

Local

Tap water harmful to plants; rainwater, leaching can help

By NANCY WEATHERLEY
Battalion Reporter
Growing plants sometimes requires a little more than just a green thumb, especially in College Station. Certain chemicals in Bryan/College Station tap water can hurt plants, but a few tricks will help keep them healthy.

Edward McWilliams, professor of floriculture at Texas A&M University, said that College Station water, which is obtained by nearby natural aquifers, has a high sodium and chloride content. Together, these two elements make common table salt. "Besides the salt problem, we don't have the element calcium which plants need," McWilliams said. "This creates an imbalance of chemicals in College Station water which affects the plants."

Many people use distilled water to avoid the salt problem altogether. McWilliams has demonstrated that College Station tap water has 100 times as much

salt as distilled water. However, for people who don't want to spend money each week on distilled water, McWilliams offered some advice. "The addition of gypsum (a form of calcium) to plants counteracts the sodium in the water," McWilliams said. Gypsum can be bought at local nursery centers.

McWilliams stressed that the salt problem isn't so severe that if a plant is watered from the tap it will suffer immediate damage. The problem is a gradual one, the salt builds up in the soil each time the plant is watered, he said. A way to avoid salt build-up is to leach plants every month or so, McWilliams said. Leaching means running water, preferably distilled or rainwater, through the plant, which washes away salt in the soil.

"A lot of plants aren't bothered by the chemical imbalance," McWilliams said. Plants such as cactus, rubber plants, jade plants, and most succulent plants are in-

sensitive and won't have a problem, he said. "Sensitive plants such as african violets and certain ferns won't last with tap water."

Bill Roy, a local nurseryman, said that besides leaching plants every month, changing the soil once a year and using rainwater occasionally will help keep plants healthy. He also recommended several plant varieties, such as closet plants (which bloom), most palms, and ficus plants.

"The closet plant is about the only blooming plant that is hardy enough to stand up to tap water," he said. Roy added that these plants were good in dorms and other areas where there is less light.

Some common symptoms of salt excess include leaf burn — brown coloring on the tips of leaves — and reduced root growth. "Generally just try to go with tolerant plants," McWilliams said. "You

won't get an immediate effect from watering them with tap water. If the plant starts showing symptoms, leach it and use rainwater or distilled water for awhile."



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Funeral for distinguished A&M prof Langford held

By CATHY CAPPS
Battalion Reporter
Funeral services for Ernest Langford, an architect and former educator at Texas A&M University, were held Tuesday. Langford, 80, died Monday morning in a Bryan hospital.

Langford, Class of '13, came to Texas A&M in 1909. He was head of the architecture department for 27 years before serving as an architect for 14 years. He retired at age 84.

Texas A&M's College of Architecture and Environmental Design complex was named for Langford in 1976 in recognition of his many accomplishments at the University. As head of the architecture department, Langford instituted the first five-year

curriculum in 1931, and gained accreditation for the school in 1948. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects since 1926, and in 1955 was made a fellow, the highest honor attainable in that institute.

"He took a fledgling school of architecture and pushed it toward respectability," said Charles Estes, head of the architecture department at Texas A&M.

As an architect, Langford was responsible for collecting materials from the early days of the University, concentrating mainly on building and physical materials, Estes said. He also wrote a monograph entitled "50 Years of Architectural Education at Texas A&M." Langford is remembered by his colleagues for his fantastic

memory and exceptional students, as well as his accomplishments, Estes said.

Langford was instrumental in the development of College Station as well as the University, serving on the first city council in 1938 and later as mayor of the city from 1942 to 1965.

Langford is survived by his wife, Lela Davidson Langford of College Station; a son and daughter-in-law, Keith and JoAnn Langford of Houston; two grandchildren, David K. Langford and Suzanne Langford Letch, both of San Antonio; four great grandchildren; and three brothers, Elton (Sam) Langford of Plainview, William H. Langford of Bakersfield, Calif., and Mark L. Langford of Corpus Christi.

A&A Building evacuated

By PHYLLIS HENDERSON
Battalion Staff
Faculty and students evacuated the Academic and Agencies Building Tuesday afternoon after the sounding of a fire alarm.

Harry Stiteler, Texas A&M University safety and health officer, said two possible causes of the alarm were found on the second

floor. Crews replaced a defective smoke detector head and discovered that an alarm station had been pulled.

Stiteler said it hasn't been determined which of these problems caused the alarm to go off.

