

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **MOTION DETECTION DEVICE** is designed for protecting industrial and commercial business against vandalism, burglary or intrusion. Radar is employed to detect movement within 25 feet in any direction from the instrument. It operates as long as motion continues and for one minute after. The device can be connected to a fire detector.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **BLEACH TABLET** for home or industrial use dissolves immediately in water and is effervescent, say its developers. One tablet equals the bleaching qualities of an equal amount of liquid bleach in an eight gallon wash. There is less danger of spilling on hands and clothes, and a saving in storage space.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **BLACK PLASTIC-FILM MULCH** is made from a specially formulated polyethylene. The mulch is described as retaining soil moisture and curtailing the growth of weeds. The film, available in rolls, is light weight, flexible and resistant to agricultural chemicals.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **CONVERTIBLE CAR TOP**, shown in the photograph, that can be washed with soap and water is made of a synthetic rubber that also resists dirt. The material has a



leathery look in daylight and a sheen at night that gives it the appearance of a hard top. A Florida test showed the top stayed in very good condition for as long as 30 months.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **MAGNETIC BULBS AND SOCKETS** are designed to replace screw-thread bulbs. The bulbs and sockets are described as self-

locking, impossible to loosen by vibration and good for 2,000 hours. Adapters permit their use in existing installations.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **PHOTOELECTRONIC SYSTEM KIT** for professionals and amateurs can be used to make a burglar alarm, counter, announcer or safety warning device. It contains a sensitive photoelectronic relay and a long distance light source. The photocell's sensitivity permits its operation 250 feet from its light source.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **WRITING-MARKING DEVICE** can be used on wood, glass, metal and textiles. The nib is built into the container holding the ink supply. The marker writes in four widths with the same nib and is available in six colors, plus black, brown and white. Marks are described as both waterproof and launderable.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957

⚙️ **PORTABLE SEISMOGRAPH** is described as having the delicate sensitivity of an observatory model. A British development, the seismograph records for up to 24 hours at 60mm per minute. The unit is sealed in a waterproof, metal case that permits open ground burial.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957



Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

Fireweed

➤ AS SUMMER approaches, wanderers in timbered regions will often come upon great stretches of a tall, loosely branched plant whose summit blazes as with fire. This is the great willow-herb, or fireweed.

It is not called fireweed merely because of the color of its flowers, though that would be warrant enough.

The plant is a sort of vegetable counterpart of those otherwise normal mortals who are happiest when they can race after the fire engines and watch the ensuing battle between flame and water. The fireweed also runs to fires, or rather to places where fire has been.

When a forest fire sweeps through the timber and wipes out all plant life, the first crop to appear on the desolated soil



is very likely to be a mass of fireweed.

Frequently, a forest fire scar is taken over completely by this plant during the first year or two after the disaster. It occupies every foot of ground and gives nothing else a chance to grow. Then gradually it will

yield to other things, and in the end you will find a stand of aspen or big-toothed cottonwood growing up in the midst of it, and the forest will have been started on the road to rehabilitation.

The fireweed is well-equipped for this kind of pioneer occupation of devastated areas.

It produces millions of seeds, each equipped with a downy parachute more or less like that of a thistle or milkweed seed. These, launched in late summer on every passing breeze, sow themselves thickly over the landscape.

If there happens to be some newly exposed soil left on the landscape by a recent fire, rich with potash and other salts from the ashes, a big crop of fireweed is, of course, sure to result.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1957