

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **FAUCET WATER HEATER** gives instant steaming hot water from a cold water faucet. The compact, portable 24-ounce electric unit screws on to the faucet for a leak-proof connection that provides an electrical ground; thermostat control prevents over-heating. The heater is useful for cottages, camps, trailers, and many other places.

• Science News Letter, 78:432 December 24, 1960

⚙️ **AUTO ASH TRAY**, jet-powered, sucks cigarette butts into an airtight container where they smother instantly. Made of anodized aluminum in gold and black or silver and black, it can be installed in minutes to extend or recess from automobile dash.

• Science News Letter, 78:432 December 24, 1960

⚙️ **HAIR CUTTER** for "do-it-yourself" professional results requires no special skill and is safe and easy to use. Patented precision mechanism automatically positions and operates cutting blade between unbreakable nylon rollers. The cutter is non-electrical and can be used anywhere.

• Science News Letter, 78:432 December 24, 1960

⚙️ **AIR-CONDITIONED RUBBER BOOTS**, shown in the photograph, have a special kick-off spur on the heel for easy removal of muddy or wet boots without soiling hands. "Air-conditioning" in the



17-inch-high boots is provided by a patented design which produces a bellows-like action with each step. The tops, fastened by a single button, are tight enough to keep out snow.

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⚙️ **HEAT-GENERATING PELLETS** thaw ice-packed gutters and downspouts up to

30 times faster than rock salt and can be used on ice or snow-covered driveways, steps and walks. They leave no residue to damage floors or carpets when tracked inside. Available in 10-pound packages and larger sizes.

• Science News Letter, 78:432 December 24, 1960

⚙️ **FLAME-RESISTANT FLOCKING ADHESIVE** for decorating toys, displays or Christmas trees may be applied by brush or spray and can be colored to match decorated object. The white water-based adhesive will adhere to any surface. The coated object can then be dipped or sprinkled with decorative materials.

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⚙️ **ADJUSTABLE SHORTENING MEASURE** of rigid plastic adjusts from one tablespoon to half a cup. Plastic-bagged, the measure comes in yellow and turquoise combination with illustrated printed instructions on outside of easy-to-use, easy-to-clean unit.

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⚙️ **FRUIT-TREE HEDGER-PRUNER** is tractor-drawn with a cutting mechanism similar to that of electric hedge clippers. It can be operated at all heights and positions, requires little power, costs less than existing pruning equipment and is a time-saver.

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Nature Ramblings



► THE USE OF HOLLY to celebrate Christmastime is older than Christmas itself. The Teutons and Celts of northern Europe gathered the evergreen holly late in December for pagan festivals observing the coming of longer days and the sun's apparent northward turning. Any plant that could stay green in winter must be favored by the supernatural powers, they reasoned.

Most Americans are acquainted with English holly, *Ilex aquifolium* L., and American holly, *Ilex opaca*. The English holly, particularly sought for its bright red berries and shiny, scoop-edged leaves, also is known as Oregon holly, because it is commercially cultivated in that state. In florist shops, it is four or five times as expensive as American holly, which grows wild and has dull green leaves.

So popular are these species that 200 to 300 horticultural varieties of English holly, and about an equal number for American holly, are now available for holiday decorations.

Holly



Throughout the world, 275 to 300 species of holly can be found. Almost all have paired, opposite leaves and one sex per plant. The opposite sexual parts may be present, but usually they are undeveloped.

Among the 22 holly species native to the U. S., most are east of the Mississippi. Not all are evergreen. Native deciduous hollies include swamp holly, large leaved holly, winterberry, smooth winterberry and mountain holly.

Holly flowers, distinguished by delicate

joining of the petal bases, usually are white, but some Chinese species with orange and brownish flowers have been reported.

Holly berries may be red, white, scarlet-orange, or in certain variations, yellow. The inkberry holly usually has black fruits, but a white-berried inkberry has been found in Florida, and a red-berried inkberry appeared in South Carolina.

The leaves of certain hollies can be cured and brewed into an acceptable tea. The favorite, Cassina or Youpon holly, is quite safe in spite of its Latinized name, *Ilex vomitoria*, which is taken from stories of Southern Indians who used the plant in a strong ceremonial brew that acted as a powerful emetic.

Like Cassina, the inkberry holly has leaves that contain an appreciable amount of caffeine. American holly, on the other hand, was the most common substitute for tea during the Civil War but contains no caffeine.

—GLORIA BALL

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