

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
November 4, 1931.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 28, 1931

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

WIND-BLOWN PLANTS

Wind is the most efficient of several agents concerned in disseminating plants, a task that it accomplishes chiefly by transporting seeds and spores. In many species the seeds, or seed-like fruits popularly identified as seeds, are especially adapted for travel through the air; in some cases through possessing wing-like appendages and in others by bearing tufts of hairs that act as parachutes, preventing the seeds from falling rapidly to the ground.

There are, however, several species in which the entire plant or a large fragment of it is, at maturity, carried along the ground by the wind, scattering seeds as it goes. Such plants are known as "tumbleweeds." One of these is a species of amaranth common throughout the United States and southern Canada, the whole shoot of which breaks off at the surface of the soil, while in another, also called old witch grass, only the panicle, or seed-bearing cluster, breaks off. Another common tumbleweed is the Russian thistle.

Of the amaranth tumbleweed Dr. W. J. Beal says: "When ripe in autumn, the dry incurved branches are quite stiff; the main stem near the ground easily snaps off and leaves the light ball at the mercy of the winds. Sometimes the winds are not severe enough or long enough continued, and these old skeletons are rolled into ditches, piled so high in great rows or masses against fences that some are rolled over the rest or pass beyond. Occasionally some lodge in the tops of low trees, and many are entangled by straggling bushes."

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

-----  
SCIENCE SERVICE  
21st and Constitution Ave.  
Washington, D. C.