

Do You Know?

Electric floodlights near turkey roosts on one turkey farm kept foxes away.

Avalanches in the Himalayan mountains are the most terrifying in the world because often they are of tremendous size.

Chloroform is not easily ignited but at high temperatures it breaks down readily into hydrochloric acid and phosphene.

Mountain leather, a common name for the mineral paligorskite, is probably a variety of asbestos and can be used for many similar purposes.

Carbon tetrachloride, used as a cleaning solvent, may cause poisoning if used in quantities over an extended period in a small, improperly ventilated room.

Only about one-fifth of the length of body of the South American electric eel is taken up with its vital organs; the rest is occupied by its power plant.

Adrenochrome, a drug potentially useful as an adjunct to insulin for diabetics, has been made synthetically by a German chemist; its use permits the amount of insulin required to be reduced by more than one-half.



Hidden Resources

► CHILDREN have to be "don'ted" so much, in their eager gathering of spring flower bouquets, that it is refreshing to be able to tell them to go ahead and pick all they want to of one kind of flowers.

These are the violets. Except where they are so sparse and scattered that children will hardly want to pick them anyway, it is all right to gather violets without even heeding the usual injunction to "leave a few for seed."

For violets form few seed from the bright attractive flowers that children delight in. That important job is well taken care of by a second crop of flowers of a totally different kind, that are produced in summer, after the showy flowers have

had their day. These later flowers are small, inconspicuous, short-stemmed things that look like unopened buds. They hide under the leaves, near the ground, and they never open. They are fertilized internally with their own pollen, and produce abundant crops of seed without ever letting the world know about it. This form of flowering and fruiting is known to botanists as cleistogamy, which is Greek for "hidden marriage."

After these cleistogamous flowers have formed and ripened their seed, the violet plant often returns to the production of its showy flowers, and continues to bear them until stopped by really severe cold. People often exclaim over finding violets in autumn, but really there is nothing very remarkable about it. Violets come about as near being ever-blooming plants as any of our wild flowers. They will even bravely put forth their blue blossoms during a January thaw.

Violets, for all their delicate appearance, might well be chosen as symbols of hardihood and enterprise. They grow far up into the Arctic, and far up the highest mountains. There are violets that manage to grow in the wettest of marshes, other violets that prefer the dry scanty soil of stony hillsides, and still others that spring up and flower briefly among the harsh shrubs of the desert when its barren curse is lifted for a spell by the short spring rains. If the fact of survival is a testimony of fitness, the violet tribe must be among the fittest.

Science News Letter, April 20, 1946



ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES

By R. C. Walker

Offers a wealth of specific information about the various applications of electronic devices and their accessories. Every electrical engineer, mechanic and student wishing to keep in touch with modern progress will find this a worthy addition to his technical library.

393 pages

Illustrated

1945

\$6.00

PLASTICS—Scientific and Technological

By H. Ronald Fleck

The author has made a critical survey of literature and a correlation of scattered data of great value to chemists in the ever-growing plastics industry. Also particularly suited as a text for college courses on the scientific and technical aspects of plastics.

352 pages

Illustrated

1944

\$6.50

RUBBER IN ENGINEERING

A Symposium based on research by the Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd.

This book has been designed to interest a wide variety of readers. Its main purpose is to furnish engineers with a general survey of the information available on the fundamental properties of rubber. Complete with graphs and tables.

304 pages

Illustrated

1946

\$5.50

CHEMICAL PUBLISHING CO., INC.

26 COURT STREET DEPT 8 BROOKLYN 2, N. Y.

ENGINEERING

Lightweight Coal Car Made of Steel Alloy

► AN ALL-WELDED coal car that is designed to eliminate 15% of the dead-weight has been exhibited in Washington.

The new hopper, produced by the railroad research bureau of the United States Steel Corporation, has an empty weight of 33,500 pounds. That is 6,540 pounds less than standard cars built of carbon steel using Association of American Railroads specifications.

Constructed of Cor-Ten, a steel alloy, the new coal car is claimed to have high strength and corrosion resistance that will mean longer life.

The steel alloy permits thinner sections, while welded joints simplify construction and provide seals against moisture and eliminate laps, the car's designers report.

Science News Letter, April 20, 1946