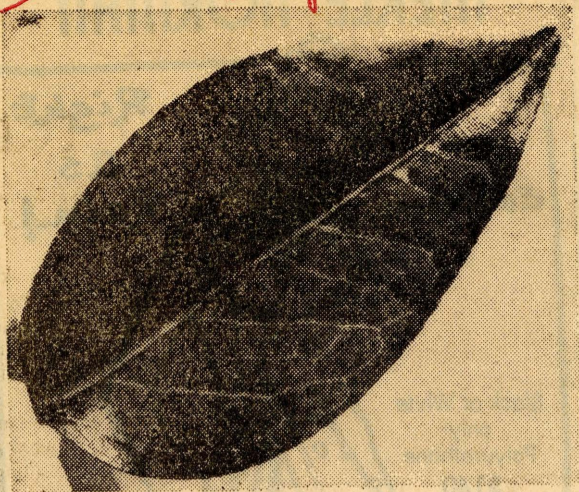


CA Sat. Aug. 23, 1975



—Staff Photo

Top Half of Leaf Is 'Dust' Coated

Clean Lower Section Shows Veins

AIR POLLUTION!

# Plant Pollution Gets Frightening

By ANN DEWAR BLECKEN

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AS LONG AS the problems are in Los Angeles or New York they don't seem quite as critical as they do when suddenly they are in your own back yard.

The leaves of the camellias and the ligustrum had been looking dirty for some time. A film of something that looked like dust had formed on them and when a hosing down didn't wash it off, a bit of elbow grease and a wet paper towel were called for. It wasn't easy to scrub each leaf and it was quite time consuming.

But the real shocker was the "dust" which came off on the paper towel. It wasn't dust at all but a black film and it had an odor, familiar and yet hard to name.

OBVIOUSLY the dirt had fallen since none was found on the underside of the leaves and it had fallen over a period of time since the older leaves were dirtier than the newer, younger leaves.

It had to be air pollution and if it was, and was as bad as this, things were getting critical. It is those green

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## Down To Earth

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leaves that are making our oxygen. When they get covered up with dirt, well, it's bound to be all over.

A call to the Health Department's air pollution office brought a visit from Robert Stanfield who took the leaves to a lab and analyzed the "dust" which coated them.

"It is a combination of sap, pollen, road dust, sand, grit and rubber fibers," he reported.

Rubber fibers?

"Yes, all our air has rubber fibers in it, especially near busy roads and streets."

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That was the familiar odor we couldn't quite pin down. Rubber. It is in the air we're breathing, and what sort of lung diseases that can cause is frightening to imagine.

The sap had fallen from the oaks that tower over the shrubs, forming a glue which holds the dirt so tightly that only the hardest scrubbing will get it off.

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Stanfield says our air in Memphis gets quite bad at times, especially when there is an inversion. It has to be bad for a period of 24 hours before the Health Department will sound an alert and always before, wind has come up to blow the bad air out before the 24 hours were up.

Where does it blow? A few miles or a few hundred miles away. It doesn't matter really. It never "goes away."

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When the alert is sounded, Stanfield says that burners, incinerators and boilers will be closed down first. But the real culprit? "It's the automobile," he said. "It causes a larger per cent of our air pollution than anything else. Stop the cars and we'll solve a lot of the problem."

IN LOS ANGELES the school children must be kept inside at recess on days when the air pollution is particularly bad.

In Memphis we're getting rubber fibers with our oxygen each breath we take. How long before we're down on our knees gasping?