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A Plan for a Temporary Insect-Killing Jar

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Science teachers, whether they are teaching elementary, high school or even college students, often include insect collecting as a unit of study. They are always confronted with what recommendation to make as a successful means of killing the specimens.

Permanent insect-killing jars, usually charged with cyanide, are dangerous. This is true while the jars are being used by amateurs and even more so during construction, if that plan is carried out. Too, when the collector is finished with his particular project, there is a problem of safe disposal or storage, whichever he may decide to do.

Temporary killing jars, still somewhat dangerous while being used, can be destroyed rather easily and are not too dangerous while in storage, since they usually need recharging for extended use. Often, however, design of the temporary jar is such that the specimens being killed become wet and damaged by the liquid used for the charging fluid. These designs usually allow the insect to come into direct contact with the cotton or other absorbent which has

been wet down with the killing fluid.

The following design for a temporary killing jar prevents such damage and can be used as a class project in its construction as well.

First, select a jar upon which a regular Mason flat lid can be fitted into the solid lid.

Using a one-inch cold chisel, cut a square hole in the center of the flat lid in preparation for using that lid to hold a wire basket to be suspended from the solid lid. (fig. 1)

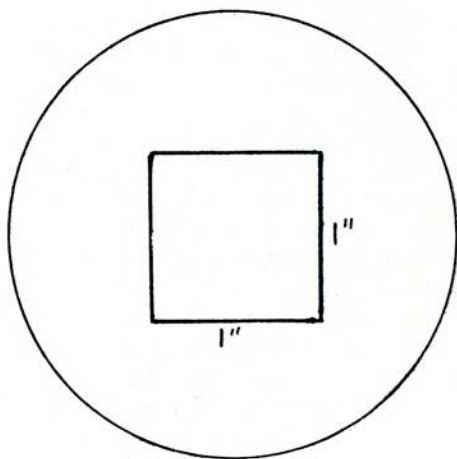


Fig. 1

Second, obtain at least a 4" x 4" piece of hardware cloth and cover it with masking tape on one side. With a lead pencil mark the masking tape as in fig. 2.

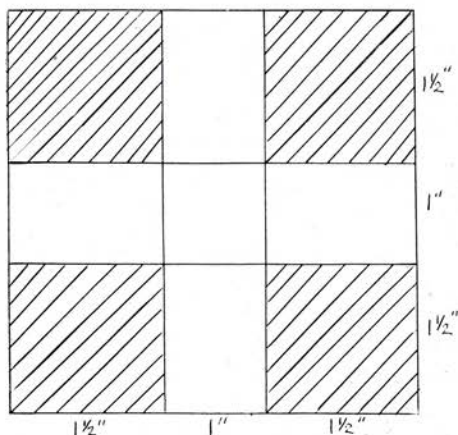


Fig. 2

Next, cut out the shaded areas of the design, using a pair of tin snips or utility shears.

The masking tape should be removed from the wire and the four wings of the design folded up to form an open box.

Insert the open portion of the box through the square hole in the flat lid and fold back about a quarter inch of each of the four sides in such a manner that there is a wire basket suspended from the flat lid. (fig. 3)

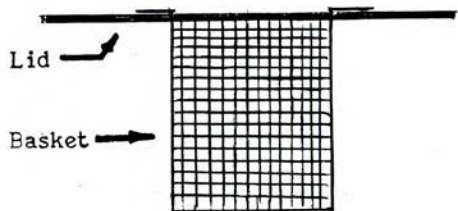


Fig. 3

After having stuffed the basket with any good absorbent material, the flat surface of the lid can be glued into the jar's solid lid, and the jar is ready to be charged.

Students should be warned of the dangers of any chemical which might be used to charge the absorbent in the basket, which in turn provides the vapor for killing the insect. Emphasis should be placed on not breathing the fumes in the jar, no matter what might be used to charge it.

Volatile fluids function well for the charging liquid. For this purpose carbon tetrachloride, varnish removers, paint thinners, alcohol, fingernail polish remover and even certain insecticides can be used. The latter should be those which kill by their fumigant effect.

Once the lid is left off the jar, the chemicals soon vaporize and the jar is safe. Next use will require recharging, and the nature of the chemical used will determine how soon the cotton must be moistened again.

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