

Do You Know?

Tea and butter *rationing* will continue through 1949 in Australia.

Among the most pugnacious of the carnivorous insects is the *tiger beetle*, which feeds exclusively on other animals.

Decorative *evergreens*, around the house, are often damaged by snow breakage during the winter; this can be largely prevented by winding them with a soft cord to bind the tops together.

Wafers with a cheese-like flavor and the texture of potato chips contain one-third skim-milk solids and two-thirds potato solids; boiled potato and skim-milk are thoroughly mixed and seasoned, then spread thin, dried and toasted.

Sponge iron, so called from its spongy character, is metallic iron extracted from ore without bringing it to the melting point; by using coal, char, or gas as a reducing agent, oxygen is taken from the ore at temperatures below the melting point of iron oxide.

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traced in plants by placing them on photographic film and letting the radioactivity register itself in the sensitive emulsion, it was found that the element becomes concentrated almost entirely in the leaves, especially in the spaces between the veins. Very little of it remains in the stems, or even in the leaf-veins.

In another series of experiments in the same laboratory, Dr. Richard B. Walker, now of the University of Washington, studied the effects of supplemental supplies of molybdenum on plants growing in molybdenum-deficient soils. Here again, the plants grew pale and sickly-looking, and were restored to normal by the treatment. It was even possible to give them their restorative doses of molybdenum by painting a solution containing it on their leaves.

Results of both these research projects are presented in the journal, *SCIENCE* (Oct. 29).

Science News Letter, November 13, 1948

MEDICINE

Tantalum Foil Tubes for Nerve Surgery Patented

➤ TUBES of thin tantalum metal foil, for use in nerve surgery, have been patented by Dr. Paul A. Weiss, the University of Chicago neurologist who devised the method. Rights in U. S. patent 2,451,703, just granted, are assigned to the government.

Tantalum, a grayish-white metal little known until recently, has become a preferred material in many surgical uses because it does not corrode in the presence of any of the body fluids and has no irritating action on the tissues. For nerve surgery it must be used exceedingly thin; five thousandths of an inch has been found the best thickness. It must also be heat-treated to increase its resilience.

To make his nerve-mending tubes, Dr. Weiss wraps a piece of tantalum foil around a quartz tube of the desired diameter, binding it on with fine steel wire. He runs a steel rod through the quartz tube, for heat-conducting purposes, and puts the whole into an electric furnace for a minute or so at 800 degrees Centigrade. After cooling, the tube is stripped off and trimmed ready for use.

Dr. Weiss has also used nylon and short pieces of artery in his nerve-mending procedure. These materials, however, are not considered in the present patent.

Science News Letter, November 13, 1948

ORNITHOLOGY

If Pheasant Is Purple, You Aren't Seeing Things

➤ IF A PHEASANT with purple, green or blue feathers crosses your path, you may not be "seeing things." The bird will be real—and the rainbow feather-colors will be real, too.

Outdoor scientists sometimes dye birds' feathers with hues not found in nature as

a means of quick identification at a distance. This enables them to keep track of their movements and learn the extent of their range.

Newest techniques and dyes useful in this particular branch of applied ornithology were described in the *JOURNAL OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT* (October) by Dr. L. A. Wadkins of Washington State College. He has made use of 14 different dyes in a variety of solvents. Best results, on the whole, were obtained with 33% alcohol.

Science News Letter, November 13, 1948

AGRICULTURE

More Sunshine Puts More Sugar in Apples

➤ APPLES have more sugar if they get more sunshine during the growing season. This was learned at Cornell's Agricultural Experiment Station, Ithaca, N. Y., in a long-time study aimed at correlating some of the factors like rainfall, amount of sunshine, and temperatures to the keeping quality of apples.

Another discovery was that the higher the temperatures during the last six weeks before harvest, the greater has been the amount of scald in storage. The scientists will test this information further during the 1948-49 storage season, based on predictions made the last six weeks before harvest. Such knowledge, they say, will be of value to growers, who could move scald-susceptible varieties out of storage rapidly if considerable scald were expected.

Science News Letter, November 13, 1948

The mysteries of mathematics are revealed in a series of twenty chapters on "THE MEANING OF COURSES IN MATHEMATICS" now running in the *MATHEMATICS MAGAZINE*. If you never understood mathematics well or want to understand it better, here is your opportunity at trivial cost. No special training is required to understand and enjoy these articles, ranging from beginning algebra through most graduate courses, and colored by the individualities of the sixteen mathematicians who are writing them.

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