

# • New Machines and Gadgets •

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**ROLLER RULER** makes it easy to draw charts and graphs. For a series of lines the same distance apart you just draw the first line with this transparent ruler and then slide the ruler down. A calibrated roller at the base of the ruler shows how far you have rolled from the last line.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

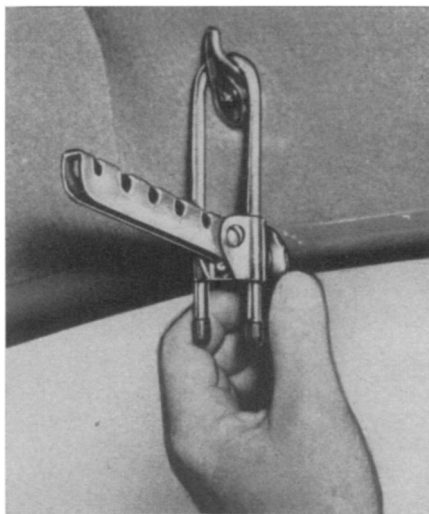
**FLY CAKE**, shaped like a doughnut, attracts flies to it and paralyzes them so they cannot fly away. They collect and die right around the cake. The fly-killer is useful in various areas around homes, barns, stables or restaurants. The manufacturer says the cakes, unless eaten in great quantity, will not hurt pets.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

**STEAK BRANDING IRON** lets guests at a big barbecue pick the steaks they like—"R" for rare, "M" for medium and "W" for well done. All three letters are set at various angles on this branding iron. The cook heats the iron and brands the steaks before cooking them. The iron has a hardwood handle and horsehide hanging thong.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

**COAT HANGER RACK**, shown in the photograph, slips over the coat hook in your car and juts out far enough to hold



five or more coat hangers. But it does not block rear vision. The rack lets you bring clothes from the cleaners without wrinkling them and, of course, is handy for travel.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

**"SOAP" FLOAT**, for play and sports in a swimming pool, is molded to look like a giant cake of soap. Because the float is a solid bar of white plastic, it cannot leak or

deflate. It is 24 x 15 x 4 inches in size and will support 200 pounds in the water.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

**SEQUENCE TIMING BOARD** operates three stopwatches at the same time by the squeezing of a handle on the board. With three stopwatches (not included) you can reset one watch at zero, stop a second and begin timing with the third, all in one motion. Each step under observation is timed in with the selfsame motion that the preceding step is timed out.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

**ELECTION GAME** turns each player into a candidate for public office. Using his knowledge of U.S. geography, each player battles the others from state primaries right on through the national election.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960

**BROADCASTING HEARING AID** has a tiny transistorized radio transmitter concealed in eyeglasses. Using subminiature battery cells, the transmitter broadcasts to a tiny receiver hidden in the ear. Because of no physical connection between the glasses and earpiece, the user may take off his glasses and wipe them without first removing the earpiece.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960



## Nature Ramblings



FEW FAMILIES of plants are as widely admired and cherished as the violets. From Shakespeare on down, poets have quickened to the inspiration of this lovely bloom.

Four of our states, Illinois, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Wisconsin, have joined in its praise and chosen the violet as their state flower. No other flower has been honored by as many states.

While the violets comprise a comparatively small group, only about 16 genera and 800 species, they are distributed almost throughout the world, even in the arctic and antarctic.

In the tropics, some become shrubs or even trees. In our area, however, they are mostly small delicate herbs with a grace and charm all their own.

Whether violets are true first signs of spring is immaterial. Certainly they herald the end of winter as much as the rose heralds summer.

By the time they become abundant in the

### Violets



woods and windblown grasses of the open prairies, there is no doubt that spring has come for good.

Happily, violet blossoms may be picked freely without fear of depletion, as long as the roots are not pulled out of the earth. Relatively few of the seeds needed for propagation are formed by the bright little flowers that people love to gather.

Violets are remarkable for the very characteristic shape of their flowers and for

for the fact that most species regularly bear two kinds of flowers.

One type is the well-known petal-bearing kind; the other, a late-season, inconspicuous "cleistogamous" flower, which does not open up to be pollinated by insects.

American violets are conveniently divided into two main groups, the stemmed and the stemless.

Best-loved of all native violets is perhaps the birdsfoot violet that inhabits dry fields and open woods from Massachusetts to Minnesota, south to Florida and Louisiana. Its showy flower, produced from April to June, has two upper petals of dark violet and three lower petals of lilac-purple.

An especially handsome species is the Confederate violet, which prefers rich shaded soil from the Carolinas and Kentucky to Arkansas and Georgia. Its abundant flowers are grayish in color. Other species may be white, cream-colored, yellow or combinations of these colors.

Science News Letter, May 21, 1960