbl flour
Finely ground pepper
2 cups chicken broth - College Inn or 8 tsp Spice Islands chicken stock in 2 cups of water.
1/3 cup of madeira
Fresh parsley finely minced

1 lb. mushrooms (1/2 minced -1/2 coarsely chopped)
Pinch of dried mustard
1 Cup low fat milk
1 Cup of whipping cream

Saute onions and mushrooms in butter. Add flour, dried mustard and pepper. Stir in chicken broth and simmer until mixture thickens. Add cream, milk, and madeira. Cook a few minutes until thoroughly heated. Sprinkle a bit of parsley on top of each bowl before serving.

"This incredible soup has that certain mushroomy taste for the most discerning palates."

SEEDS OF THE MONTH

Cherimoya, *Annona cherimola*, is a tropical, deciduous, understory tree. (Do not be put off by deciduous trees ... you don't have to water, spritz, fertilize or give up choice windowsill space. Just put them aside and mist them occasionally until new growth begins). The oval, 3-inch leaves are a soft gray-green and have a velvety texture - when crushed, they have a slight aroma of sheared boxwood.

Pit member, Tony Carella flowered his at 5 years of age and this summer, he hand-pollinated the flowers and set fruit. Unfortunately, the fruit dropped due to the excessively high summer temperatures in New York City.



Ginberry, *Glycosmis pentaphylla*, is a small tree, closely related to citrus, and your editor's favorite pit. The glossy, light green leaves are about 4 in. long, and fragrant when crushed. The tiny white flowers are borne in terminal clusters throughout the summer months; they are said to be fragrant. These are followed by 1/2" perfectly round, translucent pink fruits; these continue to mature from October to January. They taste like a martini that has too much vermouth!



The seedlings are slow to develop, but by the third year, the plant begins to take off. Ours is so vigorous, we cut it back by a quarter every summer.

Sowing: both types of seeds should be sowed in a moist, sterile medium about 2 times their depth in soil. Cover the container with plastic to ensure humidity and, if possible, give them gentle bottom heat.

11 January 1994

My Dear Pits,

I was thrilled to read your very wonderful article, *CAMELLIA SINENSIS* (December 1993 Newsletter). Tea is vastly underappreciated in this country. I've even been inspired to try growing some (*Camellia sinensis*, that is.)

With respect to its preparation, may I add that Smith is absolutely correct! If one consults *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* [England, 1859-61] (where tea had only recently been classified as *Theasia*), entry no. 1814 stresses the importance of allowing a wash of clean, boiling water to hot the pot for 2-3 minutes. This assures an exceptionally hot pot that sustains the correct temperature for proper brewing and a possible second cup. To that end, may this imbiber suggest you *swish* the water thoroughly before you pour it off. Fanatics for that first-cup taste, we never stir our tea because we don't want to lose a drop of heat; therefore, just prior to serving, I say *swish!* (but not too briskly - your tea may take offense and snap at you heatedly.)

Often overlooked is the tea cozy which is meant to crown your pot immediately after the brew is made and be kept on during teatime. And the little-used Russell Hobbs electric kettle - a joy to behold as it brings the water to an almost instant rolling boil in front of your eyes!

Last but not least, Twinings blends a "super black tea used in the imperial Tang dynasty" called Prince of Wales. We wonder about its authenticity - (could be a hybrid for the American market???) - however, it's relatively accessible and absolutely delicious. P.O.W., as we call it, is a must-try for American tea-lovers imprisoned by the need for a good cuppa.

