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 1163. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit $1.50 for one year's subscription.

WHEELCHAIR GLASS-HOLDER eliminates the need for a wheelchair patient to hold a glass while maneuvering. The glass holder clamps to the vertical arm upright of the chair with a screw and is conveniently located for the patient to reach. Securely attached, it prevents spilling and does not interfere with the performance of the wheelchair.

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ELECTRONIC INTERCOM SYSTEM, fully transistorized, for offices and industrial plants provides privacy protection for all users. The call buttons are designated by removable labels and a light indicates when a line is open, staying on until used, assuring privacy. Incoming calls, announced by chimes rather than voice, can be volume controlled.

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PORTABLE MOVIE LIGHT is a lightweight, battery-powered light that can be recharged over and over again. Each charge lasts at least six minutes, enough for one roll of film, and a special lamp concentrates the light on the subject area, minimizing "spill" light. The entire unit, consisting of lamp, holder, cord, battery case and strap, weighs only 8½ pounds.

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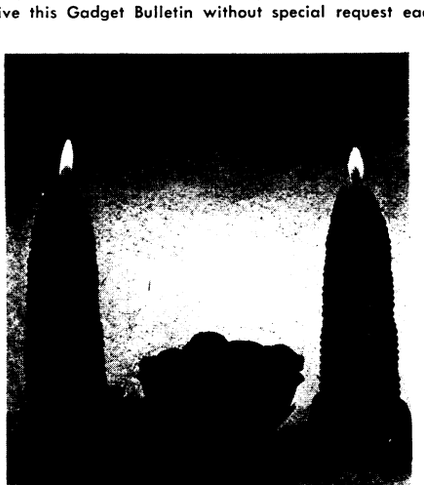

TWIST CORN CANDLES, shown in the photograph, are six inches high and are set in their own holder, one and one-half inches tall. The candles are yellow corn color and the leaf holders dark green. The mold used for these candles was made from a real ear of corn. Special formula hard candle wax that will not wilt composes the corn candles, which will burn for hours.

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TWIST-OFF JAR OPENER eliminates the need to bang or heat and cool stubborn tops that will not unscrew readily. Made of pliable rubber, the opener fits into the hand comfortably. It can be used to unscrew any size up to 2½ inches in diameter. It is also useful to tighten the lids of jars when canning.

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POLYETHYLENE SINK helps reduce breakage of glassware in laboratories. Glass equipment that slips from the fingers while being washed is less likely to shatter in the softer material of the polyethylene sink. The sink can be joined economically to chemical-resistant polyethylene fittings and pipes. Available in different sizes, its tapered bottom and rounded corners help liquids flow out rapidly.

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POWDERED CHEMICAL DISPENSER for laboratories permits even, controlled dispensing of chemicals at adjustable speeds with 0.1 milligram accuracy. Useful for accurately measuring small quantities, pressing the button on the handle starts the electrically driven vibrator. Flow speeds are regulated by turning a knob on the vibrating shaft. Three V-shaped troughs and a brush are supplied with the device.

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Nature Ramblings

Snails

By WILLIAM E. SMALL

➤ THE LOWLY SNAIL has a costly price tag in the most famous Old World and American restaurants, although it is rarely a topic of conversation in the modern scientific world.

The custom of eating land snails in Italy predates the Christian era. It became a trend in France in the 1700's, with more than 200 million snails consumed annually in seven months from September to April. America has been importing and raising the delectable little mollusks for years.

Still, the snail is perhaps one of nature's most neglected animals.

Numbering nearly 50,000 known species, snails and their close relations, the slugs, compose the largest class of mollusks known as the gastropods, or stomach-footed.

Snails are found everywhere. The greatest number live in the ocean. Many, however, live in fresh water while another group lives on land. The land snails prefer damp woods or humid mountain valleys.

The snail carries its home, a conical or spiral shell, on its back. The shell grows to accommodate the size of its occupant.

Garden snails, those of the genus Helix, glide out of damp corners at night and browse on a wide variety of plants. Garden snails are frequently found clinging to a head of lettuce. They leave glistening trails of mucus wherever they crawl.

Snails generally have eyes and sensitive tentacles on their heads. When danger threatens, they can withdraw into the safety of the shell, pulling in first tentacles and head, then the complete foot.

"Slow as a snail" is proverbial, but in reality, "patient as a snail" should be added, since these tiny travelers can make surprisingly long journeys. The snail progresses by a succession of "ripples" in the foot.

The present demand for the fleshy creatures has forced scientists to devise a farming method of raising thousands on vegetables and bran mash in regular snail gardens.

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