

NUTRITION

Unusual Foods Aid Hunger

► **WORLD HUNGER**, which breeds revolution and unrest, could be conquered if unusual foods, some of them considered weeds, were more appreciated and utilized in the undeveloped countries, Prof Robert S. Harris of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology told the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston.

Telling of his analysis of more than 1,500 unusual food plants in Mexico, Central America and China, Dr. Harris explained that some peoples in the Mexican desert are well fed because they eat native plants we would spurn but which experience has taught them can provide the essentials of good diet as well as meat, milk and eggs which we consider necessary. Iron, calcium and needed vitamins can be obtained from what we consider weeds.

MEDICINE

Peppery Drug Benefits

► A NEW synthetic chemical with a faintly peppery taste is helping patients with the muscle weakness disease, myasthenia gravis, five Chicago doctors report in the *JOURNAL of the AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* (March 31). The five are Drs. J. Alfred Rider, Sidney Schulman, Richard B. Richter, Hugo Moeller and Kenneth DuBois.

The chemical is octamethyl pyrophosphoramide, or OMPA for short. It is related to DFP and other of the nerve war gas and insecticide group of chemicals developed during World War II and tried as treatment for myasthenia gravis. Because of a different chemical structure, OMPA keeps better and is less toxic than chemicals of the DFP group.

OMPA succeeded in controlling the muscle weakness symptoms in four of the first six patients to whom it was given. These four patients preferred it to neostigmine, standard drug for myasthenia gravis, because OMPA has a smoother, more sustained action. When they took the drug

For instance, malva is a Mexican weed related to hollyhocks which would be promising material upon which plant breeders could work since it is a staple of Mexican Indians. Similarly a kind of laurel and a legume, called chipilin, are used as food successfully in Mexico.

Dr. Harris questioned the wisdom of introducing peoples of other areas to our surplus foods such as dried skim milk if their economy will not allow them to produce such foods upon a permanent basis. It would be preferable, Dr. Harris said, to make available food suitable to their own production. When imported emergency foods are stopped as they eventually must be, agitators antagonistic to the United States may charge that we are deserting the people that we have been helping, whereas if we devoted our en-

every 12 hours, their strength stayed at an even level throughout the day and night, instead of reaching a peak after a single dose and then dropping off.

Three patients had more strength than when taking neostigmine, and the fourth had at least as much. Cramps, diarrhea and profuse sweating were the only unpleasant symptoms and these were controlled by atropine or belladonna.

The two patients who were not helped by OMPA were victims of very severe myasthenia gravis who were not being much helped by neostigmine. From these results it appears the new drug will be useful only in mild and moderately severe cases.

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ergies to improving their own kinds of foods the gains made would be permanent.

Sweet potato leaves are another food that is used widely in Central America, Dr. Harris found. Good foods of this sort could be added to our diet and Americans could benefit from eating things that we have forgotten about or never knew could be eaten.

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ZOOLOGY

Geese Weed Strawberries: They Like Grass Better

► **YOU CAN** weed your strawberry patch with geese, but you will have to learn the technique of doing it.

So say experts of the University of California Agricultural Extension Service, Davis, Calif., who describe the method and some of its pitfalls.

In the first place, a limited number of individuals have geese. Those who do, need to fence their strawberry beds to keep the geese in the field, and should work out a system of keeping geese moving back and forth across the strawberry bed. Putting their feed at one end of the strawberry plot and their water at another helps in doing this.

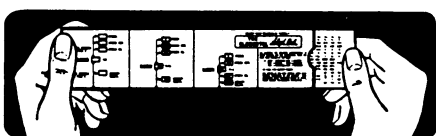
The value of the geese lies in their selective grazing. They like the grass but do not care for the strawberry plants. When the fruit is ripening, the geese need to be taken from the field.

The University of California experts report that geese are of most value the first year that the plants are set out and of reduced help when the plants become dense and matted.

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