

• New Machines and Gadgets •

For sources of more information on new things described, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 1022. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

NUT DRIVER SET consists of five of the most popular sizes of nut drivers, with plastic handles of different colors for quick identification. They are contained in a two-tone transparent plastic case.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1960

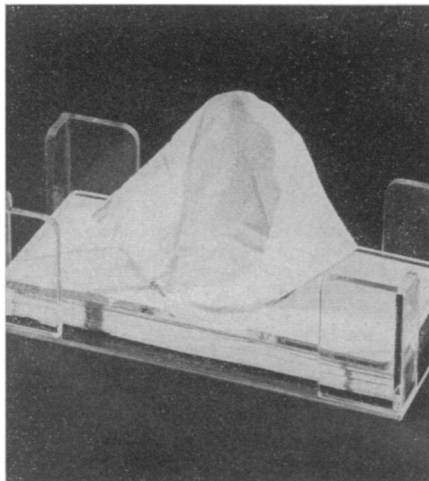
BUSINESS CARDS, slightly larger than the regular size, carry the normal company imprint. But across the top is printed, "Wet Card. When Dry, Wet Again." On wetting the card, a business slogan or advertisement will show up on the back. When the card dries, the message disappears and the card may be used over and over again.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1960

POWER-DRIVEN HAMMER not only drives in nails and tacks with one sure blow, but automatically feeds and holds them in place prior to the impact. The hammer is claimed to enable furniture manufacturers to increase production and incorporate crating operations on the end of assembly lines.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1960

FACIAL TISSUE DISPENSER of hand-polished clear plastic, shown in the photograph, has a circular "pop-up" opening in a floating lid. Available with special mono-



grams, the unit holds up to 400 interfolded tissues of any make. Since the entire supply is visible through the clear plastic, you can always see how many are left.

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LAWN SPREADER of plastic has a capacity of more than 25 pounds and may be used to seed, weed and feed your lawn. A calibrated non-slip flow control adjustment

may be set to release the exact amount of fertilizer, seed or weed killer.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1960

SHORT-CIRCUIT FINDER for locating shorts in autos consists of a three-by-five-by-six-inch steel case, a dialed detector, and two leads 24 inches long equipped with insulated alligator clips. When the detector comes within an inch or so of the short, the flipping dial ceases to register and the short is pinpointed.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1960

PORTABLE PLANETARIUM may be used indoors to teach names, locations, appearance and relative positions of all major constellations in our latitudes, and outdoors as a star finder. Adjustable for any hour of any day of any month, the planetarium also includes the mythical constellation configurations, compass points for viewing direction, light bulb, batteries and instructions.

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SHRUBBERY RAKE for removing leaves, twigs and cuttings from flower beds and around shrubs is seven and a half inches wide and light in weight. Six flat spring-steel tines are oil tempered for resilience and wear resistance.

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Nature Ramblings



By BENITA TALL

NOW IN MIDWINTER, with snow covering much of the land, trees stripped bare of their leaves and little plant life to be seen, it might seem premature to talk of seeds. Yet it is certainly not.

Seeds, actually miniature plants complete with a protective covering and a food supply to last until "the time" has come, are resting in the cold earth. They are now in a kind of midway point in their lives. In the spring all the food will be needed as conditions become favorable and the time does come for germination and growth. The resting period of wintertime is not all in preparation for spring, however. An equally energetic and busy time ended as the seed touched soil not many months ago.

We know how cultivated seeds reach their destination: placed in the soil by man or ingeniously designed machines. Nature, however, exceeds man in the many ways seed dispersal is insured.

They are jet-propelled, carried by water,

Propulsion for Posterity



air, or outside—or inside—animals. Some seeds are relatively simple structures like the wild rose's, others are complicated with "propeller blades" (maple trees), parachute-like arrangements (milkweeds), or barbs (cocklebur).

The wild geranium virtually jet propels its seeds, scattering them far from the parent plant.

The seed pod of this plant is made up of five strap-shaped sections firmly attached

to the top of a central core and sealed along their edges. At the bottom of each section is a cup holding the seed. "Launching" occurs when atmospheric conditions are right and the seeds are ripe. The five sections break loose from the central core and violently fling their cup ends upward and outward. The seeds are thus tossed far away.

In another group of plants that includes the swamp mallow and jimson-weed, the seed pod splits open at the top. The plant is dependent upon the wind to shake its stem, throwing out the seeds. The poppy, with its openings at the top of the pod, is another plant that needs the wind for seed propulsion.

The millions of seeds which almost literally flood the land in autumn and early winter are a placid, underground reservoir of plant life. Not too many months from now, the cycle will begin again: Germination, growth, reproduction, seed dispersal and dormancy.

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