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Letters

Tire wire

Your article on new uses for old tires ("Rubber to the Road," SN: 3/7/92, p.155) prompts me to ask about the steel wire that is included in radial tires. What does it do to the shredders? I think the wire is like piano wire — about the toughest steel there is — a pretty hard thing for steel shredder blades to digest. If the tires are burned for power production, what becomes of the steel? Does it melt into a puddle in the bottom of the furnace? Does it clog up the machinery? If the steel-containing tires are shredded for inclusion in asphalt roads, are there little slivers of steel that could be harmful to vehicles or people traveling on the road? Out of the total volume of tire material, is the steel enough to be worth reclaiming as scrap steel?

Dan Larson
Downers Grove, Ill.

In the shredding process, says H. Barry Takallou of BAS Engineering Consultants, Inc., rubber

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Cover: Even the quintessential inventor Thomas Edison, who established a large research facility in West Orange, N.J., likely suffered the glitches and gremlins that plague experimental work. Modern instrumentation and computers provide a host of new venues for Murphy's Law: If anything can go wrong, it will. (Photo: Ivars Peterson)

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tires are ground into pieces 1 inch or less in size and then passed through a magnetic field, which separates the metal from the rubber. Oxford Energy Co. in Dearborn, Mich., burns the tire with its steel belt and bead, then collects the metal's residue ash from the furnace and sells it as a by-product. — E. Pennisi

Try it, you'll like it

Ilex vomitoria, locally known as yaupon (Catawba for little shrub), is mistakenly believed to have been an ingredient in the famous "black drink" mentioned by Leonard Glick ("Emetic symbolism," Letters, SN: 2/29/92, p.131). Folkways in this area suggest that the white and black brews were separate beverages made from different ingredients. According to Euell Gibbons in *Stalking the Blue-Eyed Scallop*, the association of *Ilex vomitoria* with the black drink was made in error — an error that persisted in the literature and resulted in the scientific misnomer *vomitoria*.

From personal experience I can attest that, rather than possessing emetic qualities,

yaupon makes a lovely (and stimulating!) tea, similar to maté or Chinese green tea.

John P. Mijac
Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Iron-poor plants?

"Garden-Variety Tonic for Stress" (SN: 2/8/92, p.94) confirms a practice I have been following for years in my backyard farming. I feed my crops Geritol. This results in healthy, vigorous growth in plants free of fertilizer residue. An added bonus is that small animals don't like the smell of the solution.

Debi Treweek Nehila
Modesto, Calif.

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