

BIOPHYSICS

Taste Sense of Children For Sweetness Tested

➤ SUGAR BY ANY other name tastes just as sweet. At least children think so.

Sweet-toothed, and every-other-toothed, children are being given a series of tests to determine just how well they can distinguish between different degrees of sweetness and saltiness, and how the brain receives these taste messages from the mouth.

Ten children, ranging in ages from four to 12 years, are enjoying their research tasks under the direction of Dr. Lloyd M. Beidler, director of the Laboratory of Sensory Biophysics at Florida State University, Tallahassee. The research is financed under a National Science Foundation grant.

The youngsters sit at what looks like a drugstore counter, in front of a shiny box-like machine which dispenses liquids with three degrees of saltiness or sweetness.

After the child tastes the three solutions, he pulls one of three levers to identify what he considers to be the sweetest or saltiest.

If he makes a correct response, a nickel drops out of the machine. If he makes a wrong guess, he receives no money. In either case, the machine pours out three more glassfulls for him to taste, until the experimental session of 30 to 40 minutes is ended.

Children are being used for the experiments because they are more easily motivated, explained Dr. Beidler. The system of using nickels for rewards on correct responses worked wonders, he said, until the children began losing interest after building up a stockpile of hard cash. Then extra motivation was added by allowing them to save up and buy various toys at different prices.

• Science News Letter, 85:207 March 28, 1964

Nature Note

Leopard's Bane

➤ ONE OF THE earliest spring flowers that seems to concentrate the first golden rays of the sun in its bright yellow face is the leopard's bane, *Doronicum plantaginicum*.

This hardy, daisy-like perennial blooms in early April and usually grows about two feet tall. Its leaves are oval with wavy, toothed edges and each of the large golden flowers grows on its own stalk.

Of southern European and Asian origin, the derivation of its Latin name, *Doronicum*, from the Arabic, is relatively obscure. At one time, it is believed this plant was considered useful in destroying or warding off wild beasts. Another member of the genus, *Doronicum pardalianches*, has a name that means to strangle leopards.

In the United States, the leopard's bane is grown as a hardy perennial in the north-eastern part of the country.

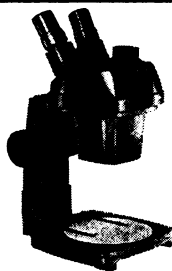
The plant prefers good, rich soil in a moist site, and should be divided after blooming when the foliage dies down. It is a member of the same family as the zinnia, aster, daisy, dahlia and chrysanthemum.

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