

• New Machines and Gadgets •

For sources of more information on new things described, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to SCIENCE SERVICE, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 883. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **INDOOR BASEBALL** is close to regulation size and made of a polyethylene plastic. Designed with fluted air passages, the baseball can be thrown in curves, out-curves, in-shoots and "dipsey doodles." The play ball can be hit with a bat and does not break glass.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

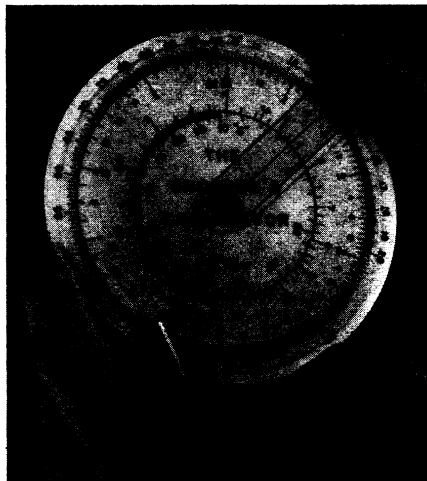
⚙️ **PORTABLE SUMMER ROOM**, made of lightweight aluminum, offers a screened retreat that can be easily erected. Panels are installed by dropping hinge pins into place. Temporary anchor brackets and stakes are supplied. Available in four sizes, the summer retreat is covered with a vinyl plastic.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

⚙️ **UNDERWATER DETECTOR** for finding metals can be operated from a boat. It is described as being able to find sunken ships, outboard motors, and treasures in salt or fresh water up to 300 feet deep. Battery-operated, it will penetrate seven feet of silt, sand or mud.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

⚙️ **POCKET CALCULATOR** for the shopper has four marked scales for comparing values on weighed and liquid measures and to figure the best buy for quantity items



displayed. The simplified circular slide, shown in the photograph, is made of a rigid vinyl plastic sheet, measures about three and three-quarter inches in diameter and is washable.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

⚙️ **COVERED UTILITY CONTAINER** molded of a polyethylene plastic is designed for storage and disposal problems in the

nursery, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. It stands on shelves or can be hung on closet or cabinet doors. It has top and side handles and is washable.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

⚙️ **ENGINEERING TOOL** for developing automatic and computing devices speeds up the conversion of linear displacement to an electrical signal. The experimental differential transformer kit contains seven transformers, a flexure plate and clamp, a demodulator and an instruction handbook.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

⚙️ **SPRAY HOODS** and other types of marine covers are made from a plastic vinyl laminated to nylon cloth. These lightweight covers for various boat uses keep out moisture and dampness. Dirt, oil or grease can be washed off. The covers are available in white or pearl gray.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957

⚙️ **ROLLING LADDER** is a high-level ladder designed for hard-to-reach jobs and repairs. For safety, the front caster is spring-loaded. The all-aluminum ladder is available in four sizes from a three-step model to a six-step model.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957



Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

➤ MOST PLANTS are firmly fixed to a given spot by a deep, strong system of roots, and so we commonly think of them as being without the power to move. Actually, while the plant as a whole is incapable of moving from place to place, its separate parts do move or change position in a number of ways.

If you place a growing plant in a dark box and then let light enter from a single direction, in a little while you will find your plant pointing toward the light. Likewise, if you place a growing plant on its side so that its stem is parallel to the ground, pretty soon the tip of the plant will change its position and start to grow upwards in the normal position.

These are genuine movements. Like movements in animals, they are the result of an external stimulus. They differ from animal movements principally in the length of time required to react to the stimulus.

Plant Movements



While an animal reacts through his nerve and muscle systems almost instantaneously, the plant may take hours or days to complete its movement response.

Plants have neither muscles nor nerves, and plant movement is often a matter of growth. In the case of the plant's response to a single source of light, growth is increased on the plant stem opposite the light so that the plant bends toward it.

When the plant is laid flat, growth becomes greatest on the lower part of the stem, so that the plant comes to bend upward.

The opening and closing of flowers with day and night are examples of plant movements.

The saffron flower closes in a cold room and opens when the temperature rises.

The sunflower blossom "follows the sun" by moving from east to west with the sun through the day.

One of the most fascinating and least understood plant movements is that of the insect-eating Venus fly-trap. This plant has hinged leaves, covered with fine hairs on their upper surface and bearing large "teeth" on their edges. When a luckless insect treads on one of the hairs, the two leaves rapidly close together. The teeth act as prison bars to keep the insect from escaping. When the insect dies, it is digested by the Venus fly-trap for its mineral and chemical contents.

Science News Letter, May 18, 1957