

• New Machines and Gadgets •

For addresses where you can get more information on the new things described here, send a three-cent stamp to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., Washington 6, D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 660. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **LINE-GRIPPER** *ALLOWS* housewives, boat owners, tennis players and others to tie things up without knotting the tie-line. A plastic clothes line, for instance, is pulled tightly through two circular plates of the small device, and is clamped there with a hand-operated screw. Eight teeth grip the line securely in vise-like fashion. Will hold most plastic lines, ropes and cables.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

⚙️ **BOTTLE CAP-SPOUT** for milk bottles delivers an even, gurgling stream of milk to the glass. Made of a non-breakable polyethylene plastic, the spout is sized to fit standard milk bottles, but has a special ring to adapt it to odd-sized bottles. When not in use, the spout is covered with a protective cap.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

⚙️ **VACUUM SWITCH** shuts off the power when the liquid supply being pumped runs dry. Designed for use with electric motors and gasoline engines, the switch also can serve as a warning where operating conditions depend upon a vacuum. Attached to the vacuum line, the switch operates when the "suction" drops below a given amount.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

⚙️ **PRECISION FILE** set, micrometer-checked to thickness tolerances as low as four ten-thousandths of an inch, features 18 small files varying in thicknesses from .072



to .009 inch, as shown in the photograph. Especially useful in hard-to-reach places, the files can serve as go-or-no-go gauges during maintenance of delicate, high-speed machinery.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

⚙️ **EMERGENCY LIGHT** unit plugs into standard alternating current outlets and comes on automatically the instant the regular power fails. Operating from a built-in

storage battery kept in good condition by a trickle charger, the portable unit throws light for 10 hours from two sealed-beam lights during the emergency. Suitable for hospitals, theaters and industrial plants.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

⚙️ **ADJUSTABLE REFLECTORS** for fluorescent lights can be moved with the flick of a finger to five different positions to direct light where it is needed. Made of enamel-trimmed 20-gauge steel, the fixtures can be obtained to take 20-watt or 40-watt fluorescent lamps.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

⚙️ **NOTE-ENVELOPE PAPER**, double post-card size, provides enough writing space for thank-you notes to friends, plus a paragraph or so of family news. The card-like sheet can be folded in the center into a neat envelope which can be addressed, stamped and mailed. The top half tucks into a slot in the lower half, eliminating flap-licking.

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⚙️ **FIRE-RESISTANT PAINTS** react with flames to form a non-toxic gas which blankets the painted surface, choking off oxygen that feeds the fire and reducing the size of the blaze. Available for interior or exterior use, the paints are durable, washable, and easy to apply.

Science News Letter, February 7, 1953

• Nature Ramblings •

➤ **UNTIL RECENTLY**, earthbound man could only dream of flight, longingly watch the birds—and stay right there on the ground. Yet for ages many plants, though blind, unconscious, unknowing, have borrowed birds' wings for their seeds.

Evidences of these borrowed flights are so common all about us that as a rule we pay no attention to them—the survivors of such voyages sprout in every fallow field, stand thick in every fence-row.

Birds that eat seeds as food, in particular weed seed, are seldom active agents in disseminating those particular species, it is believed. The seeds are ground up in their gizzards, digested, and that is the end of them.

Jays, woodpeckers and other birds that carry off acorns and other large seeds, however, often unwittingly plant them. They may drop them in flight, or after they have

Bird-Borne Seeds



hidden them they may either forget about them or die and leave them unused, to sprout in the spring.

Intermediate between these two classes one might notice a group of birds that often dig conifer seeds out of their cones. Included here would be crossbeaks, siskin,

grosbeaks and several other members of the finch family.

The seeds they swallow do not survive; but in their diggings and prying they often drop some seeds, which then swirl down the wind on their own wings. The birds here are not carriers, but launchers only.

Birds that eat seeds covered with more or less palatable pulp are perhaps the most effective agents of distribution. Here the pulp alone, as a rule, serves as food; the seed passes through the digestive tract unharmed and is dropped under the bird's perching place.

That is why fence-rows, stone walls and similar places are apt to be marked by rows of red cedar trees, and to be covered with growths of such berry-fruited scramblers and vines as Virginia creeper, wild grape, poison ivy, moonseed, false bittersweet and dewberries.

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