WE NEED BETTER SEED COLLECTING EQUIPMENT

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The postwar expansion of tree-planting has focused attention on the problem of seed procurement. Lack of seed in adequate volume has been a limiting factor in some areas, and more efficient methods of collecting seed are needed. Although a large amount of seed is collected from felled trees, the practice of collecting from standing trees is more consistent with adequate control of the genetic quality. This practice is expanding slowly, but is being delayed by lack of efficient equipment for tree climbing and removing cones. There are many possibilities for improving our present methods. The first step should be to test available equipment as well as to prepare specifications for special types.

Foresters responsible for seed procurement should obtain and test equipment used in other countries. For example, Swedish foresters have devised some practical methods because of their interest in collecting seed from high-quality forest trees, and there is little information in this country about the equipment they use. One good possibility is a one-legged manganese-steel ladder. It is strapped to the tree for support. In all appearances, it is light in weight, easy to erect, and safe to use. They also have an extension ladder mounted on a small truck or jeep. This is useful in reaching the outer portions of broadcrowned hardwood trees. Individuals like Professor Bertil Lindquist, Botanical Garden, Gothenburg, Sweden, who is familiar with the equipment, could furnish information about them.

Some of the equipment manufactured in this country should be tested also. One of these is the extension ladder, mounted on pick-up trucks, used by telephone companies. These will support a man's weight while fully extended and are reported to sell for about $1500. Another tool is the magnesium-aluminum pruning pole that the advertiser claims can be used in lengths up to 40 feet. This pole may require a special head for cutting off cones. The pole should be designed for use from the ground as well as from the tree, because some of the heads for pruning are not well adapted to clipping off cones.

Tree-climbing and cone-collecting equipment has not received much attention from foresters in the past. With the widespread demand for seedlings stimulated by the new efficient planting machines, we should not let the work slow down for lack of seed. To collect enough to grow the nearly 400 million trees we are now planting each year is a big job. The techniques and equipment for doing this job deserve more thought than we have ever given them before.