

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **HIGHWAY SAFETY MARKER** for car owners looks like a dunce cap. The marker is designed to be placed 30 to 60 feet from a disabled automobile to warn other drivers. Made of a waterproof material, the marker is 10 inches high and yellow in color.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **QUICK-CLEANING FILE**, designed to cut soft or hard metals, woods and plastics, has a disk control which, when turned, breaks up accumulated particles on its teeth. The file has a handle that can be used vertically, horizontally, or made right- or left-handed. It is available in mill or shell types.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **DOOR ANSWERER** permits someone to answer calls at outside doors without leaving his or her work. The three-station electronic receptionist operates from 117 volts, 50/60 cycles AC, or 117 volts DC power source. No power is used unless the talk-listen switch is operated.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **LAMPSHADE SLIP COVERS**, shown in the photograph, are designed to be used to renovate old shades. They are made of rayon, interlaced with gold metal yarn. One



size of the gold and white lampshade covers fits all shades from 10 to 20 inches in diameter.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **INSULATED ALUMINUM WINDOW**, internally weather-sealed by means of a two-piece frame, has a glass fiber screen for insect control. The window is available in

single hung, horizontal slide and fixed sash models. The screen can be removed for cleaning and repairing.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM** is designed for high intelligibility of speech for distances up to three-quarters of a mile. The self-contained unit has a rechargeable nickel-cadmium 28-volt battery and an output power switch ranging from 25 to 200 watts.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **FOLDING RECORD SCREEN** is a three-paneled black wrought iron holder that has 15 compartments. Each compartment holds up to seven 12-inch LP albums. The screen can be used as a room divider. Each fully assembled panel measures six feet high, 12½-inches wide and 2½-inches thick.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958

⚙️ **AUTOMATIC CHOPSTICKS** are joined together and hinged with a small spring. They can be used for eating and as sugar tongs. The chopsticks are inlaid with a random pattern of mother-of-pearl and available in either black or red and with either silver or gold plate chips.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958



Nature Ramblings



By BENITA TALL

► SCIENTISTS have discovered the "Adam" of the cucurbits, the family of plants that includes the squashes, pumpkins and ornamental gourds.

The small, green, pear-shaped gourd found growing wild in the gardens of the Maya Indians of Central America holds for horticulturists the promise of larger, tastier and more nutritious squash and pumpkins.

The reason for this is that crosses made with the ancient gourd, which has the scientific name *Cucurbita Lundelliana* in honor of Dr. C. L. Lundell who discovered it, and other cucurbits produce seed that will live. None of the domestic species of squash and pumpkins, for example, can be cross bred and produce viable seed. This has meant that scientists have been limited in their attempts to improve the plants. Results of crosses among the cucurbits were also unpredictable as to shape and other characteristics.

An Ancient Gourd



With many important food plants, scientists try to introduce "wild blood" in the form of an uncultivated species for breeding better plants. Usually the wild plant is more disease- and insect-resistant.

The new gourd is being used as a kind of bridge connecting the wild and cultivated species of pumpkins and squashes, transferring the desirable qualities from one to the other. Many of the resultant hybrids

produce healthy and luscious fruits with improved flavor and nutritional qualities as well as highly developed root and vine systems.

This ability to cross breed with wild and cultivated species indicates that *Cucurbita Lundelliana* is probably the ancestor of all the cultivated species.

Just as the small green gourd contributed to the agriculture of the Mayas as far back as 5,000 years ago, it is contributing to the agriculture of today.

Dr. Lundell discovered the fruiting vine of the small cucurbit while he was botanist and director of the 1933 Carnegie Institution of Washington-University of Michigan expedition into the lowlands of the Department of Peten in Guatemala. Other researchers, including the late Dr. L. H. Bailey of Cornell University, became interested in the ancient gourd and carried on breeding experiments with the plant and related species.

Science News Letter, September 20, 1958