

## PUBLIC SAFETY

## Teach Youngsters Bicycle Safety

► THIS IS the season when millions of youngsters take to the streets and highways on bicycles. For their protection, they should learn and practice the rules of safe bicycling.

Hundreds of lives are lost each year through bicycle accidents. Most of these are the result of collisions with motor vehicles, the rest being the result of falls off bicycles.

To help the young bicyclists, and old ones, too, safety experts of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company have suggested the following rules:

"Don't weave in and out of traffic in competition with motor vehicles; you and your bike are almost sure to come off second best in a collision. Be particularly careful at intersections.

"Never—oh, never—hitch onto trucks or automobiles!

"Don't ride two people on a single bicycle; it's not built for two—with safety; ride single file on the highway.

"Use lights at night, and at all times keep the bicycle—especially lights and braking mechanism—in good repair.

"Observe all traffic rules and signs; they apply to you just as much as to the biggest cross-country transport truck."

Science News Letter, March 29, 1952



Early Dandelions

► POETS, RHAPSODIZING over the coming of spring, sing of violets and crocuses and snowdrops and daffydownillies, but strangely neglect the dandelion.

Yet this tousled towhead is among the earliest of flowers, impudently showing its undesired face in all sorts of places, exposed to the rawest winds, if only the sun shines strongly there. In fact, March dandelions might well serve as a kind of large-scale soil thermometer to point out the patches that warm up first.

You find a line of them nestling along the lee of a house, or even in the slight shelter of a raised sidewalk. And where a group of buildings is heated from a central boiler plant with radiating pipe lines under the ground, their course is marked plainly on the surface by zones of yellow bloom.

These early dandelions resemble their later successors of the close-cropped lawns

of summer, in that their stems are short. Long stems belong to the long-grass period, and to dandelions trapped in partial shade, which is uncongenial to their kind. Shortness of stem seems to be linked up with free access of light, and possibly also with higher evaporating power of the air; though these are only guesses—nobody really knows why for sure as yet.

It may seem queer that these flowers go right on and form normal heads of seed, when there are no insects about to carry the fertilizing pollen. The secret is that, though dandelions form pollen, they never use it. These plants produce their seeds without the formality of fertilization, after the weird fashion of plant lice and waterfleas, that regularly bring forth fatherless offspring.

Dandelions, like other plants that flower very early in the spring, obtain the material and energy necessary for the expensive and exhausting business of flower production from a store of food manufactured during the previous year. In the case of the dandelion this is stored in the thickened root.

The dandelions' larder is not stocked with either starch or sugar, the commonest of plant storage foods. It is a queer stuff, like starch in some respects but soluble like sugar, called inulin. It can be converted into sugar very easily by either natural processes or by artificial means in the laboratory.

Normally the dandelion grows from seed two or three years, a flowerless rosette of leaves, before it produces its first flower. After that it goes into business on a great scale and produces blossoms faster than there is any demand for them, for five to seven years before it dies. And cutting its head off only rejuvenates the plant.

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## TECHNOLOGY

## Jeep Has Snorkel Tube

► FORMER SOLDIERS, who may still have calluses from riding in Army vehicles, probably will marvel at the new military jeep model scheduled for production this spring.

The new jeep will be five inches longer, two inches wider, 72 instead of 60 horsepower, and will have a 300-mile cruising range without refueling, as contrasted to its previous 180-mile range. The Department of Defense explained that the new 72 horsepower F-head engine and a larger gas tank were responsible for the increased cruising range.

Furthermore, the jeep will come complete with a kit which can be used to make it ready for underwater operation in 15 minutes, as contrasted to hours of preparation necessary for previous models. It also will be adaptable to arctic and desert use.

Snorkel (intake) and snorter (exhaust) tubes allow the engine to "breathe" underwater. The operator must waterproof battery terminals, but a lever situated on the dashboard can be pulled to waterproof the oil breather.

New improved brakes provide faster stopping for the jeep. Flanged fenders keep mud from splashing on the windshield. A new machine-gun mount has been installed opposite the driver's side on the front seat.

And seats, which soldiers previously have likened to crude buckboards, will be made of "soft plastic," the Department of Defense said. Larger springs and new shock absorbers also will help to make drivers and riders more comfortable.

The vehicle will be produced by Willys-Overland Motors, Inc., Toledo, Ohio.

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