Yours tealily,

Amellia Insensis

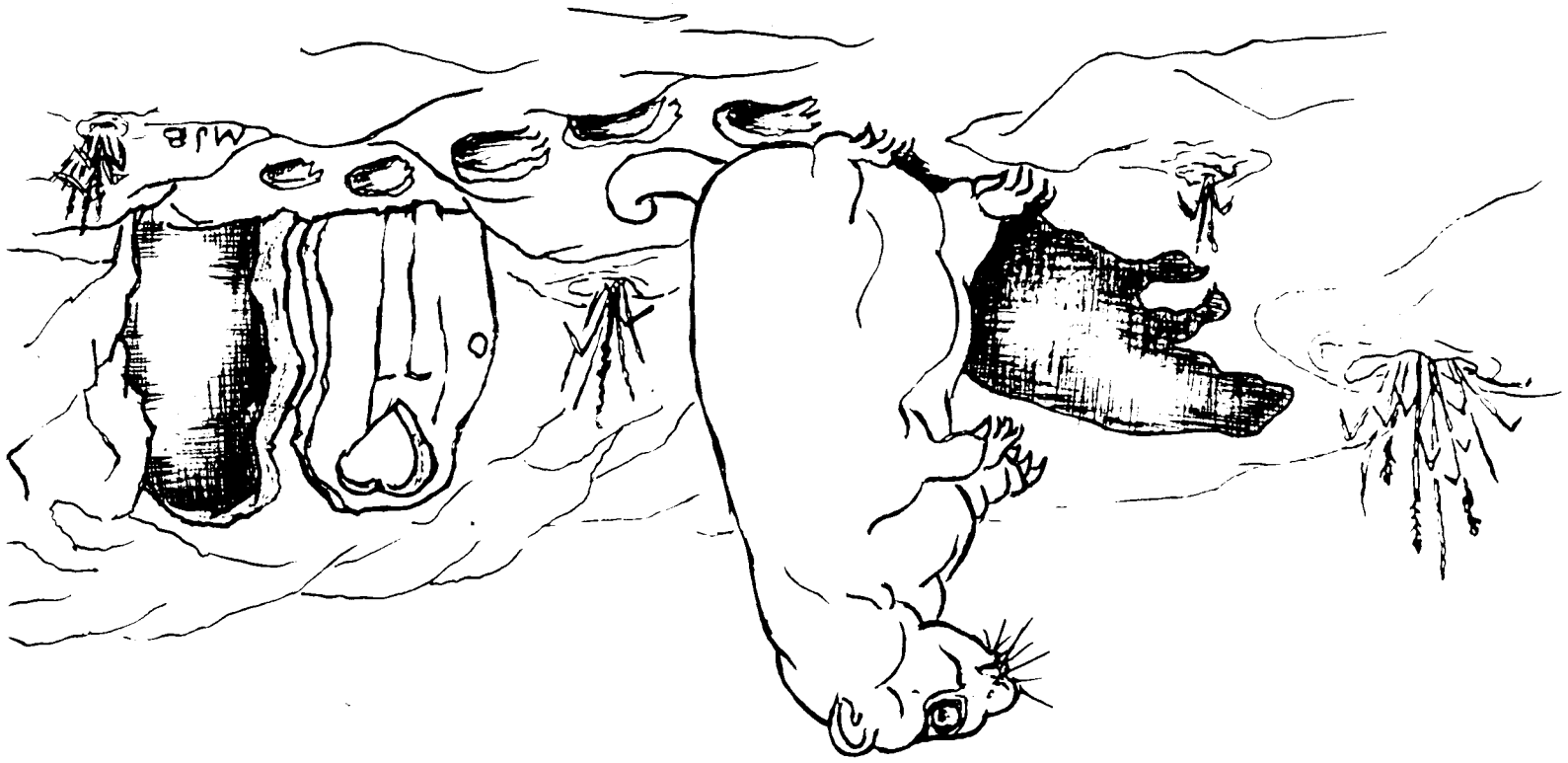
Amellia Insensis

Dear Amellia, We put your name through our computerized mailing list - frontwards, backwards, upside down, but did not find you listed. Perhaps it is a glitch. We are reprinting your letter in appreciation that you admit reading the article. Ed.

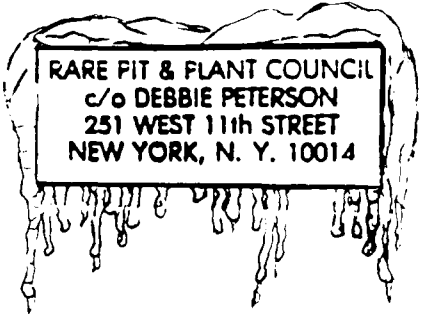
**STATE
TREE
PUZZLE**

Answers according to the New York Times Crossword Puzzle Dictionary

- 1 - California, 2 - Connecticut, 3 - Florida, 4 - Kentucky,
- 5 - Nevada, 6 - Utah, 7 - New York, 8 - New Hampshire, 9 - Arizona,
- 10 - Illinois, 11 - Colorado, 12 - Kansas, 13 - Iowa, 14 - Massachussets,
- 15 - Ohio, 16 - Vermont, 17 - Louisiana, 18 - New Mexico,
- 19 - Tennessee, 20 - Texas, 21 - Oklahoma, 22 - Virginia, 23 - Georgia,
- 24 - Rhode Island (and Providence Plantations), 25 - North Dakota.



the pits



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