3

DIRECTIONS FOR PRESERVING LEAVES FOR DECORATIVE PURPOSES

By P. L. Ricker.

Several processes have been used for preserving flowers. To have them retain as nearly as possible their natural colors, it has been customary to press them between blotters, changing the blotters two or more times a day, and preferably keeping the pressed material near some source of heat in order to hasten the drying process, but not close enough to any artificial heat to cause the leaves to become brittle. The leaves when dry are then either given a thin coating of paraffin applied with a hot flat iron or given a coating of varnish or white shellac. The labor involved in these methods has been such as to make the method of little value for commercial purposes. In addition they are brittle and very inflammable.

During the last few years, leaves of beech, box, elm, laurel, privet, magnolia, maple, palms, oak, and Ruscus, have appeared on the market, single, on branches, or made into wreaths, or other designs. These leaves are often approximately of natural color, but some of them are more often of rich shades of brown, green, orange, or red, and retain their natural pliability. Frequently they are rendered noninflammable.

The process of preparing leaves in this manner, as far as can be learned, was introduced into this country from Europe several years ago. It is not known to be patented and is practically controlled by a very few firms who have endeavored to keep the process secret.

The leaves, singly or preferably on branches, one to three feet long, are placed in a large wooden or cement vat containing Javelle water.

1.

Javelle water is made by putting 4 lbs. of sal soda, (also called sodium carbonate and washing soda), into a vessel with one gallon of water and boiling ten minutes; then add one pound of bleaching powder, (also called chloride of lime) free from lumps. When cold strain into a jug of large bottle and keep tight.

ly corked. Metal receptacles will be destroyed by it, if allowed to stand. For large quantities use the same proportions, strain into a wooden or cement vat and use at once.

Full strength will destroy the leaves in a short time. Oak leaves, on account of the large amount of tannin, require the solution to be diluted one-fourth, while all other leaves tried require the solution to be diluted one-half. The time for bleaching varies from 12 to 36 hours, depending upon the leaf used. When thoroughly bleached, the leaves should be removed to another vat and thoroughly washed in running water for several hours; or after several thorough rinsings they may be immersed for 10 to 15 minutes in a 1/4 of 1% solution of acetic or hydrochloric acid, which will aid materially in setting some of the colors. The leaves should then be placed in another vat containing a basic dye (suitable for dying cotton goods) of the desired color. The setting of the color is not absolutely necessary unless the material is to be much handled. The leaves are then removed from the dye, thoroughly washed and placed for a few hours in a vat containing a 5% solution of glycerine, after which they are removed and placed in racks to dry. They will now remain pliable indefinitely. If it is desired to fire proof the material, it should be given a further bath in a solution of ammonium phosphate.