

STEMazing NEWS



Sun in a Box!

Solar and wind power are ideal when the sun is out and the wind is blowing. The problem is one of storage. What happens when the wind blows or the sun is bright and you don't need all that power? Electrical engineers have several methods that have been explored to store electricity such as lithium batteries or pumping water uphill to be saved later to drive turbines. Both of these methods are expensive. A new idea has been proposed that would use liquid salt as a storage device. Salt can be heated with excess electricity at temperatures in excess of 1000 degrees Fahrenheit. The liquid can be pumped into a heat exchanger and then produce steam to push a turbine. See and read more at: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/12/181205171913.htm>

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Honoring Nancy Roman

The Hubble Space telescope came into being because Nancy Roman had a vision. She pushed for the idea of a space telescope that could look beyond our atmosphere and deep into space to discover new wonders of the universe. In a science world dominated and controlled by men, Roman persevered and became the first woman administrator at NASA. Nancy died on Christmas Day at the age of 93. Thank you, Nancy, for your vision and drive to explore our universe! See and read more at: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/mother-hubble-nasa-astronomer-nancy-roman-dies>



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Monkey Talk!

We have all heard the chattering of forest monkeys in the sound tracks of jungle films or at the zoo. Does it seem like chaotic chatter or more like polite conversation? Japanese ethnologists wanted to know so they eavesdropped on macaque monkeys. They recorded their “conversations” and tracked who spoke and the spaces between verbalizations. They found what seemed to be conversations. Monkeys talk one at a time and there are pauses after a phrase of monkey talk--very much like human speech. We wonder what they are talking about... See and read more at:
<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/macques-take-turns-while-chattering>

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Another Reason to Avoid a Black Widow!

Black widow spiders have a toxic bite. The enzymes that they inject in their prey can cause a variety of symptoms if that prey happens to be a human. The toxins affect neurotransmitters and cause a variety of symptoms like sweating, pain, muscle spasms, and high blood pressure. For one Canadian man, however, the bite caused a swelling in the urinary tract preventing urination—another reason to avoid a black widow bite! See and read more at: <https://www.livescience.com/64386-black-widow-bite-urinary-retention.html>

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Plant Air Cleaners!

Some chemicals that are produced in the home can accumulate even through air filters that are part of the heating and cooling systems. Chloroform can be generated from heating chlorinated water and benzene comes from gas tanks that may vent indoors. These two molecules are too small to be removed by HEPA filters. *Pothos* ivy to the rescue! Genetically modified house plants have been shown to process these chemicals and scrub your environment! See and read more at:

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/12/181219093911.htm>



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