



Dayflower

➤ **LATE OCTOBER** though it is, you can find the dayflower in bloom in a thousand places in the moist woods, and if the winter turns out to be a mild one you will find it still in bloom after several snows have fallen. This lowly, creeping, unobtrusive plant with the curious two-petaled blue or purple flowers is one of the hardiest blossoms we have.

If you will pluck one of the little flowers and examine it more closely, you will find that it is not really two-petaled, but has the orthodox three of the lily tribe and the rest of the great branch of the flowering world known to botanists as the monocotyledonae. The third petal is so much smaller than the other two that it is often overlooked at first glance.

More specifically, the plant belongs to the same group as the familiar spiderwort and the even more familiar Tradescantia or Wandering Jew widely cultivated in window boxes. Its creeping habit and the shape of its leaves and jointed stems remind one at once of the latter species. It also has the same trick of striking roots at the joints or

nodes, which makes for its success in taking care of itself in the woods.

There is also a suggestion in the arrangement of the flowers that connects this flower with the spiderwort. It will be remembered how the upper leaves of the tall spiderwort stem bunch themselves protectively around the flowers, forming a sort of rosette or clump. This function is performed in the dayflower by a single upper leaf, which folds inward to form a sort of hood.

The plant receives its English name from the brevity of the lives of its blossoms, which are even more evanescent than the tender flowers of the spiderwort. They do not even live as long as the name indicates, for they unfold in the morning and by afternoon are already past their time and turned inward, withering on their stems.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1954

## ENGINEERING

## Test Transformers In "Quiet" Room

➤ **TO TAKE** the monotonous hum out of transformers that may be placed in residential substations, a "quiet" room has been built that throws back no echoes.

Francis E. Fairman Jr., vice-president and general manager of General Electric's transformer division, dedicated the room in Pittsfield, Mass. It is the main part of a new sound laboratory built by the power transformer department.

The anechoic chamber, as it is called, is more than four stories high. Its walls, ceiling and floor consist of more than 12,000 fiber glass wedges arranged in a pattern. Each wedge, which is 28 inches deep, absorbs sound. Floor wedges are protected by a suspended network of interwoven cables similar to the trampolines used by acrobats.

The room has five-foot-thick walls for keeping out outside noise. It has two huge 30-ton doors, also lined with fiber glass wedges, that are opened and closed by electrical means. Around the 41-foot-high doors is rubber tubing that is inflated to seal the room completely from outside noise.

Measuring 43 feet high and 58 feet long by 48 feet wide, the anechoic chamber contains as much space as some mansions. The large-sized room was required so that large transformers, often as big as a small house, could be tested in the chamber.

In addition to being the world's largest anechoic chamber, it is probably the largest room to have a solid lining of copper. A total of 20,900 pounds of copper sheeting, enough copper to make 3,250,000 pennies, was used for the lining. This prevents radio frequencies from entering the room and provides an ideal place for studying the exact effect of transformers on radio and television reception without interference.

Science News Letter, October 23, 1954

Hurricane winds blow counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern.

# Questions

**ASTRONOMY**—What is an eclipsing binary? p. 282.

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**GEOGRAPHY**—How is the Caspian Sea being dried up? p. 277.

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**PUBLIC HEALTH**—Why should common methods of dealing with athlete's foot be discarded? p. 276.

How would computing machines help in fighting smog? p. 279.

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**ZOOLOGY**—How does the wallaby handle the heat problem? p. 281.

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## TECHNOLOGY

## Azoton Is New Cotton, Chemically Improved

➤ **YOU'LL BE** wearing azoton clothes and using other sorts of azoton textiles. For "azoton" is the new name for cyanoethylated cotton products, a new variation of an old cloth material.

Announced by the Institute of Textile Technology at the Eighth National Chemical Exposition in Chicago, the new name is derived from "azote," French for nitrogen, and the end of the word cotton. Azoton is made by reacting a nitrogen-containing compound, acrylonitrile, with cotton.

This produces a new fiber material which is superior to cotton. Azoton has improved resistance to wear, heat, rot, chemicals, greater strength, better dyeing qualities and improved electrical insulation characteristics.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1954

## A 9,000-word report on

# Radioactivity

by Sir Wm. Bragg, Nobel Prize winner

**THE H-BOMB** and its deadly radioactive gases have been written up by virtually every newspaper in the country. Now read a scientist's report on what radioactivity really is, why radioactive atoms can penetrate other substances, how radioactive gases are transmuted to lead, why radioactivity is one of the few processes that scientists cannot control. It's all told in the 9,000-word opening chapter of Bragg's "CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THINGS," a book which the London Morning Post called "more interesting than any bestseller among novels that we have ever seen." Five other chapters in this 244-page paperback republication explain in non-technical terms the nature of gases, liquids, crystals, metals, etc., and describe in detail the experiments by which scientists have been able to analyze their characteristics. The London Times writes: "We cannot think of any kind of man, among those having any interest in science at all, who could not read this work with pleasure and profit." 89 illustrations. **Send only \$1.25** (plus 10¢ postage) for your copy to Dover Publications, Dept. 12, 920 Broadway, New York 10, N. Y. Money back if not delighted.

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