



*Chemicals for a colorful hearth fire*

Have you ever watched the brilliant colors in a driftwood fire — the yellows, blues, violets, greens, and reds? You remember, then, how compelling and enchanting a thing they are to see. One of the most exciting and unusual presents you can give your friends at Christmas is a big bag of pine cones, or a Yule log, treated to burn in many colors. Anyone you know who has a fireplace will bless you all through the holidays for this unique gift.

And surely it is one of the most inexpensive gifts in the world. If you live in the country, there are pine cones close by; if in the city, head some week end in the car for the nearest pine grove. Children will love to help gather the cones, and this can be a happy family outing. Take several large baskets or corrugated paper boxes for bringing the cones home. You can sort them out as you find them.

*Directions:* All you need in addition to the cones are ordinary chemicals which could be bought at any drugstore. (You may find some difficulty in finding them *all* at a single drug store, but you'll surely find some of them; if possible try several sources.) Some are even simple kitchen staples, like salt and borax.

The following substances produce flames of the specified colors; choose your favorites.

Strontium nitrate — red

Borax — vivid green Calcium chloride — orange Copper sulphate — blue Copper nitrate — emerald Lithium chloride — purple Potassium nitrate — yellow Barium nitrate — apple-green Common table salt — yellow

These chemicals are safe to use as directed, but like many household items they should be kept out of reach of small children or pets who might taste them. *Another note of warning:* Don't mix them in your metal utensils; use crockery containers or a wooden bucket because many of these chemicals are corrosive to metals. Also, when treating the pine cones, protect your hands with a pair of household rubber gloves.

Pick the color you want and mix the particular chemical in water — about a half-pound of chemical to half a gallon of water. *Don't mix the various chemicals together.*

Put a few cones in cheesecloth bags, dip them into the liquid, and soak them thoroughly. Drain them well and spread them out to dry on thick newspapers. Sometimes it takes them three or four days to dry thoroughly.

Package the cones for giving in strong bags which are tied with ribbons. The bright red mesh bags that apples and onions and potatoes are often packaged in also make just-right containers.