

Arbor Day.

The happy idea of setting aside a day for the planting of trees is American in origin. The day was first celebrated on 7th April, 1872, in Nebraska, U.S.A. Something over 30 years passed before the day was recognised in Australia. Victoria in 1909, it would seem, being the first to publicly proclaim a day to be known for all time as Arbor Day. Since then every State in the Commonwealth has given recognition to the day, more particularly as regards the schools. Arbor Day furnishes gratifying evidence that a forest-conscience is being aroused and stimulated in Australia. The day testifies to a new found belief that forest conservation is a national duty. In Western Australia Arbor Day has received legal recognition and constitution. Clause 72 of the Forests Act reads, as follows:—

“One day shall be set apart in every year for the planting of trees in the several land divisions of the State, and such day shall be called ‘Arbor Day.’”

The Education Department, with a fitting sense of the importance of trees to the community, encourages the planting of trees in school grounds. By so doing the children acquire some knowledge of tree-growth, while the part that trees play in the life of a people is impressed upon them by their teachers. There is a wide field in Western Australia for worthy endeavour in this direction. In many parts of the State the hand of the vandal has destroyed every tree, and the roads are, in consequence, bare, shelterless, and uninviting. Such roads should certainly be planted with suitable trees. By way of assisting in the good work, the Forest Department is prepared to supply, at cost price, young trees for planting in any suitable places throughout the State. But there are other cogent reasons besides beautifying landscapes and road vistas why the planting of trees should be seriously and systematically attended to. It is open to doubt whether there is any other matter which can approach in importance in Western Australia that of tree planting and forest preservation. If our forests disappear, or the full volume of tree life is not kept up by steady planting, the water supply will be gravely affected, our hillsides will become bare rocks, our alluvial lands will lack moisture and cease to produce as they

ought, rains will produce floods, springs will dry up or yield but slightly. It was upon recognition of these baneful results following denudation of trees, without planting, that led in Nebraska to the inauguration of Arbor Day.

So far as tree planting by public bodies and landowners is concerned, there are numerous advantages attending the system of using healthy seedlings instead of raising them from seeds. But with schools the case is entirely different, for valuable cultural lessons are to be learned from watching the process of preparing the ground to the nurture of the infant seedling. Summarised these advantages may be put thus:—

- (a) The cost is less;
 - (b) Varieties especially suited to the district may be obtained;
 - (c) The trees when ready for planting out are acclimatised;
 - (d) The time which must elapse between the removal of the plant from its pot or bed to the permanent place of planting is very much shorter, and the tree consequently suffers less check;
 - (e) It is possible to sow some seeds in the positions where the trees are to remain, and so to avoid the necessity for transplanting;
 - (f) The most suitable time for planting may be chosen;
 - (g) Greater interest is taken by the children in trees they have raised from seed;
 - (h) The educational value of the work is far greater, and the practice of tree-raising and tree-planting is more likely to spread from the school to the children's homes.
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