

ered normal though, since feeding has ceased. It is apparently caused by material already accumulated in the body.

Habrobracon's venom is believed to be composed of protein-like material. The venom may be dried, dissolved in water, and the solution will still paralyze other larvae.

The wasp's poison seems to work by breaking down the connections between muscles and nerves in its prey. *Galleria* caterpillars undergoing violent tremors after exposure to DDT are readily quieted by *Habrobracon* venom, Dr. Beard has found.

The larvae of several species of insects are acceptable to female *Habrobracons* as living nurseries and food supplies for their young, but they prefer those of the small moths of *Galleria*, *Ephestia* and *Plodia*. These include the almond, tobacco, raisin, Indian-meal and wax moths, all of which are especially susceptible to *Habrobracon* venom.

There are, however, several kinds of insects that seem immune to the wasp's poison, among them, unfortunately, some important insect pests to man.

Japanese beetle larvae, the European corn borer and adults of the large milkweed bug show no reaction to the venom even when the poison is injected artificially into them.

With such a bloodthirsty wife, the male *Habrobracon* remains an insect Caspar Milquetoast. Having a sweet tooth, he prefers to dine on meals of diluted honey robbed from flowers.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1956

HORTICULTURE

Electric Lights Fool Lawn Shrub

► ELECTRIC LIGHTS will fool the weigela plant into growing at night the same as it would during the day.

The popular landscaping shrub can now be grown in the greenhouse to a larger size and can be made to put out buds during the winter, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported.

Experiments by R. J. Downs and H. A. Borthwick, plant physiologists at the Plant Industry Station, Beltsville, Md., showed that weigela shrubs getting 12 hours of light a day grew two and one-half inches during a 60-day period. Plants getting an extra four hours of light from electric bulbs grew nearly 19 inches in the same time.

The 12-hour-day plants stopped growing at the end of the 60-day interval. But the 16-hour-day shrubs kept right on growing. When the 12-hour weigelas were given a 16-hour day they began to put out buds within a week and new growth was noticeable within 12 days.

The experiments may lead to similar methods of controlling growth in other woody plants.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1956

MEDICINE

Operate for Hypertension

► YOUNG AND MIDDLE-AGED MEN with seriously high blood pressure, especially those with heart involvement, do better when they have an operation than when they are treated by drugs and diet, Dr. Paul D. White of Boston reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (March 24).

Of 50 of his patients first seen between 1941 and 1946 and treated medically, only two are still alive. One of these had a stroke and is partially paralyzed although otherwise in good health.

Of 50 patients similar as to age and sex who were operated on, 25 are still alive, 20 of them in good health with blood pressures in almost every case much lower than when first seen.

The operation, one in which nerves near the spinal cord were cut, was devised by Dr. Reginald H. Smithwick of Boston.

Certain patients, especially middle-aged men, should not be kept on medical treatment if it does not help them within eight to ten weeks, Dr. Smithwick states.

He and his associates report, in the same issue, their results in terms of five-year mortality rates for 1,118 male and 1,109 female patients.

They divided patients into four groups according to the severity of the disease when first seen.

For group one, the least severe, 24% of the men medically treated died within five years, compared to seven percent of those operated on. For group two, next in severity of illness, the mortality was 47% for the medically treated, 18% for those operated on.

The difference appeared even greater in the third and fourth groups, with 75% and 97% of the medically treated dead

within five years, compared to 57% and 34.3% of those surgically treated.

Dr. White points out that the patients he reports on were treated before the development of the more active blood-pressure-lowering drugs and use of very low-salt diets. Further comparison will be needed, he says, between patients operated on and those treated by these newer drugs and diet.

However, he says the operation may be better than the "tedious and continuous" taking of drugs and dieting.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1956

PSYCHOLOGY

"Fence in" Baby For Half Playtime

► KEEPING THE TODDLER in his play pen or otherwise "fenced in" for half his playtime does more than spare mother's nerves and the household ornaments and gadgets.

It makes the child more adaptable and keeps him from developing the habit of resisting grown-ups.

Findings showing this are reported by Dr. E. Robbins Kimball, pediatrician of Evanston, Ill., in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (March 24).

The reason "fencing in" is good for the small child, Dr. Kimball explains, is that until he is four the child does not really understand what is his and what belongs to his parents.

He needs to escape grown-ups' "no-no" for some of his time, and he needs the expansion of his world slowed to the point where he can handle it.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1956

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