

• New Machines and Gadgets •

For addresses where you can get more information on the new things described here, send a three-cent stamp to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N ST., Washington 6, D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 641. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

❁ **MINNOW SCOOP** dips live minnows from the fisherman's bucket and slides them into a tapering cone-like handle. Fish hooks are inserted through ribs in the handle. Baited hooks are withdrawn through the hinged handle top. Made of a lightweight plastic, the rugged scoop withstands the rigors of outdoor life.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **MAGNETIC SWEEPER** for floor has a high-powered magnetized tube mounted between two wheels. When rolled along shop floors, the sweeper picks up tacks, nails, nuts, screws and other objects made of ferrous metal. A wiping ring moves from one end of the tube to the other to clean off the tube.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **VEGETABLE SLICER** has nine parallel blades of rustproof spring steel that are attached to a handle. By drawing the instrument across tomatoes, cooked beets, boiled potatoes, bananas, oranges and other such soft foods, the housewife can make eight slices at once.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **WINDOW SHEETS** of plastic are cut to the size of the window panes and are squeegeed on the glass, as shown in the photograph. The sheets reduce glare due



to sunlight pouring through office, drafting-room and machine shop windows. Made of a vinyl resin, the sheets are available in shades from "frosted translucent" to "black-out black."

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **HOT-BOX DETECTORS** for railroad car bearings monitor bearing temperatures continuously, and automatically sound a warning when a dangerous temperature

rise is detected. Adaptable also to commutators of electrical equipment, the instruments give warning in ample time for corrective steps to be taken.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **BED SCALES** designed to weigh patients confined to hospital beds consist of a two-by-six-foot board that is slipped under the patient and attached by wires to scales suspended overhead. When the nurse pulls a lever, the patient is raised off the bed slightly. His weight can be read directly from the scale dial.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **GAS HEATER** for small houses automatically keeps an even room temperature during blustery winter months. Specially designed louvers permit warm air to be blown in several different directions. A switch cuts off the heat in the summer, permitting the unit to be used as a fan.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

❁ **FLOOR POLISHER** for housewives has a quiet electric motor that drives special rotary brushes to polish, scrub, clean, buff or wax floors. The brushes are easily changed for the different tasks. A bumper protects furniture and baseboards from damage should the device strike them.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1952

• Nature Ramblings •

➤ **GERANIUMS, BEGONIAS,** umbrella-plants, rubber-plants, oleanders, cacti—indeed, practically all of the most popular and easily raised houseplants—really represent a survival of the toughest.

They have to be, to put up with indoor conditions that modern civilized man considers comfortable. Most of our living rooms and apartments are overheated and under-ventilated, and practically without exception the air is kept too dry. We demand that our houseplants put up with the kind of atmosphere we like, and what we like, physiologically speaking, is desert air.

That is bad enough for the leafy tops of our plants. What their roots often have to put up with is worse still: too-small pots, soil with too much clay in it, so that it puddles when over-watered (which it almost invariably is), and either so little of it that the plants half-starve, or so much that water poured on top of the soil runs off and makes a muddy mess underneath.

Here are a few simple suggestions for making life more nearly bearable for your houseplants:

When you first pot them up, use flower-

Winter Company



pots that look much too large for the plants as they are at the moment. Remember, they want to grow, and you want them to grow, and they will grow best if their roots have room, and enough soil to supply at least a minimum of mineral nutrients.

Put a piece of broken flowerpot, or a large pebble, over the hole in the bottom of the pot. Then cover the bottom of the pot with an inch or so of coarse gravel. That is to make for better drainage, and to permit a little ventilation at the bottom of the

pot. Roots of most plants need air, quite as much as do their leaves.

Then fill in partly with the soil you are going to use. It should be the best and richest soil your garden affords, with leaf-mold added. If it is a bit on the heavy side, a judicious admixture of fine sand is in order. Firm down gently, but don't pack it tight.

Set your plant on the soil surface, with its roots well spread, and fill in the rest of the soil around it. Do not skimp, but do not overfill. A half-inch below the pot brim is good. Firm the soil down, but again do not push too hard. Trim the oldest, lowermost leaves off, to reduce evaporation surface until the roots have recovered from the transplantation shock.

Set the pot in water, to about a third its height, let the soil absorb for a few minutes, then remove and let stand in the sink for a half-hour or so to drain. Finally, set the pot on its saucer in the sunniest window you have. Do not fuss over your plants too much. Plants, like children, grow best when they are not being over-closely watched.

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