The fire department was not called to the scene. "It's (a fire alarm) verified in that building be-

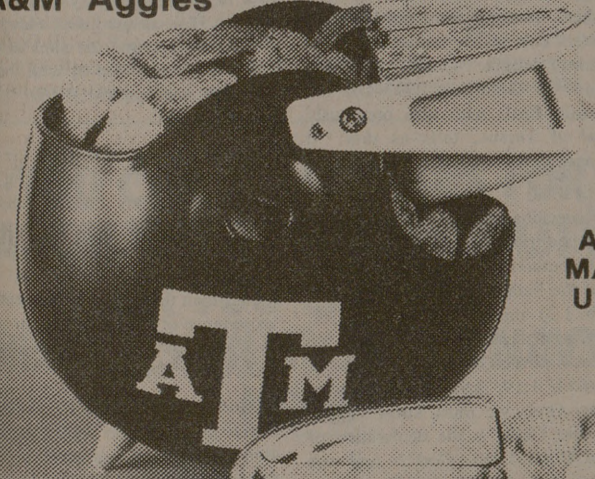
fore the fire department is called," Stiteler said.

Evacuation of faculty, students and staff is normal procedure in the case of a fire alarm, Stiteler said. If there is a fire, their safety is ensured, he said, and if it is a false alarm, the evacuation is only a minor inconvenience.

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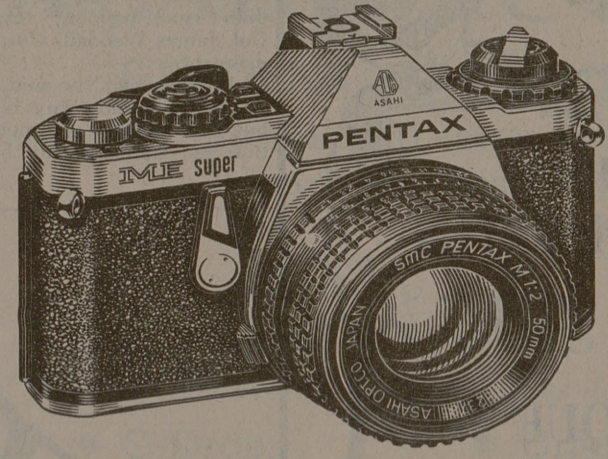
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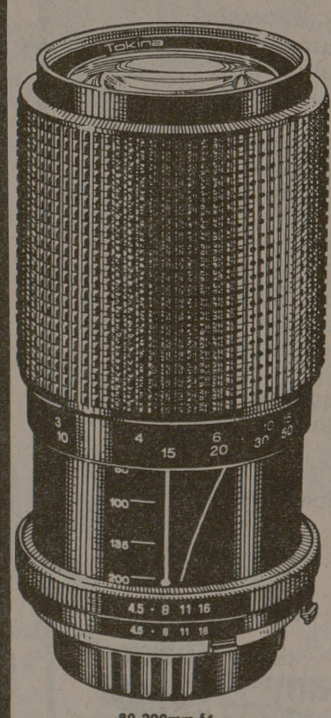
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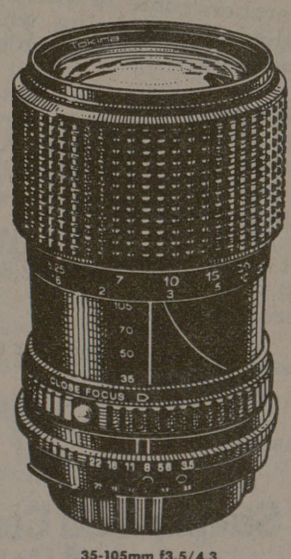
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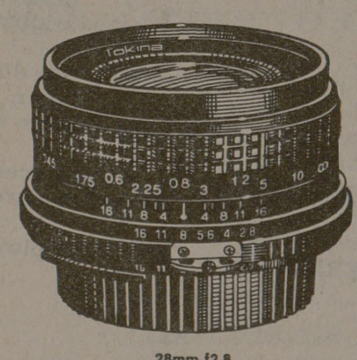
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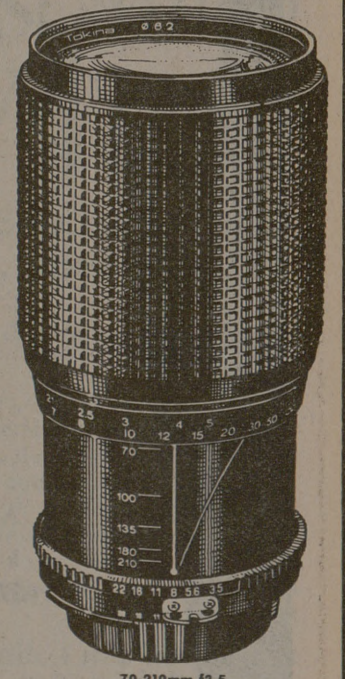
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