

# • New Ideas 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 1127. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

☼ **INFRARED AND ULTRAVIOLET LAMP** for heat therapy is an oscillating lamp that works automatically for timed periods of 1 to 60 minutes. Ideal for doctors, hospitals and athletic instructors for treatment of sprains, bruises and muscle soreness, the heat can be adjusted for broad or limited areas of the body.

• Science News Letter, 81:48 January 20, 1962

☼ **AUTOMATIC RECORD CLEANER** applies electrostatic action to keep records free of dust. The device consists of a fine brush and a soft pad which are dampened with a special fluid to collect the dust from the grooves and surface of the record. Attached to the pick-up head of the changer, it cleans the record as it is played.

• Science News Letter, 81:48 January 20, 1962

☼ **CRYSTAL BUILDING BLOCKS** of clear plastic for constructing crystal models are useful to teachers, scientists or students to demonstrate the relationships existing between spatial arrangements of atoms and ions in crystal structures. A colored sphere in some blocks indicates the presence of an ion. Kits range from introductory sets to a complete laboratory.

• Science News Letter, 81:48 January 20, 1962

☼ **BOWLING TRAINING DEVICE**, shown in the photograph, is an attractive handle that attaches to any bowling ball by controlled vacuum cups. Although the



device grips the ball firmly, the ball can be released in a natural manner instantly. The handle is said to correct delivery faults, improve timing and footwork, and eliminate finger ailments. It comes complete with instructions.

• Science News Letter, 81:48 January 20, 1962

☼ **HEATED VACUUM DESICCATOR** of all-metal construction for the laboratory weighs only 8¾ pounds and can be plugged into any 120-volt outlet. Having an adjust-

able thermostat permitting temperature settings up to 257 degrees Fahrenheit, it can also be used as a vacuum oven and a drying oven.

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☼ **AIR-THRUST PORTABLE ENGINE** to power small watercraft clamps instantly onto any transom. Powered by an ordinary gasoline engine, it creates a tightly confined airstream that thrusts the boat over the water at high speed. Directional control is achieved by adjusting the direction of the air jet.

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☼ **RAZOR PLANER**, an economical precision tool that fits into the palm of the hand, converts safety razor blades into four types of planes. Useful to the home hobbyist or craftsman for work on wood, leather, linoleum or plaster, it converts the razor blade into a regular plane, spoke shave, nose plane or short arm plane.

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☼ **PORTABLE DRAWING INSTRUMENT** for students or professional people adjusts to any pad of paper to provide accurate field sketching or drawing. Its angle arm can be snapped into rigid positions at 15-degree angle intervals from 30 to 150 degrees from the horizontal. Folds to pocket size and comes with case and instructions.

• Science News Letter, 81:48 January 20, 1962



## Nature Ramblings



## Do You Know?

► THE BLOSSOMS of the witch hazel brighten bleak fall and winter days. One native species that flowers from December to February is the little known vernal witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*). It has spidery yellow or orange flowers—midwinter blooms with a slight fragrance.

Better known than vernalis is another native species, the common witch hazel (*H. virginiana*). This is a large, semi-upright shrub that grows in eastern woodlands and swamps, and along the edges of ponds, lakes and streams. Sometimes it grows to a height of 10 to 15 feet.

Its small ribbonlike flowers are a bright yellow. They appear earlier in the season than those of the vernal witch hazel. Starting in October and continuing into November, they brighten the fall landscape, apparently impervious to killing frosts.

There are two imported species of witch hazel. One from China, *H. mollis*, has the usual yellow and fragrant witch hazel

### Witch Hazel



flowers, but with a purple-red touch inside. Depending upon location, this species may bloom sometime between January and March. The other import, the Japanese witch hazel (*H. japonica*), is the most fragrant of them all, and usually perfumes the air during January, February or March.

In addition to brightening winter days, the woody seeds of these shrubs furnish some food for squirrels and ruffed grouse.

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About 1,900 industrial firms in the U.S. are now licensed to use *radio-isotopes*.

In the U.S. only 20% of the disposable income goes for food.

Coastal soils show higher fallout than do those remote from the coast.

There are more than 10,000,000 cases of leprosy in the world and some 400 in the U.S.

*Isotopes* as tracers are used in plants to measure the amounts of various compounds absorbed from the roots and how and where in the plant they are transported.

*Corn* planted in rows 60 and 80 inches apart give three percent and 18% lower yields than those planted in rows 40 inches apart.

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