

Nuthatches are small birds related to the creepers and the titmice, and are widely distributed. They feed on insects and nuts, and make their nests in the holes of trees or in crevices of rocks, usually plastering up the opening with clay to the required size.

The European nuthatch is not uncommon in England in beechwoods. It is about 5 inches long, is slate-blue above, buff-white below, has a slate-blue and white tail, and the sides are chestnut red. In summer it feeds chiefly on insects, and in the autumn on nuts, beech mast, hard seeds, and the stones of berries. The nuthatch is a sprightly, attractive fellow, and shows great devotion to his mate.

Creepers are found in temperate regions. They are dull-plumaged birds, a little smaller than the sparrow, with long slender bills. They get their name from their habit of creeping up tree trunks, where they find the small insects on which they feed. (See Birds.)

Scientific name of European nuthatch, *Sitta caesia*; of common European tree creeper, *Certhia familiaris*.

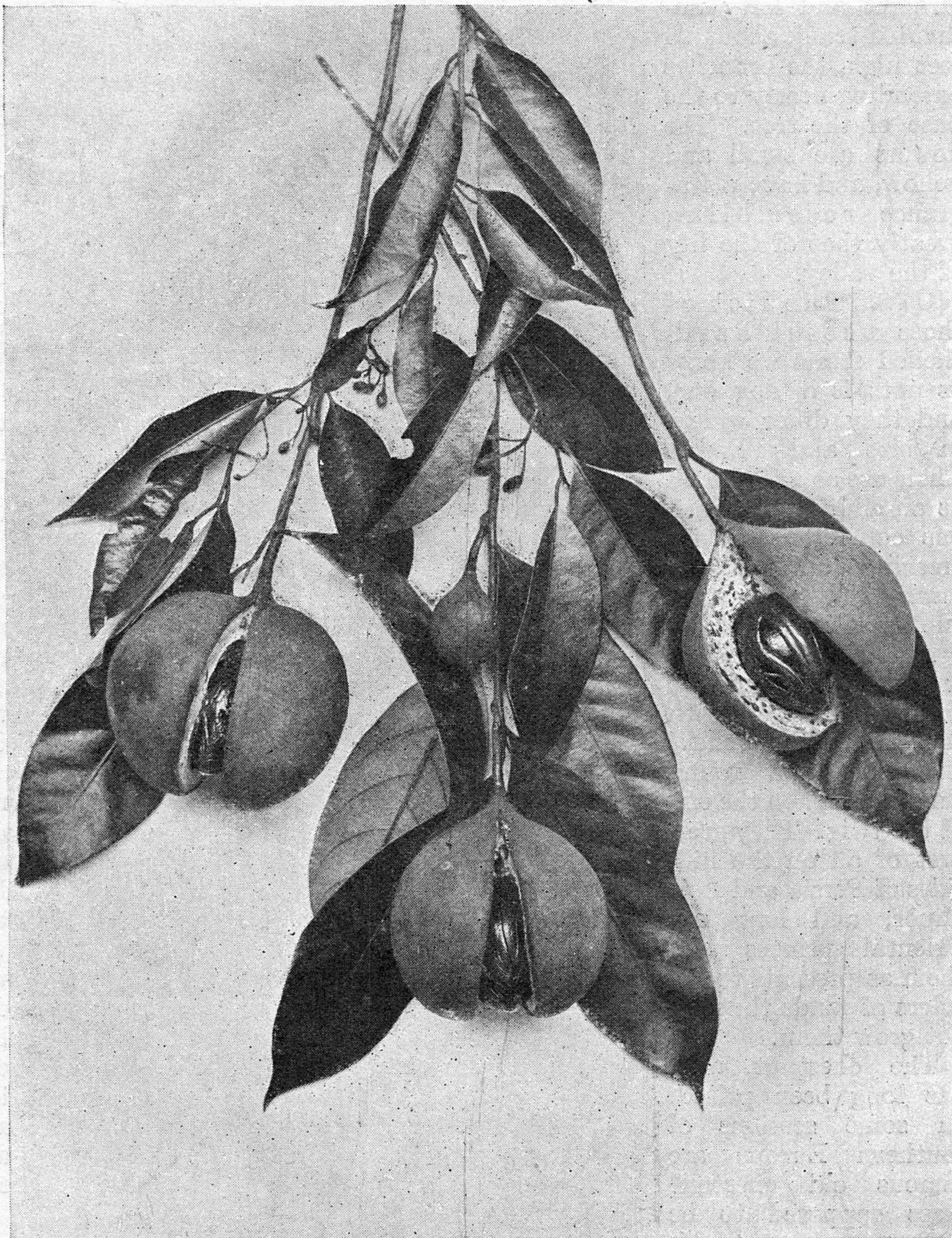
NUTMEG AND MACE. The fragrant spice we call nutmeg is the seed of the nutmeg tree. From the fruit of this tree is also obtained mace, another popular spice, which has an unmistakable and characteristic flavour

of its own, quite unlike that of nutmeg. "The nutmegs must be able to smell the sea" is a common saying, referring to the fact that there have been few successful plantations of nutmegs at any distance inland. Indeed, most of them are on tropical islands, chiefly the

Banda Islands of the Dutch East Indies, which are almost covered with nutmeg plantations.

The nutmeg tree blooms and bears fruit continuously. The fruit, which is pale orange in colour and about the size and shape of a pear, splits open, revealing the crimson fibre—the mace—which covers the seed or "nutmeg."

THE TREE THAT GIVES US TWO OF OUR SPICES



Fruit of the Nutmeg tree of Java. When the crop is ripening, a nutmeg plantation is a gorgeous sight, with the orange-coloured fruit splitting and revealing the crimson of the mace, and the dark leaves lined with silver. The fragrance of fruit and leaves is indescribably sweet.

Besides its use as a flavouring, it has a certain medicinal value.

When the fruit is collected, the fleshy husk is removed, and the mace is carefully stripped off, dried, and prepared. Then the seed shell is broken off, revealing the hard kernel, the nutmeg of trade. The latter is elliptical in shape, about an inch long, and irregularly

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