

• 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 1131. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **STARS THAT GLOW** are luminous star decals that will make a sparkling night sky out of the ceiling of a child's room or a recreation room. A chart of the heavens and instructions are included with the set of 125 decals to help place the stars in their correct relative positions.

• Science News Letter, 81:112 February 17, 1962

⚙️ **REDWOOD NAME SIGN** is made of clear, dry California redwood and custom hand-carved with requested name, in brown or white glossy letters. It can be hung from porch, pillar or tree, or mounted on a stake. The sign is 3 x 16 inches and comes with hooks and chains.

• Science News Letter, 81:112 February 17, 1962

⚙️ **PORTABLE ROOM HEATER** about the size of a shoe box and weighing only seven pounds is thermostatically controlled for home or office use. Noiseless, it uses a finned cylindrical impeller on a 120-volt circuit to radiate heat through louvers without turbulence, from flat, on end or tilted positions.

• Science News Letter, 81:112 February 17, 1962

⚙️ **CABINET SHELF UNIT** that holds containers of liquid soap, scouring powder, other cleaning items, and soap pads securely and out of sight is made of hammered aluminum that will not rust or water spot. The ready-to-mount, 10-inch-long shelf,



shown in the photograph, can be attached inside any kitchen cabinet door and is easily slipped off for cleaning.

• Science News Letter, 81:112 February 17, 1962

⚙️ **MULTI-PURPOSE BALANCES** that fill the gap between analytical balances and precision scales have a capacity of 160 grams and an optical scale with an indicating range of zero to 1,200 milligrams. Useful

in laboratories and for quality control work, the balances are accurate to the nearest 0.1, 0.5 or 1 milligram.

• Science News Letter, 81:112 February 17, 1962

⚙️ **RAZOR BLADE SHARPENER** makes possible 100 shaves from each blade. The used blade is inserted into the plastic sharpener containing 32 honing surfaces and a cord projecting from the case is pulled up and down several times to sharpen the blade.

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⚙️ **BALL AND SOCKET JOINTS** of polyethylene eliminate the danger of frequent laboratory glass breakage. Resistant to radiation, they are leak-tight and permit remote manipulation. The joint is firmly gripped by a clamp and takes either glass, rubber or plastic tubing of 3/16-inch inside diameter.

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⚙️ **FELT-NIB COLOR APPLICATOR** for visual aid projectors enables the user to draw, mark or highlight directly on films, slides, plastic map cover and other transparencies. Brilliant in tone, the colors dry instantly and project sharp clear images. The markers are available in four colors that can be easily removed with a damp cloth.

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Nature Ramblings



Do You Know?

➤ **PEEKING** from the snow in late January and through February is the skunk cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, member of the arum family of perennial herbs. Notorious for its fetid odor, it heralds the coming of spring in swamps and bogs from Georgia north and west to Minnesota in the United States.

With an odor imitative of decaying flesh, or mustard plaster and raw onion, but not entirely bad, skunk cabbage pushes up a closely-coiled, purple and green, leathery spathe that attracts and traps flies. Those that escape deliver the pollen from one flower to another.

When the spike or spathe opens, coarse, long, cabbage-like leaves unfold which, when crushed, give off a skunk-like odor.

The fruit of this perennial is the enlarged and fleshy spadix, enclosing the round seeds beneath its surface. These ripen in September and are eaten by various game birds, including the ring-necked pheasant. Skunk

Skunk Cabbage



cabbage is, therefore, a good natural wild-life food. As such, it does not deserve the general dislike with which it is regarded.

The skunk cabbage is also native to Nova Scotia and Quebec. It is found in wet and watery areas in Asia. And in the American West, a related plant, *Lysichiton camtschatcense*, known as the yellow skunk cabbage, is found.

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Most of India's *flaxseed* is crushed for oil.

The cure rate for *cancer* over the past 25 years has increased from one out of seven to one out of three.

The principle of the old-time stereoscope is now used to produce three-dimensional *photographs* of the ocean floor.

On the Amazon, Indian fishermen actually catch certain kinds of *fish* with their hands.

The main use of *slate* today is for roofing tile.

Scientists still do not know what complicated process takes place when *fire* burns.

The primary obstacle to salt *water* as a source of fresh water is the high cost of conversion.

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