

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **SYNTHETIC PARAFFIN** is described as exceptionally hard and has a melting point of 214 degrees Fahrenheit. The wax, a South African development, is a hydrocarbon wax, derived from low-grade coal. It can be used as a modifier in varying percentages for petroleum waxes used in polish formulations, and rubber and plastic processing.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957

⚙️ **ELECTRIC KNIFE SHARPENER** hones blades ranging from the finest hollow-ground carving knife to the smallest paring knife. Powered by an air-cooled motor, it never needs oiling. The sharpener has a beveled wheel and guide slots for the blades. It is housed in an ivory-colored acetate plastic case.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957

⚙️ **CHEMICAL APPLICATOR** is designed to be attached to the garden hose. A solution is put into a Mason jar which, together with the mixer, is attached to the hose nozzle. A change of the nozzle head produces either a fine mist or a jet stream.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957

⚙️ **CLOTHES SPRINKLER**, shown in the photograph, to help the busy housewife with her ironing chores, holds 16 ounces of water. Molded of a polyethylene plastic,



the sprinkler is unbreakable and will not rust. It has a tight fitting, snap-on lid in chalk white. The container is available in red, yellow, pink or turquoise.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957

⚙️ **GOLFING PRACTICE** in the backyard is possible with a non-breakable plastic

golf ball mounted on a six and one-half inch rod. The rod is inserted at right angles in a wooden stake in the ground. When the ball is hit with either a wood or an iron, the ball goes around in a circle.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957

⚙️ **WALL PAINT** made in Holland absorbs ultraviolet light rays. Designed for industrial areas where welding torches are in use, the paint can also be used in hospitals. The paint is made in three different surface-types: cement, concrete and brick; wood or metal; and asbestos or canvas.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957

⚙️ **HOT DOG SKEWER** roasts six wieners at a time. A clasp locks the skewer end, so that food does not slip off into the fire. The roaster fork is 30 inches long, with a wooden handle. When the food is cooked, the tines are unsnapped by means of a peg.

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⚙️ **AUTOMOBILE-DEODORIZER** is designed to be attached to a car's air conditioner. Eliminating gas fumes from a car ahead or from a dead skunk, the air cleaner is a slowly evaporating solid. The deodorizer for autos will clear the air of odors from garlic to rubber and leather to perspiration, the makers state.

Science News Letter, February 9, 1957



Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

Desert Harvesters

► IF YOU ARE NEAR desert or semi-desert areas of the American West late this winter or early spring, you may notice that the ever-present kangaroo rats seem unusually active. They may hardly seem to pause in their constant trips to and from their dens.

If you look closer at the desert, you may guess the reason for this burst of activity. Patches of greenery will dot the desert floor, the result of the few winter rains. Soon this green will turn to brown under the desert sun. The kangaroo rats depend on this sparse vegetation for food, and while it is available they must work overtime to collect and store the green grass seeds.

The den of the giant kangaroo rat, *Dipodomys ingens*, is a maze of tunnels and rooms, with numerous side pockets for storage of seeds and other foods. Now in the season of seed collecting, the soil is



moist and if green seeds were carried directly to an underground storage room they might quickly rot. So to be safe, this kangaroo rat temporarily stores his hoard of green seeds in shallow pits on the ground about his den. Here they are left for two months or longer to dry in the hot sun. When cured to the kangaroo rat's satisfaction, the seeds are taken below ground.

There are several species of kangaroo rats, ranging from about six to 15 inches in length. Actually, they are not "rats" but ground-dwelling "squirrels." They are found in desert and semi-desert areas of the West, from Oregon and Wyoming south to Mexico.

Their hind legs are greatly elongated, the fore legs small and the tail long, giving them a "kangaroo" appearance. The tail typically ends in a large tuft of hair. Like their namesake, kangaroo rats get around rapidly by prodigious leaps with their exaggeratedly long hind limbs.

The mounds of the kangaroo rat are a common sight in much of the West. These mounds may measure 10 by 12 feet on the sides, 18 inches above and about the same below the ground.

There may be a dozen or more entrances leading into a single mound, with holes large enough to admit a kangaroo rat on a dead run.

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