

# New Machines and Gadgets

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**UNDERWATER COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM** permits an amateur diver to talk to others within a radius of 150 feet. The diver simply speaks into a mask microphone. An amplifier on the diver's air tank radiates the magnified sound waves through the water. Other divers need no receivers to hear the sounds. The system operates in water up to 120 feet in depth.

Science News Letter, May 28, 1960

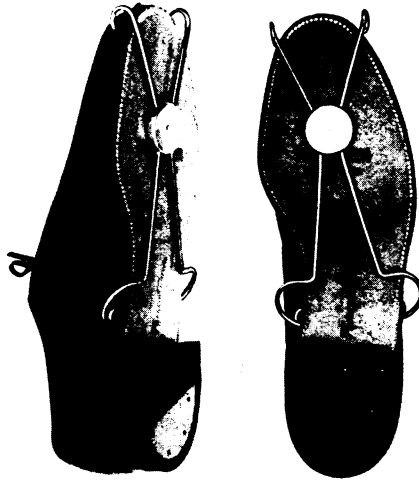
**TILT GAME** tests skill and dexterity. Player must tilt the game's triangular plastic tray by two levers so that a marble rolls from start position to finish without falling through holes in the tray. Baffles bounce the ball, as in a pin-ball machine.

Science News Letter, May 28, 1960

**PHONY DENTIST KIT**, just for fun, includes forceps and drill. A hidden tooth pops up when forceps are opened. Drill hums and vibrates but does not actually drill, of course. Both tools are made of chrome finished plastic.

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**OUTSIDE SHOE TREES**, shown in the photograph, clip onto the bottoms of soles. Made of chrome finished spring steel rod, the trees prevent soles from curling and



keep shoes shapely. Because they do not fit inside the shoes, the trees permit the shoes to air and dry.

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**RADIO HAM'S GLOBE**, designed for amateur radio operators and shortwave listeners, features indicating devices that show the direction in degrees and distance

in miles of any country from the user's location. This feature is particularly useful to amateurs with rotary antennas. The colorful world globe also includes a disk that indicates the time anywhere in the world. Amateur call letter prefixes are shown on each country.

Science News Letter, May 28, 1960

**AUTOGRAPHED LEAD PENCIL** has a smooth white panel on which you can write your name or a message with pen or pencil. With name inscribed, pencils may not "walk away" so often.

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**CELESTIAL JIG-SAW PUZZLE**, when fitted together, makes a cardboard map of the stars. Stars are shown in white; constellation shapes and mythological figures are drawn in green. The puzzle is designed for youngsters in grades three to eight.

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**FRICITION DOOR HOLDER**, easily installed on door hinge, is designed to hold the door in any position, preventing it from opening or closing by itself or from a breeze. Part of the bronze holder rubs against the hinge to retard the swing of the door.

Science News Letter, May 28, 1960



## Nature Ramblings



SOMETIME between May and October, the poison ivy season will hit most parts of North America. During this season most of the 500,000 to 1,000,000 people who are expected to fall victim to this major public health hazard this year will develop an irritating skin rash, whose extent and severity will vary considerably with the individual.

Poison ivy, and closely related poison oak, is prevalent in 47 states and Canada. It is rare or non-existent in the extreme southwestern United States and is not known to exist in other parts of the world. Known as *Rhus radicans* to botanists, common poison ivy grows as a woody vine, as trailing shrubs or as erect woody shrubs without support.

There are as many as 18 varieties of poison ivy leaves, depending on exposure to sunlight, rain and other weather conditions. About the only thing about the plant that is constant is that its leaves always grow in groups of three. Leaf edges

### Poison Ivy



may be quite smooth or notched, and their color is green throughout spring and summer but scarlet and russet in early fall.

Poison ivy flowers are small and white and grow in clusters from the side of the stem above the leaf. The fruit is white or creamy and usually wax-like, but may have a downy look. They have distinctive lines like a peeled orange.

Poison ivy may be caught by sensitive individuals by direct exposure by contact

with the leaves, berries, stem or roots. Most investigators, however, believe that contact is dangerous only when these parts are broken or bruised, because only then is the urushiol oil, which causes the infection, released.

It is important to note, however, that the danger of contracting a skin rash from poison ivy exists the year round. For the urushiol oil may reach its victims in many different ways, such as through smoke from a fire in which parts of the plant may be burning and by contact with clothes that have been contaminated with the long-potent urushiol oil.

Sensitivity to poison ivy is acquired by repeated exposures. A young infant, unless specifically allergic, is not sensitive. Allergists believe about 20% of the population are naturally immune to the toxic plant, but warn that people who claim to be immune really may not be; they may merely be "underexposed."

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