A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed July 26, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

TROPICAL TREES AND HURRICANES

Writing under the above title in a botanical journal, Fred R. Clark suggests that the reason why trees in tropical countries are so extensively damaged whenever a hurricane comes along is that a large proportion of them are structurally weak as compared with the trees of temperate latitudes.

"A large number," he says, "have long branches extending out at awkward angles from the trunk and tipped with great clusters of leaves. These long branches, heavily weighted at the ends with leaves, are easily broken off by violent wind and rain. Moreover, many of the so-called trees are in reality nothing but huge herbaceous plants, and the first good wind blows them down.

"In general it seems that trees of temperate zones are much better adapted structurally to withstand rigorous conditions. Winter brings heavy snowfall, ice storms and high winds, and the trees must be able to stand these conditions or be eliminated. For this reason those that survive are undoubtedly more robust than their tropical relatives, which grow where such conditions are rare or never encountered."

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