

NUTRITION

# Gardening by Touch

► SOME OF the home gardens started this spring will be planted by blind men and women. Perhaps more of them might enjoy the health benefits and satisfaction of gardening if they had some practical suggestions such as given by Nelson Coon, librarian at Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind, in the American Foundation for the Blind's *OUTLOOK FOR THE BLIND* (April).

To begin with, Mr. Coon suggests a small garden. A narrow strip 30 feet long can produce vegetables or flowers and give much fun. Because it is small, it will be easier for the blind man or woman to work all of it.

The blind may need help with spading and fertilizing but once the soil is prepared, normal good gardening methods can be followed. Mr. Coon suggests marking out the small plot by measuring the planting distances at both ends, marking with stakes and then stringing tight strings between the proper stakes both at ground level and a higher guiding level. The actual planting can be done by laying a board along the edge of the string and making the row close up to the board.

Then move the board to the next string and plant along it again.

For the difficult job of identifying the sprouted row of seedlings, Mr. Coon suggests mixing a little radish seed with all small seeds before planting. The radishes come up quickly and identify the row so that weeding between rows can be done even before slower growing plants can be felt.

One of the most valuable aids to the blind gardener, Mr. Coon says, is the recent development of pelleted seeds. Each pellet contains one seed along with enough fertilizer for the first few days and the proper amount of fungicide and growth hormones. The pellets are easily spaced in the row, so the tiresome and difficult job of thinning is eliminated. For both blind and seeing gardeners, they make gardening easier for such tiny-seeded plants as carrots, onions and the like which have always been hard to space properly.

For taking care of the garden after the seeds are up, Mr. Coon favors the old-fashioned garden hoe or the short handled cultivator.

Science News Letter, April 28, 1951

METEOROLOGY

# Catch "Illegal" Rainmaking

► "ILLEGAL" rainmaking may one day be detected by instruments now being developed by one of the inventors of the silver iodide method of cloud seeding.

Dr. Bernard Vonnegut, General Electric scientist, told *SCIENCE SERVICE* that if federal control is ever placed on rainmaking, the instruments he is working on may help track down persons who seed clouds without a license. Dr. Vonnegut recently testified before a Congressional committee in favor of strict governmental control of tampering with the weather.

However, catching lawbreakers is not the main purpose of his present task of instrumentation. The basic job of his new

gadgets is to count the number of tiny particles in the air. Without these particles—called nuclei—there would be no rain at all.

An efficient method of doing this is needed to settle a basic argument between those who believe in rainmaking and those who do not. Anti-rainmakers say that nature almost always provides enough nuclei when other conditions are right for rain. Pro-rainmakers, however, believe that many times nature needs a boost with artificial nuclei.

Dr. Vonnegut's new instruments may provide the answer. They will be based on a "cold chamber" in which nuclei from the air can be trapped. At least two methods of counting them within the chamber might then be used, he said. One would be to measure the space between the particles. Another might be to precipitate crystals on a ruled slide.

The cloud physicist sees many problems cropping up, however, once the instruments are developed. For one thing, he said, we have lost forever the opportunity of finding out exactly how many natural nuclei there are in the air. Too many people are contently pouring artificial nuclei heavenwards, he said.

In catching "illegal" cloud seeders, Dr. Vonnegut indicated, knowledge of illegal nuclei in the air is only the beginning.

Finding out where the silver iodide is coming from is another, much more difficult task.

Science News Letter, April 28, 1951

PHYSICS

# Radioactive Breath Detected In Checking Atomic Counters

► RADIOACTIVE BREATH has been detected by special atomic disintegration counters at Finsen Laboratory in Copenhagen.

Devised to monitor the amount of the contamination of patients with radium or thorium within their bodies, the radioactive breath-measuring devices are reported to the British journal, *NATURE* (April 14), by A. H. Ward from Britain's Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell and P. G. Jensen of the Danish laboratory.

Science News Letter, April 28, 1951

## BORDERLANDS OF SCIENCE

By ALFRED STILL

This unusual work considers critically those "borderland" phenomena—rarely investigated by the scientist—that lie on the wavering and elusive boundary between what the scientist claims as his own rightful territory and the lands where he can not or will not venture.

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