

Jellyfish Victims Get No Serum, Tenderizer

Grocers in seaside communities have learned to stock extra supplies of meat tenderizer in the summertime.

Warm weather always means more cookouts across the nation, but demand for meat tenderizer rises in coastal towns for another reason: first aid for swimmers stung by jellyfish.

In a painful coincidence, the sunny months that bring vacationers to the seashore are often the months that bring invasions of jellyfish, or sea nettles, drifting in to the beaches.

Each year armadas of the translucent nettles bobbing in the waves drive bathers from the water. Beaches are forced to close until the troublesome creatures wash away with the tide.

Hair-trigger Stingers

Floating nettles resemble shimmering umbrellas, their tentacles dangling limply from the fringes. But spotted around the pulsating umbrella and along the tentacles are thousands of tiny cups packed with venom. Each cup contains a tightly coiled, barbed thread

attached to a trigger hair on the animal's skin. When the trigger is touched, the hollow thread springs out and injects poison into whatever it pierces, the National Geographic Society says.

A person brushing against a jellyfish receives stings that can vary from a severe itch to sharp burning. The most soothing remedy seems to be meat tenderizer. "When people get stung they should apply meat tenderizer to the wound," advises Charles Bell, a chemistry professor at Virginia's Old Dominion University. "It hydrolyzes the protein in the toxin and brings relief."

Hydrolysis is a chemical decomposition that occurs in interaction with water. Commercial meat tenderizers contain papaya, which breaks down the protein.

Marine biologists have known the effectiveness of meat tenderizer for years. Applied to the area of the stings quickly enough, moistened with water and rubbed in so that the enzyme in the preparation is in contact with the poison, then rinsed off, it causes the painful welts to disappear.

Under a Sea Grant project sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, researchers at the University of South Florida are working to develop a serum that could provide immunity from the stings of jellyfish.

"Most people who are stung are not killed," explained Dr. David Hessinger in Tampa. "But the sting is excruciatingly painful and, if stung badly enough, a person may go into shock, drown, or succumb to a heart attack."

Dr. Hessinger notes that the poison of the Portuguese Man-of-War, a seagoing relative of the smaller nettles that plague bathing beaches, is as strong as cobra venom and poses a threat to fishermen and divers.

He thinks a method will be found to inject these people with a non-toxic venom, so they will form antibodies and become immune. A serum containing the antibodies could be produced to be given to beachgoers who are stung, he predicts.

Residue Is Cause Of Pest Problems

Good after-harvest clean-up is recommended for vegetable gardens in North Carolina as a means of limiting disease, insect and weed buildups for the 1978 garden.

Old plants and crop residue left in the field become havens for all kinds of crop pests, according to North Carolina State University agricultural extension specialists.

The roots of plants allow nematodes to thrive and multiply long after the plant has served its purpose and its production has been harvested. By disking or plowing out these roots, the nematodes are exposed to sun and wind. The drying action kills them.

Disease organisms also continue to multiply and insects continue to feed and reproduce on the residue that remains after harvest. One of the biggest pests of all - weeds - continues to develop toward its ultimate goal, which is the production of seed by which it reproduces itself.

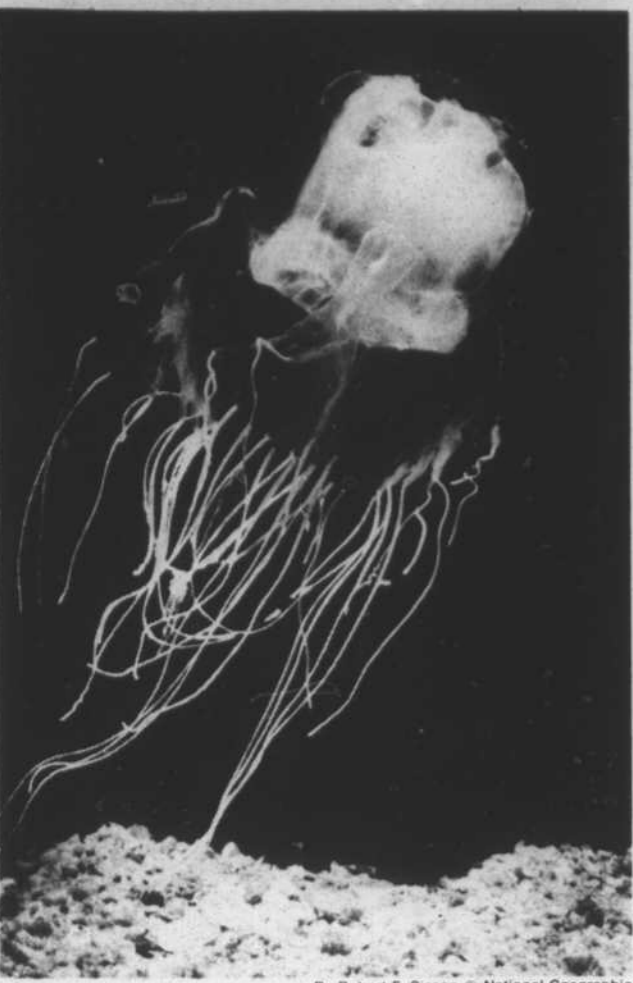
Some of the worst weeds produce tremendous numbers of seeds. These seed, once they mature and fall to the ground, can infest the soil for years to come. One of the surest ways of limiting the weed problem in the garden is to keep the garden clean, and that includes after harvest is completed.

Some gardeners plow under the residue and allow it to enrich the soil. It can be hauled off and put into a compost pile. In the country, pea vines that are free of pesticides can be fed to livestock, and so can corn stalks.

Seeding a cover crop, such as rye, can help hold the soil in place during the fall and winter. If you want to get a head start on next year's garden, why not go ahead and fix some rows for early-planted crops?

Big Lake

Loch Ness, scoured by glaciers in the last Ice Age, covers 24 miles of the Great Glen, a geologic rift cutting across Scotland. The lake, up to 975 feet deep, holds more water than any other in Britain, National Geographic says.



By Robert F. Sisson © National Geographic

DEADLIEST of all jellyfish is this sea wasp, found in the Pacific. Other species called sea nettles plague American beaches in warm months, driving bathers from the water with their poisonous stings. Researchers are trying to develop a serum that will protect swimmers from the jellyfish venom.

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