

Nature Note



Crocus

Suddenly, it's spring. Along the edge of the woods, in the lee of a rocky ledge, or in a far corner of your backyard, shoots up spring's first evidence—the crocus. Everywhere else the land is still winter dark, with trees stark and stiff, and last year's brown leaves curled and torn on the ground. Then almost overnight, the bright yellows and purples of the cuplike crocus appear, surrounded by fresh crisp green of its narrow pointed leaves.

This is *Crocus vernus*, member of the Iridaceae family which has about 1,200 species, including iris, gladioli and freesias. The crocus is the earliest member to show its head in the spring—so much so, in fact, that it often

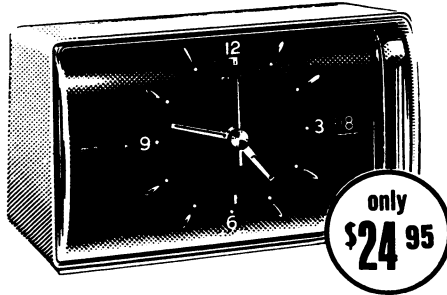
gets covered by heavy snowfalls as winter lingers on.

The common spring crocus came originally from Europe, and is a bulbous plant with rather thick, but essentially grass-like leaves. The flowers are often practically stemless, blooming very close to the soil. Colors vary from white, yellow, lilac, purple, deep purple to black. Even though the flowers do not last very long, the bulbs persist year after year, and make startling arrangements as they poke above ground in large sheets of color.

Only one member of the crocus family is fragrant—*Crocus sativus*, an autumn-blooming flower. This is also called "vegetable gold" because its yellow stigma, which is part of the ovary, is the source of saffron in Asia Minor, its ancient home. Saffron was once a valuable yellow dye used in coloring medicinal preparations and foodstuffs. *Crocus sativus* is not to be confused with safflower, or false saffron.

Although many species of crocus have been cultivated for gardens, there are not more than 8 or 10 common original wild species.

SOME PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU'RE CUCKOO TO PAY \$25 FOR "JUST" A CLOCK



They're the same people who don't mind living with "the approximate" time or walking into a Five-and-Dime every six months to buy another new \$8.95 wind-up tick-tock.

Also, this clock is not "just" a clock. It is a most elegant tabletop timepiece from West Germany with the following attributes:

There is the calendar. When you wake, you'll know what day it is! (This sometimes comes in handy!) Around back you will see no handle for winding... no cord for plugging-in. An ordinary flashlight battery powers the mechanisms—for a good year or more. When it begins to lose its juice, red appears under the number "12". Now, about the alarm. It's not the alarming kind. Just effective. Reveille begins with four short but insistent signals. If you don't shut off the alarm, there will follow a continuous bzzzzzzzzzz that would stir Rip Van Winkle.

Furthermore, this timepiece is in excellent taste. Quite handsome. Designed to "go" anywhere. You will think so, too. The works of this TwelveMonth Clock are so precise and perfect that you can adjust it to within two seconds of being on-the-dot every 24 hours. It's a rare wristwatch that can time itself to such a fine degree. The usual Haverhill's 10-day money-back Guarantee applies (if you are not impressed in any way). Beyond that, there is the Manufacturer's Warranty covering parts and workmanship. This extends over a full year. So if you can afford to indulge your appreciation of fine

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things, this indeed is the timepiece that should bid you "Good Morning" each day. This is also a pretty wonderful gift to a son and daughter with early morning classes.

NO TIME LIKE THIS TIME

SN 0318

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LETTERS

To the Editor

Medicaid Concern

Dear Sir:

In your recent SCIENCE NEWS of Dec. 31 I find the article "Medicaid: Apples and Oranges," by Barbara Culliton, extremely informative and interesting.

We in the State Anesthesiology Society in Florida are very much concerned with the coming problem of Title 19 and the tremendous burden that will apparently be placed upon the people.

Franklin B. McKechnie, M. D.
Winter Park Memorial Hospital
Winter Park, Fla.

More Food From the Sea

Dear Sir:

Thank you for publishing Norman L. Brown's letter (SN:2/18) concerning methods of producing and potential value of Fish Protein in helping to solve world food needs.

His experience as a physical chemist in the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries' Fish Protein Concentrate Development Program lends authority to his statement that the potential productivity of the seas "could supply the entire daily 'high quality' protein needs of 5.5 billion to 22 billion people."

Our present dependence upon wheat to help stave off starvation in India, etc., seems to indicate, in view of the above findings, that our Government should:

- (1) Invite the countries that appeal to us for such help to send a team to study our methods, and
- (2) Solve their own protein problems with the help of their own fishermen and processing plants.

F. E. Schuchman,
President
Homestead Valve Manufacturing Co.
Coraopolis, Pa.

Justice Next

Dear Sir:

Let me add a word of praise to your new format for easy and interesting reading of SCIENCE NEWS.

The magazine is extremely interesting from a layman's viewpoint, educational and intriguing. The article by Patricia McBroom, Feb. 25, on "High Crime, Poor Justice" leads me to believe that we might do something to improve our local picture by delving into our delinquency and youth crimes and our juvenile court system.

We have the National Crime Com-
(turn to p. 254)

... To the Editor

mission report and may be able to accomplish something in this field by public exposure.

The report may not allude to the need for child guidance, but I feel there is good potential for fighting crime at the source—psychiatric counseling of mother and young child to educate and achieve communication.

With best wishes, and keep up the good work.

Robert W. Bliss, Co-publisher
The Janesville Gazette
Janesville, Wis.

Phonetic Alphabet

Dear Sir:

I thought your article on I.T.A. (SN: 2/11) was very fine indeed. It was so clear, direct, and brief that it provides an excellent statement for any interested person.

I have been a subscriber to your publication for I do not know how many decades and have always found it very valuable reading. I think the new format which you adopted recently is a great improvement.

Arthur I. Gates
Institute of Language Arts
Columbia University, N.Y.

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