

# Scientist Busy Identifying Poisonous Seeds

Pretty little red and black seeds used to decorate costume jewelry, which turned out to be deadly poisonous, have triggered a deluge of mail and phone calls to the U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist who pinpointed the danger.

Dr. Charles R. Gunn, a taxonomist in USDA's Agricultural Research Service, noticed the seeds while Christmas shopping. He notified the store manager after verifying that the seeds were indeed poisonous. The management immediately withdrew the jewelry from sale at all its outlets and publicly announced its search to retrieve pieces already sold.

Since then, from all over the country, items containing suspect seeds and loose seeds have been pouring in for identification to Dr. Gunn's office at Beltsville, Md.

A typical case involving the seeds included a visit to Beltsville by Mrs. Harold Feeney, Jr., of Alexandria, Va. She found suspicious seeds that had spilled

from a dried gourd broken in play by her son. The gourd, which had been made into a percussion instrument called a maraca, was one of a pair of souvenirs that had lain in the child's toybox for over a year. The 2-year-old had already visited the family doctor and had his stomach emptied on the chance that he may have eaten some of the seeds. Dr. Gunn was asked to identify them and he verified that each of the maracas held a good-sized handful of the attractive and deadly peas.

The seed causing all the concern is named *Abrus precatorius*, Latin for prayerful because the plant's leaves fold at night. It's also called the jequirity pea, but is best known as the rosary pea, so named because of its former use in Catholic and Buddhist prayer beads.

When chewed and swallowed, a single rosary pea can kill a small child, and only two ounces would kill a horse. Ingesting the pea would be especially dangerous in this country since

there is no readily available antidote.

The plant grows in the tropics and subtropics, including Florida. So far, seeds have been found in necklaces, bracelets, decorative wreaths, maracas, and even in a baby rattle. Mostly the items containing the deadly seeds have originated in South America, the Caribbean, Hawaii, and southern Florida.

Though it has several look-alikes, the rosary pea can easily be identified. It is bright red with a black end and is oblong, measuring about a quarter of an inch from end to end. The hilum, the little dent where the seed was attached to its pod, is located along the edge in the black area. Other seeds that closely resemble the rosary pea, while similar in color, usually are larger and the hilum always is located in the red portion.

In the public interest, Dr. Gunn has said that he will accept all queries and make identifications of any suspect seeds sent to him.

## ● For The Farm Wife (Continued from Page 11)

2 tablespoons (scant) molasses  
Boil until it forms soft ball in cold water, remove from heat and add 2 heaping tablespoons cocoa and 2 tablespoons of marshmallow whip. Stir and pour in greased pan.

### CRUMB CAKE

3 cups sugar  
1 cup lard or shortening  
6 cups flour  
1 teaspoon soda

### Buttermilk or sour milk

Mix sugar, shortening and flour. Keep 1 cup crumbs out for topping. Take 1 cup buttermilk and mix in soda. Add enough additional buttermilk to make it the consistency of cake batter. Pour into pans, add crumbs on top and sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake in a 350 degree oven until brown.

By the time a man can afford to lose a golf ball, he can't knock it that far.

## ● Have You Heard? (Continued from Page 11)

reach them and upset the pans. This will also prevent your catching a sleeve on the handles and upsetting the pans.

Tighten utensil handles regularly and replace them as needed.

Store knives and can openers in a safe place and use them carefully.

Store sharp knives separately and use a cutting board whenever possible.

When using a sharp knife, cut away from yourself.

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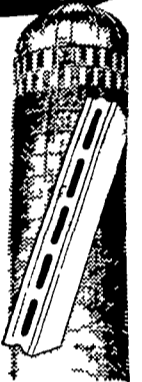
Instant minced onion and onion flakes are similar.

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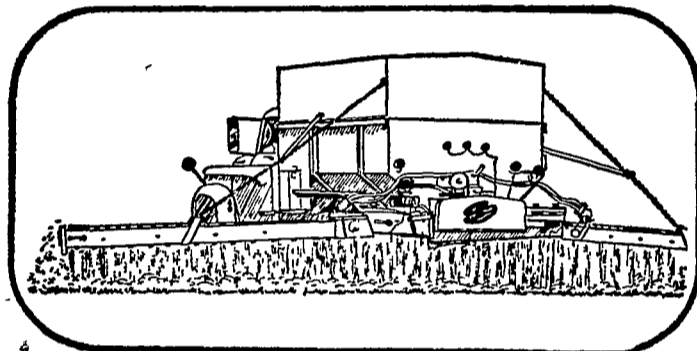


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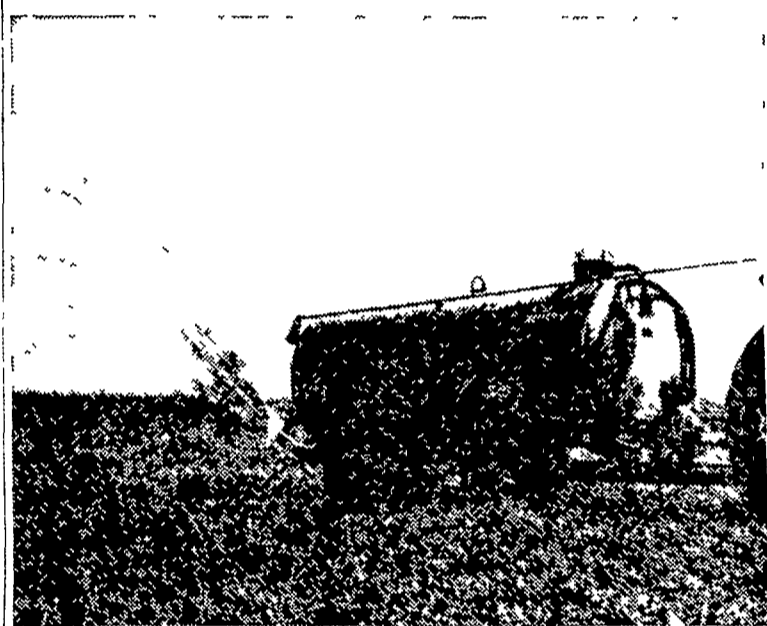


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### USDA Summary, Sept. 1968

191 dtrs	128 heids	15134	554
Pied Diff (1pt 90%)		+355	+11

### HFA Summary, Oct., 1968

40 clsfd dtrs	80 8,	101 9% BAA
40 clsfd dams	79 1	97 7% BAA
Increase over Expectancy	+3 05	

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